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The Red-Green Divide in Canada

Class Differences in Environmental Attitudes in Canada and their Consequences for the Party System

Abstract

This paper uses data from the 2004-2011 Canada Election Studies to assess the extent to which social classes differ in their views on environmental protection. It reflects long-standing findings from other countries that support for environmental measures are concentrated in "social and cultural specialists", a particular subset of the new middle class. However, it also finds that divisions across class only manifest themselves when environmental issues are salient and high on the political agenda. Moreover, evidence is produced to suggest that class differences manifest themselves among Liberal, Green and NDP supporters. Bloc Québécois supporters tend to support environmental measures without much difference by class, while Conservative supporters oppose them, regardless of social class. The paper concludes arguing these patterns help explain why the Conservatives have been so eager to promote economic development projects with serious environmental consequences arguing that their opponents are "opposed to jobs".

Zusammenfassung

Auf Grundlage von Datenerhebungen zu kanadischen Wahlen zwischen 2004 und 2011 geht es in diesem Artikel um eine Analyse unterschiedlicher gesellschaftlicher Klassen und ihren Einstellungen zum Thema Umweltschutz. Ausgangspunkt sind bereits veröffentlichte Studienergebnisse aus anderen Ländern, die beschreiben, dass Umweltschutzmaßnahmen vor allem von „gesellschaftlichen und kulturellen Experten“, einer bestimmten Teilmenge der neuen Mittelklasse, befürwortet werden. Anhand der Analyse zu den kanadischen Wahlen wird aufgezeigt, dass unterschiedliche klassenbasierte Meinungen nur dann eine Rolle spielen, wenn Umweltthemen klar hervorstechen und ganz oben auf der politischen Agenda stehen. Außerdem liefert der Artikel Belege dafür, dass sich Klassenunterschiede sowohl bei den Liberalen als auch den Grünen und der NDP zeigen. Anhänger des Bloc Québécois hingegen neigen klassenübergreifend dazu, umweltpolitische Maßnahmen zu unterstützen, während Wähler der Konservativen sich eher gegen sie aussprechen, ganz gleich welcher Klasse sie entstammen. Diese Muster können teilweise erklären, weshalb die Konservativen

bisher so eifrig wirtschaftliche Entwicklungsprojekte mit schwerwiegenden negativen Folgen für die Umwelt mit dem Argument vorangetrieben haben, ihre politischen Gegner seien „gegen Arbeitsplätze“.

Résumé

Cet article utilise les données de l'Étude électorale canadienne de 2004 à 2011 pour évaluer comment les classes sociales diffèrent dans leurs points de vue respectifs concernant la protection de l'environnement. Les résultats de ladite étude reflètent les résultats d'études déjà parues venant d'autres pays qui indiquent que les mesures pour protéger l'environnement sont surtout appréciées par les « experts sociaux et culturels », un sous-ensemble particulier de la nouvelle classe moyenne. Cependant, l'article montre aussi que les divisions entre « classes » se manifestent seulement quand les enjeux environnementaux sont d'une priorité politique actuelle. En outre, cet article tente de mettre en évidence qu'il existe des divisions de classe chez les partisans des Libéraux, des Verts et du NDP. On trouve chez les partisans du Bloc Québécois une tendance générale, observable dans toutes les classes, à soutenir les politiques environnementales, tandis que les partisans des Conservateurs s'opposent à ces politiques sans différence entre classes sociales. L'article conclut que ces constantes peuvent expliquer pourquoi les Conservateurs ont – jusqu'ici – intensifié la réalisation de projets favorisant le développement économique qui ont des conséquences environnementales importantes tout en soutenant que leurs adversaires sont « contre la création d'emplois. »

Introduction

Conflicts between working classes, committed to pursuing their own material interests at the expense of ecological sustainability, and movements drawn from the middle classes, sheltered from economic deprivation and dedicated to protecting ecosystems, are common images – however apocryphal – of contemporary political life. In Germany, the rise of the Green Party in the 1980s out of environmental movements as well as disaffected elements of the Social Democratic Party remains a paradigmatic example of tensions between traditional, “red” movements with roots in unions and working classes and “green” forces with roots in social movements and service-sector, middle classes. These have also manifested themselves in the North American context. For example, while the social democratic party, the NDP, formed the government in British Columbia in the 1990s, there was a bitter and protracted political conflict – the “War in the Woods” – within the party and with environmental movements over forestry policy. The divide between these forces is a profound one and scholars and activists have expended

a great deal of energy across the industrialized world trying to find workable coalitions that would enable both political families to find common ground (cf. Burkett 1999; Weston 1986; Dalton 1990).

These divisions and images continue to manifest themselves in Canadian political discourse. During the 2008 federal election, the Conservative Party took great pains to portray themselves as the party of working Canadians and made attacks on elites a centre-piece of their campaign: "I think when ordinary working people come home, turn on the TV and a bunch of people at a rich gala all subsidized by taxpayers claiming their subsidies aren't high enough when they know those subsidies have actually gone up – I'm not sure that's something that resonates with ordinary people" (Cheadle 2008, 1). Moreover, the party seized on the Liberals' proposal to shift taxes from income on to carbon emission as a new tax fit well with the Conservatives' strategy of portraying themselves as defenders of working families against elites who could afford to shoulder such an imposition.

Theories of Class And Environmentalism

This paper enters the debate by examining environmental attitudes in comparison with selected measures of social and economic ideology. The major findings from this are that class differences do exist, although the precise mechanisms that generate them are not known. Moreover, they are moderated in that they tend to manifest themselves only when issues are politicized. Lastly, the greatest differences manifest themselves in the NDP and the Liberal Party.

There is a long trail of empirical evidence that suggests that there is a strong middle class basis to environmental movements and activism. Vanliere and Dunlap (1980, 186) summarized a series of studies in the 1970s that examined socio-demographic and ideological correlates of environmental concern and found that education was the variable most closely related to pro-environmental views. Similarly, according to Morrison and Dunlap, the modal member of an environmental organization is a college graduate, holds a professional-level job and has an above-average income (1986, 283). Later, scholars specified this observation by noting that environmental movements were not just heavily "middle class", but were composed of members of particular subsets of the middle classes. Offe (1985) argued that elements of the new middle class (particularly members of the human service professions such as teachers or nurses) formed a pillar of European new social movements, alongside elements of the old middle class and people autonomous of the labour market. Kriesi (1989, 1111) also found an important distinction in the new middle classes between social and cultural specialists and managers and technocrats. Much more recently, Van de Werfhorst and De Graaf (2004) produced more evidence that this class had distinct political views, at-

tributable to communicative skills developed over the course of their fields of study.¹

Eckersley summarized two competing explanations for this class basis within environmental movements: interests and values (Eckersley 1989). Gouldner reflects one strand of the interest-based argument, arguing that the disproportional involvement by social and cultural specialists in new social movement activity is explained by their unique class position. Lacking access to the means of production, unlike members of the bourgeois classes, but also lacking technological expertise (which technocrats in the new middle class possess and for which they can command higher wages and status from the bourgeoisie), protest becomes an expression of alienation (Gouldner 1982, 4, 67). Alternatively, some have argued that this class, or fraction of a class, advocates measures of environmental protection because of a professional interest to expand public sector activity and because their particular skill sets can command greater prestige and compensation there than in the private economy (Lamont 1987, 1504).

Eckersley argues that the two interest-based arguments cannot be sustained. Primarily, she notes that it is implausible to attribute such a degree of alienation to members of well-regarded professions such as journalism, pedagogy or social work. Moreover, she notes that members of this new class tend to be interested and active members of the political community and hardly alienated (213). She also asks how it can be the case that those public sector members of the new class seek increased environmental regulation to expand their power base when the welfare state requires a high degree of economic activity to finance itself, which environmental regulation might jeopardize (214). Rejecting the interest-based argument, Eckersley is left explaining the predominance of middle-class activists in the environmental movement with reference primarily to: a) the impact of higher education, which provides both cognitive capacity, intellectual resources to identify complex, long-term social problems, b) autonomy from the vagaries of the labour market, which allows a certain flexibility in political action and demands and c) their class position in the human services occupations that make them familiar with the vagaries of industrialization (221-222).

While Eckersley is probably correct in rejecting interest-based arguments for the middle class basis of environmental activism, this does not leave class dynamics out of the equation or mean that class differences do not contribute to political conflict. Conflict between classes can be inspired by competing values, just as much as by interests. Lipset identified a pattern long ago, whereby middle classes have more liberal politics on social issues and more conservative attitudes on

1 This mirrors a finding by Guimond et al. (1989) whereby undergraduate students in the humanities and social sciences were more likely to adopt a "systemic" causation to social events while engineering students were much more likely to see "individualist" causes for events.

economic issues, while, for lower and working classes, the situation is supposedly reversed.

Economic liberalism refers to the conventional issues concerning redistribution of income, status, and power among the classes. The poorer everywhere are more liberal or leftist on such issues. On the other hand, when liberalism is defined in non-economic terms so as to support, for example, civil rights for political dissidents, civil rights for ethnic and racial minorities, internationalist foreign policies, and liberal immigration legislation – the correlation is reversed (Lipset 1963, 454).

According to this view, voters face cross-pressures. Bourgeois and upper class voters tend to have socially liberal, but economically conservative views, while working class voters tend to have socially conservative but economically liberal views. Thus, working class voters have a pressing interest in voting for parties of the left to ensure a degree of redistribution of wealth, but culturally conservative views about respect for authority and tradition and a high priority on law and order make them potential supporters for conservative parties, even in the face of their own material interests.²

Thus, while there is a long line of research examining the class basis of Lipset's distinction between social and economic views (Gouldner 1979; Offe 1985; Kriesi 1989; Houtman 2003; Van de Werfthorst and de Graaf 2004; Achterberg 2006), this research has not examined environmental issues in this context. Mostly, environmental concerns are usually lumped in with the broader issues of cultural or social issues. However, there are important reasons to think that they would be very different. Despite the distinct middle class basis to environmental movements,

2 While there is evidence that class positions are responsible for their economic views, the same cannot be said for their social views. Working class people, for example, are not socially conservative because they occupy weak positions in the labour market, but because they lack educational experience and cultural capital. It is for this reason that when income, not education, is used as a proxy for class, studies can show evidence of a relationship between class and economic values without showing a relationship between class and social values (Houtman 2003, 98). Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu, Houtman concludes that the occupational categories that display the patterns noted above (working class authoritarianism but economic liberalism) do not constitute "classes" in the strict sense. Instead, analysts have confused occupational groups with different levels of cultural capital for classes acting out of their class position. For the purposes of this essay here, we retain the term "class" and group survey respondents based on their membership in well-defined class categories, while conceding that this combines different possible causal mechanisms including, dependence on hourly wages versus salaries, supervisory authority, education or cultural capital. The ongoing debate about whether class dynamics drive "working class" authoritarianism and whether or not social and cultural specialists constitute a "class" in the strict sense will not be resolved here; the terms and occupational categories will be used here as an entry-way into the debate about divisions between the working and middle classes over environmental attitudes.

environmental problems actually have a material base to them in that they can threaten the sustainability of communities and individual physical health, regardless of their class position.

Indeed, often it is precisely workers and poor people who face the brunt of economic degradation. The oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in the summer of 2010 demonstrates this point in spades. The tourism and fishing industry in an entire region was devastated because of the environmental catastrophe and, even worse, 11 workers lost their lives in the explosion on the Deep Horizon drilling rig. One finding that bears on this is from Achterberg (2006) who found partial evidence that as environmental issues increase in salience, skilled manual workers, routine non-manual workers and the self-employed were all more likely to vote for a left-wing party, while unskilled manual workers were more likely to vote for a right-wing party. This reflects *partial* evidence that the increasing salience of environmental issues exacerbates the red-green divide; it seems to drive working class voters (at least with the least skills) to vote against their own economic interests and for conservative parties (Achterberg 2006, 249).

In the next section, we test three hypotheses. First, we examine whether or not there are class differences in terms of the salience of environmental problems. Second, we explore whether or not social and cultural specialists are at all distinct from their colleagues in the other middle classes. Third, we test whether any observable differences pose any particular problems for the political parties.

Methodology

This paper draws on public opinion data from the 2006, 2008 and 2011 Canada Election Studies (CES). There are four sets of questions in these surveys that can be used to examine environmental attitudes. First, in each survey, respondents were asked an open-ended question as to what the most important problem in Canada was. This allows us to examine whether there is a class distinction in the salience of the environment as an issue. Second, respondents were asked a series of Likert-scale questions that asked them to strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree. Five were selected to measure respondents' social ideology: a) "Newer lifestyles are contributing to the breakdown of society", b) "This country would have many fewer problems if there were more emphasis on traditional family values", c) "The world is always changing and we should adapt our view of moral behaviour to these changes", d) "We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country", and e) "Only people who are legally married should have children". By contrast, three were selected to measure respondents' economic views: a) "Overall, free trade with the U.S. has been good for the Canadian economy", b) "If people can't find work in the region they live in, they should move to where the jobs are", and c) "How much should be done to reduce the gap between

rich and poor in Canada? Much more? Somewhat more? About the same? Somewhat less? Much less?". Each of these questions was rescaled from 0 to 1 with 0 indicating the most liberal response possible and 1 indicating the most conservative response possible.

Fourth and lastly, to assess environmental attitudes, the Canada Election Study has asked participants in each mail-back survey whether they agreed with the statement that "protecting the environment is more important than creating jobs." Answers to this question were recoded from 0–1 so that, consistent with both the economic and social indices, a low-score indicated a more left-wing attitude while a high score indicated a more conservative attitude. It bears emphasizing that this question is clearly formulated in a provocative fashion and presumes precisely what environmental movements seek to question, namely, that economic prosperity and ecological sustainability are incompatible. However, this paper is not primarily interested in the nature of the economics of ecological protection, but in class differences to positions that are part of the current debate. While the Canada Election Study asks numerous questions about social and economic ideology, it only asks one regular question about environmental issues (see above).

However, in addition to this question, the 2008 questionnaire also asked respondents about their views on the carbon tax proposed by the Liberal Party in that election campaign: "The Liberals' carbon tax would harm the Canadian economy."³ While it is usually preferable in public opinion survey research to develop scales to measure latent deeper constructs to counteract the random variation associated with individual questions, this is not possible in this case, as the CES only includes the above three questions that bear on environmental attitudes. It does not make sense to combine respondents' answers to these two questions because they are framed in very different ways. The first (jobs versus the environment) is a very general question without any reference to any contemporary political issue while the second makes an explicit reference to a political party and addressed a hotly debated and politicized issue.

In order to operationalize "social class", this study uses the class schema most closely associated with the sociologist John Goldthorpe (Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portocarero, or EGP, schema) which has become a leading measure of social class in international comparative research (Evans 1996, 1). While the schema basically distinguishes between three categories of workers, self-employed and employees, the great contribution of this categorization is its insistence on capturing class distinctions within different gradations of working classes (skilled versus unskilled labour) as well as the different dynamics associated with the rise of salaried, new classes. Within the three broad categories, classes are distinguished on two key

3 This question was the subject of a wording experiment. Half the respondents were given the question with the words "green shift" and half were asked with the words "carbon tax". The word experiment is not of interest here and so the combined results to both questions are used.

dimensions: the difficulty which employers have in monitoring employees' behaviour and the specificity of training required to do the job. Labour contracts for unskilled labour are low on both dimensions whereas professional service classes such as teachers, nurses or scientists are high on both. The inability to monitor service classes, and the need to motivate them to accomplish tasks tend to lead to employers providing them with more favourable working conditions such as higher pay and more promising career paths.

This paper adopts a 5-class EGP schema with one modification. The five basic classes are salaried professionals, self-employed workers, the routine non-manual workers, managers, and a manual working class of skilled and unskilled labour. In addition to these, we add the social and cultural specialists, building on the research into the political views of fractions of the new middle class by Van de Werfhorst and de Graaf (2004), Kriesi (1989) and Offe (1985) described above in the theoretical framework. These class categories were created using the major categories of the National Occupation Classification schema developed by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (2006).⁴

Results

First, we assess the evolution of the environment as a salient issue since 2006, with *Figure 1* reporting the percentage of respondents listing the environment as the most important issue in the election campaign. Clearly, the environment was most salient in the 2008 election campaign, in which the Liberals placed heavy emphasis on a shift in taxation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The issue receded somewhat in the 2011 election campaign although it was still marginally higher than in the 2004 and 2006 election campaigns.

Figure 2 suggests that the increase in salience in 2008 was broadly-based but primarily driven by social and cultural specialists. During that campaign, 18 percent of that class labelled the environment as the most important issue, while working classes mean respondent, while only six percent of working class respondents said the same. These suggest two findings. First and foremost, this suggests that class *polarization* over whether the importance to be assigned to environmental issues *increases* as the salience increases. Second, this provides initial evidence that social and cultural specialists do, in fact, show different patterns than other members of the old middle class or the managerial class.

4 Those major groups are a product of a cross-classification by economic sector (natural sciences, social sciences, primary extraction, sales and services, manufacturing, etc.) and skill level (on-the-job-training, college or vocational training and university-level training). As such, the class categories to which each respondent in the survey is assigned reflect a mix of educational achievement, income, labour market position and field-of-study.

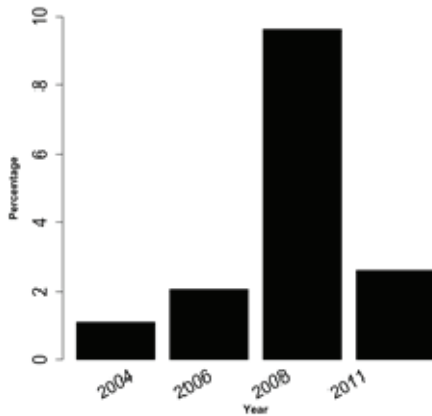


Figure 1
This figure displays the percentage of respondents choosing the environment as the most important problem during the 2004, 2006 and 2008 and 2011 election campaigns.

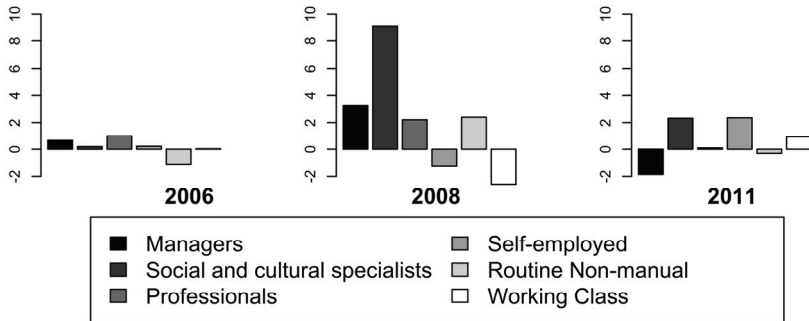


Figure 2
This figure shows the deviation from the total percentage of respondents choosing the environment as the most important problem by social class. From this, it is evident that the increase in salience in the environment was driven largely by increasing concern among the social cultural specialists.

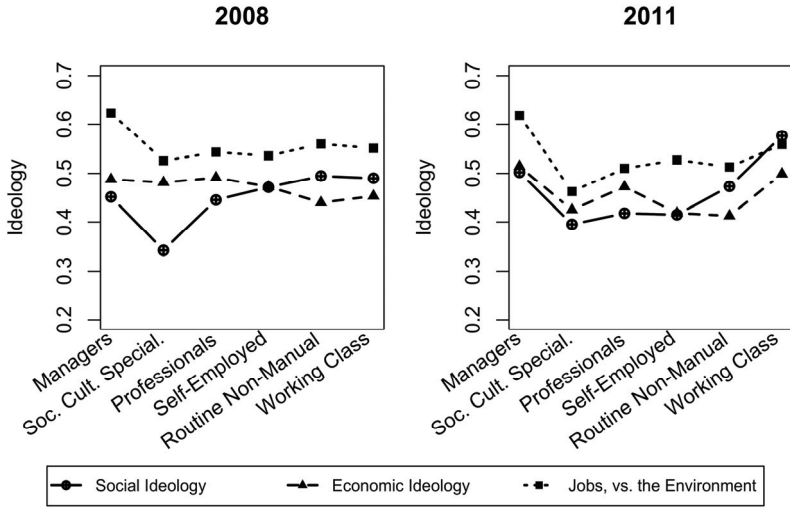


Figure 3
This graph displays social, economic and environmental views from 2008 and 2011 respondents. The liberal positions are scaled to 0 and conservative positions are scaled to 1.

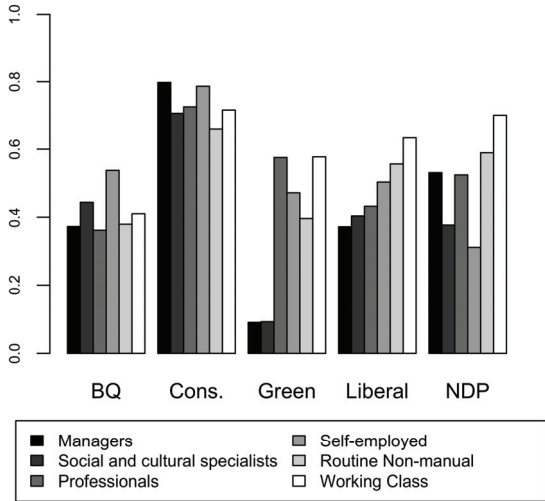


Figure 4
This graph displays social, economic and environmental views from 2008 and 2011 respondents. The liberal positions are scaled to 0 and conservative positions are scaled to 1.

We can also compare how social, economic and environmental views differ by social class. *Figure 3* graphs these differences for both 2008 and 2011. There are three things that stand out. First, just these data reflect longstanding findings that working classes (manual working class and routine non-manual) tend to be more

socially conservative but more economically liberal, while the opposite holds for upper and service classes. In both 2008 and 2011, the working and routine non-manual classes held more conservative social than economic views. Second, social and cultural specialists stand out with sharply more liberal views on social and environmental issues, particularly in 2008. Third and finally, although most respondents held substantially more conservative opinions on the question of protecting the environment at the expense of jobs, the shape of the distribution of opinions follows social views, more than they do economic views. Social and cultural specialists display much more support for environmental protection, while these start to become more conservative, the more one approaches the working class.

While there are real differences in class positions on some environmental questions, we are also interested in whether or not these differences have any relationship with the political party system in Canada. The 2008 election offers an opportunity to examine this question. As noted above, the Liberals put forward a controversial shift in taxation away from income and profits toward the consumption of greenhouse gases. While this was perhaps sensible policy, and even politically courageous, it evoked strong opposition from two other parties. The Conservatives opposed the policy, calling it a “tax on everything”, while the NDP, conceding human-induced climate change was a problem, preferred a policy of capping national greenhouse gas emissions and setting up a market mechanism for the sale and purchase of carbon credits. By contrast, the Greens and the Bloc Québécois supported the carbon tax. At the end of the campaign, the Liberals were reduced to historic lows, while the Conservatives, NDP and Bloc Québécois increased their vote and seat share. Figure 4 shows the interaction of class and party vis-à-vis the Liberal Party carbon tax.

There are three distinct patterns. First, BQ supporters held mostly favourable opinions toward the green shift and did not differentiate by social class. Second, Conservative supporters had a largely unfavourable opinion but also did not differ by social class: opinions were almost uniform. The picture is much different, however, for the remaining three political parties. In each one – the Green Party, the Liberal Party and the NDP – opinions toward the carbon tax differed strongly by social class, with members of upper and service-sector classes supporting it and working classes being more skeptical. The importance of this finding should not be underestimated for two reasons. First, this suggests that the proposal for the carbon tax caused the most internal conflict for the English-Canadian political parties of the centre-left, and not for other political parties. Second, this finding is all the more remarkable because the question included an explicit reference to the fact that it was a Liberal policy, giving even inattentive survey respondents some information they could use to form a response. Even with an explicit reference to a political party, the Liberal and NDP partisan universes were divided by social class. One might have expected

the Liberal universe to have been open to its own party's position. But it appears this did not apply to working class Liberals.⁵

We can extend this analysis and ask how party and class interact in regards to the question asking respondents about the relative importance of protecting jobs or the environment. This presents a very different story. When fitting a model that includes party identification, class and an interaction between the two, only party identification seemed to matter in 2008, with Conservative party supporters strongly opposed to the idea that protecting the environment is more important than creating jobs – regardless of class – and Green Party supporters more open to this idea.

Table 1

	2008	2011
Intercept	0.51*** (0.04)	0.46 (0.05)
Conservative	0.13** (0.04)	0.14 (0.05)
Green	-0.20** (0.06)	-0.29 (0.079)
Liberal	-0.00 (0.04)	-0.05 (0.06)
NDP	-0.02 (0.05)	0.00 (0.07)
Social and Cultural Specialists v. Working class	-0.13 (0.08)	0.06 (0.06)
Conservative* Class	0.13 (0.09)	-0.09 (0.08)
Green* Class	-0.14 (0.13)	0.13 (0.09)
Liberal* Class	0.09 (0.09)	-0.07 (0.07)
NDP* Class	0.14 (0.10)	- -
<i>N</i>	374	266
AIC	20.03	29.47
log <i>L</i>	29.99	21.26

Standard errors in parentheses

† significant at $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

- 5 Party identification has a long history within the study of public opinion as a major driver of attitudes (cf. Zaller 1992; Converse 2006). Asking citizens general questions about policies tends to elicit random responses; asking citizens questions with a reference to a political party provides them with some information that activates a latent and durable party affiliation that many citizens possess. In 2006, 75 percent of Democrats in a public opinion survey tended to believe that the Republican president George W. Bush had a substantial level of influence over retail gas prices (and presumably was simply unwilling to act on them). In 2012, a repeat public opinion survey found exactly the opposite. The vast majority of Republican respondents felt that the Democratic president Barack Obama had influence over retail gas prices (Franklin 2012).

This presents the results of a simple regression model of party affiliation, social class and an interaction between the two on the respondent's agreement with the statement that "protecting the environment is more important than creating the jobs". It tests the hypothesis that social and cultural specialists have significantly different views from the working class. The only substantial differences in opinion were evident in 2008 and were between Conservative and Green Party partisans. No class differences were evident.

Why were NDP and Liberal partisans divided by social class on the question of the Liberal carbon tax in 2008, but not divided on the general question of protecting the environment at the expense of creating jobs? There are likely two answers to this question. First, the question about "jobs and the environment" is posed as an explicit dichotomy; when expressed in such stark terms, even most people who would consider themselves committed to ecological sustainability would hesitate to answer that "protecting the environment is more important than creating jobs". Second, the question contains no partisan reference and is a very general statement, and does not give respondents a lot of information they can use to form a response.

Taken together, these findings presented in Figure 2 which showed how increasing salience of the environment lead to a polarized assessment of whether the environment was the most important issue. People only divide on an issue *when it becomes an issue*. There are class differences about environmental issues in Canada, but they exist in the context of a broad social consensus that would choose "jobs" over "protecting the environment," they manifest themselves on the centre left and they only appear when environmental issues become important.

The 2011 Election And Beyond

As noted above (Figure 1), environmental issues became less important in the 2011 election, even as the Canadian political landscape shifted profoundly. The Green Party elected its first ever Member of Parliament (party leader Elizabeth May in the British Columbia riding of Saanich-Gulf Islands), although its federal vote share dropped from 6.8 percent to 3.91 percent. More profound, however, was the election of a majority Conservative government and the unforeseen rise of the NDP to Official Opposition status. After five years of minority parliaments, the Conservative Party has a much less encumbered hand to implement policies that it wishes.

Since winning its parliamentary majority, initiatives that are going to have serious environmental consequences have been central to the Harper government's agenda. First, the federal government has actively and loudly promoted two controversial pipeline projects: the Keystone pipeline from Alberta to Oklahoma and the Gateway pipeline from Alberta to the West Coast of British Columbia. Both have aroused substantial opposition from environmental groups and political

allies. To support these policy initiatives, the federal government has targeted environmental non-governmental organizations that have received foreign funding, describing them as being “radical” and emphasizing their foreign ties. Simultaneously, close political allies of the Conservative Party launched a highly visible public relations campaign to brand Alberta and Canadian oil as “ethical”, on the grounds that Canadian labour and environmental standards are higher than in other oil-producing countries.

There are good policy reasons why the Conservative government might be so insistent on pursuing these policies: Alberta’s oil and gas industries contribute substantial amounts to the national economy in terms of income, profits and jobs. There is another reason, why the government is so keen to make these issues a priority and the analysis presented in Figure 4 may bear on this: In 2008, the Conservative Party’s base of supporters were much more united in their opposition to the Liberal carbon tax than were the supporters of any other federalist party.

With this in mind, the recent observations made by one political observer seem prescient, namely that the Prime Minister’s recent trip to China to boost oil and natural resource exports was primarily about domestic politics. In a recent column, columnist Paul Wells noted that the Conservatives had taken note of the NDP’s consistent record of opposition to resource development projects with some satisfaction. That column quoted the federal Minister of Natural Resources, Joe Oliver, describing the looming battles over the Keystone and Gateway pipelines as follows: “If I have to have a battle, it’s a battle I would relish, because we’ve got, in our opinion, overwhelming facts on our side. I just think the NDP position is a bit fringe, actually. *I think that their base is divided on it*” (quoted in Wells, 2012b, emphasis by author).

To date, the new leader of the NDP, Thomas Mulcair, has tried to position himself carefully in regard to developments in Alberta’s oil sands. In 2010, he wrote the foreword to a book critical of the oil sands called *Tar Sands: Dirty Oil and the Future of a Continent* (Nikiforuk 2010). But in other fora, such as during his campaign for the leadership of the NDP and just after, he has been diligent in criticizing the developments in the oil sands on the grounds that their rapid development has contributed to “Dutch Disease” and to the hollowing out of central Canada’s manufacturing sector, rather than by emphasizing any environmental degradation.⁶ In one NDP leadership debate, he said: “It would be senseless to stop

6 “Dutch disease” is a macroeconomic consequence of sudden resource booms in a domestic economy. As external capital floods into an economy to develop the infrastructure necessary to export raw commodities, a country’s currency is driven up in value. This makes that country’s manufactured goods more expensive and less competitive, hollowing out a country’s industrial capacity. It draws its name from Holland’s experience with an oil boom in the 1970s, and it is alleged that Canada is currently experiencing this phenomenon. For an overview of this debate, see Beine et al. (2012) and Gordon (2012).

developing the oil sands, but we should stop subsidizing them and we should internalize the carbon cost" (Mulcair quoted in Wells, 2012a).

This careful positioning allows Mulcair and the NDP to be simultaneously in favour of moderate oil sands developments and further regulation of the sector on the grounds that such an approach would *benefit* the manufacturing sector. Whether it is actually the case that the uncontrolled development of the oil sands has contributed to the dramatic job losses in central Canada's manufacturing sector is debated by economists. However, the politics of the position are quite clear: the party can oppose oilsands expansion and pipeline development not on ecological grounds (which might alienate some of its working class base) but on *economic* grounds, arguing to its supporters that oilsands and pipeline expansion are harming its employment opportunities. This could allow the NDP to broker a compromise position between the class segments of its base.

Conclusion

There are class differences to environmental opinions in Canada, and these reflect a combination of level of education, field of study and market position. By carving out social and cultural specialists from the other salaried classes, we were able to replicate findings from other scholars (van de Werfthorst and de Graaf 2004; Kriesi 1989; Offe 1985) who found that environmental and other new social movements had bases in this particular nexus of occupations. None of this means that this group holds more environmentally liberal opinions because it is in their interest to do so; instead, it likely reflects Eckersley's observations about these opinions being the result of autonomy from the public sector and of values inculcated through higher education. The source of these particular values that is common to this class was not tested here and is not relevant to the overall observation that the difference in values (whatever the source) will contribute to political conflicts; values can inculcate conflict just as much as interests do.

It is crucial to note, however, that these class differences interact with the political party system in crucial ways. Perhaps most importantly, divisions emerge only as environmental issues rise on the agenda. When that happens, the foregoing analysis suggests that it presents the most difficulties for the NDP and the Liberals. For this reason, the red-green divide will most likely be manifest itself in terms of intra-party, rather than inter-party, conflict. We can also expect the Conservatives to capitalize on this division within the Liberal and NDP partisan universes and to emphasize a "jobs versus the environment" narrative, particularly on issues such as the construction of the Gateway and Keystone pipelines. By contrast, the NDP will either attempt to shirk these issues or strenuously find a way to frame the issue such that the cross-class tensions that exist will be manageable.

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