

Queering Representation
LGBTQ People and Electoral Politics in Canada

Edited by Manon Tremblay



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To all LGBTQ people who feel that representation is a foreign concept.

Contents

List of Figures and Tables / ix

Foreword / xi

Rev. Dr. Cheri DiNovo

Acknowledgments / xiii

Introduction / 3

Manon Tremblay

PART 1: LGBTQ VOTERS

1 Profile of the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Electorate in Canada / 51

Andrea M.L. Perrella, Steven D. Brown, and Barry Kay

2 Winning as a Woman/Winning as a Lesbian: Voter Attitudes toward Kathleen Wynne in the 2014 Ontario Election / 80

Joanna Everitt and Tracey Raney

3 Media Framing of Lesbian and Gay Politicians: Is Sexual Mediation at Work? / 102

Mireille Lalancette and Manon Tremblay

4 Electing LGBT Representatives and the Voting System in Canada / 124

Dennis Pilon

PART 2: LGBTQ REPRESENTATIVES

5 LGBT Groups and the Canadian Conservative Movement: A New Relationship? / 157

Frédéric Boily and Ève Robidoux-Descary

- 6 Liberalism and the Protection of LGBT Rights in Canada / 179
Brooke Jeffrey
- 7 A True Match? The Federal New Democratic Party and LGBTQ Communities and Politics / 201
Alexa DeGagne
- 8 Representation: The Case of LGBTQ People / 220
Manon Tremblay
- 9 Pathway to Office: The Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, and Election of LGBT Candidates / 240
Joanna Everitt, Manon Tremblay, and Angelia Wagner
- 10 LGBTQ Perspectives on Political Candidacy in Canada / 259
Angelia Wagner
- 11 Out to Win: The ProudPolitics Approach to LGBTQ Electoralism / 279
Curtis Atkins
- 12 LGBT Place Management: Representative Politics and Toronto's Gay Village / 298
Catherine J. Nash and Andrew Gorman-Murray
- Afterword: The Champion / 314
Graeme Truelove
- Contributors / 329
- Index / 334

Figures and Tables

Figures

- 1.1 LGB support for ROC federal parties in the 2006, 2008, 2011, and 2015 Canadian elections / 66
- 1.2 LGB support for Quebec federal parties in the 2006, 2008, 2011, and 2015 Canadian elections / 66
- 1.3 LGB male-female vote differentials, outside Quebec / 67
- 1.4 LGB male-female vote differentials, Quebec only / 68

Tables

- 1.1 A comparative socio-demographic profile by sexual orientation and gender / 56
- 1.2 A comparative electoral engagement profile by sexual orientation and gender / 59
- 1.3 Regression of electoral engagement variables on LGB membership and socio-demographic background variables / 60
- 1.4 Regression of electoral engagement variables on LGB membership and socio-demographic background variables, with interactions / 61
- 1.5 Summary of views on social and political issues, by sexual orientation and gender, 2006–15 / 63
- 1.6 Sexual orientation and vote choice, outside Quebec / 69
- 1.7 Sexual orientation and vote choice, Quebec / 70
- 1.8 Sexual orientation and vote choice, with interactive terms, outside Quebec / 71
- 1.9 Sexual orientation and vote choice, with interactive terms, in Quebec / 72
- 2.1 Mean likeability scores for party leaders (standard deviation) / 86
- 2.2 Mean ratings of leadership traits and issue competencies / 87
- 2.3 Mean ratings of traits and issue competencies (standard deviation) by respondent's sex / 89
- 2.4 Determinants of trait attributes and issue ownership for Kathleen Wynne / 91
- 4.1 Percentage of women's representation in lower houses / 128

- 4.2 LGBT representation by voting system / 133
- 4.3 Numbers of LGBT representatives by country and year / 134
- 4.4 Proportions of LGBT representatives by country and year / 135
- 4.5 Federal LGBT representation in Canada, 1979–2015 / 140
- 9.1 Number of out LGBT federal candidates by party and election year, 2004–15 / 248
- 9.2 Number of out LGBT provincial/territorial candidates by party / 249
- 9.3 Candidate status and margins of victory at first election / 253

Foreword

QUEERING REPRESENTATION: LGBTQ People and Electoral Politics in Canada is a groundbreaking compendium. So very little is known about LGBTQ2S people's involvement in Canadian electoral politics, and so few scholarly works are concerned with our participation.

Of course, one could argue that political representation is a necessity for any minority, including LGBTQ2S people, and that although comparisons can be made with women's involvement or that of racialized minorities, the differences are worth exploring. To that end, *Queering Representation* has assembled a wealth of analytic data, as well as some memorable profiles of LGBTQ2S ground-breakers such as Kathleen Wynne, Kristyn Wong-Tam, and Svend Robinson.

In these pages, the major political parties are critically examined for their contribution or lack of contribution to LGBTQ2S representation, as are their nomination processes and electoral and policy successes. Some chapters confirm long-held assumptions about the involvement of LGBTQ people in politics – that we tend toward the progressive left and away from the conservative right, and that we're less religious than many other Canadians. However, some chapters show that what might intuitively seem valid can be challenged. The jury appears to be out on whether a proportional representation system automatically results in more diversity where we're concerned. And the number of out LGBTQ Tories is increasing. It's possible to be both Conservative and queer. The intersection of partisanship and identity is fascinating.

Historically, all political parties have displayed homo-, bi-, and transphobia, and though some have a better track record than others, none can claim immunity. I remember my own father, not knowing at the time that I identified as queer/bisexual, telling me that Pierre Trudeau's cabinet was "full of homosexuals." He was a passionate NDP-er and unionist, and his words were not intended as a compliment.

This book also traces certain policy changes, such as defining trans rights as human rights (in Ontario in 2012 and federally in 2015) and the legalization of same-sex marriage. We're still waiting for the federal government to act on other issues. In 2015, Ontario banned conversion therapy for minors, but a number of provinces have yet to follow suit. The same is true for Ottawa. Parental rights depend on where you live. British Columbia shines here, followed by Ontario,

but lesbian and trans parents in other provinces may be obliged to adopt their own children. Clearly, there's still a great deal of work to be done. *Queering Representation* points to that fact and to the ongoing struggle with representation of the queer community. One example, ProudPolitics, attempts, as Equal Voice does for women, to assist LGBTQ people to run and to win. ProudPolitics challenges aren't minimized. For LGBTQ people, it's still difficult to get nominated and then win, anywhere.

Success in representation is also debated in these pages. Does success have to do with being out, proud, and ardent in championing LGBTQ policy change? Or is it enough simply to have LGBTQ candidates win their seats? In terms of getting elected, does heteronormativity help, even for LGBTQ persons?

Like all explorations, this volume raises as many questions as it answers, which is one of its strengths. How do we represent being LGBTQ politically? What about the intersectional issues, being black, two-spirited, intersex? Should we aim simply to increase the numbers elected and even their degree of (out)spokenness, or should we set our sights on something higher, perhaps something more revolutionary – a non-binary and fluid political presence?

Finally, this is an important book and a pioneering one. Read this and keep on queerying.

Reverend Dr. Cheri DiNovo

(The only woman to sign “We Demand” in 1971, Cheri DiNovo performed the first legalized same-sex marriage in Canada. During her eleven years as a member of the Ontario Legislative Assembly, she managed to have more LGBTQ legislation passed than anyone in Canadian history. This included Toby's Law, which added trans rights to the Ontario Human Rights Code, a first in a major North American jurisdiction; banning conversion therapy for Ontario minors; achieving parental equality for lesbian and trans parents, who are no longer required to adopt their own children; and establishing the Trans Day of Remembrance, on November 20, during which members of the legislature stand and observe a minute of silence.)

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