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# The gender gap in political knowledge: a comparison of political knowledge levels in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain

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THE GENDER GAP IN POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE:  
A COMPARISON OF POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE LEVELS IN THE UNITED  
STATES, CANADA, AND GREAT BRITAIN

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
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requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

In

The Department of Political Science

by  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Previous research indicates that there is a gender gap in political knowledge. I examine whether the gender gap exists in the United States and what the significant determining variables are aside from gender. I also examine whether the gender gap exists in other countries and whether the variables that are significant in the United States are significant in other countries. I examine political knowledge levels in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain. By utilizing crosstabulations and multiple regression models, I find that a gender gap does exist in the United States as well as in Canada and Great Britain. Many of the variables that are significant in the United States are significant in the other countries as well. However, even controlling for the effects of the other independent variables, gender still has a negative, significant effect on political knowledge.

## INTRODUCTION

The gender gap in political knowledge poses an interesting question that is much studied, yet there is still no definitive answer as to why men seem to know more about politics than women. This knowledge gap exists despite the fact that women have similar education levels as men. In this thesis I examine political knowledge levels in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain in order to see if the gender gap has the same effect in countries that are similar in background and in cultural and economic ties, but that are at the same time culturally and institutionally different enough to supply alternative explanations of the gender gap. I hypothesize that in each country men will know more than women, but the size of the gap will depend on the particular knowledge questions asked. I also hypothesize that the gap will exist for each of the countries examined, but the gap will vary across countries.

Political knowledge has significant implications, not only for policy preferences (Alvarez and McCaffery, 2000), but also for democratic participation, subsequent representation in democracies (Verba, Schlozman, and Burns, 1997), and the quality of decision making. If one group of individuals is not as knowledgeable as another the chances of that group being politically represented or active are slim. Low knowledge individuals are also more likely to make lower quality decisions while those with higher levels of political knowledge are more likely to make higher quality decisions. This is not to say that women cannot participate politically at all.

Previous studies have shown that men and women approach the political world differently. Men tend to focus on pocketbook or financial considerations while women, in general, care more about social concerns. Women are very active voters, often going out in larger numbers to vote than men. It can be argued that women vote based on the character or personality of the candidate and not necessarily on the candidate's record or policies. This is not a wrong way to go about voting; however, if an individual does not even know the basic facts about a political

figure, i.e. the office that Al Gore holds, then how can they be expected to know his/her policies or even his/her character? The questions used to measure political knowledge in this thesis mostly consist of surveillance questions. This means that they are questions that concern what is going on in the current political world focusing particularly on political figures. As these figures change it is necessary to watch the political scene to observe who replaces the old figures. Knowledge of this sort requires surveillance which demands a certain level of attention and absorption of what is going on in the political world. The different types of political knowledge will be examined later on.

In this thesis I investigate the various factors that account for the gender gap and more importantly whether those factors have the same affects in the different countries studied. My findings indicate that the gender gap is something common to many countries, as found in the three countries I examine. The gender gap is also characterized by certain independent variables, the effects of which hold true in all the countries. My findings support previous knowledge and at the same time point the study of the gender gap in new directions. This thesis does not claim to be the definitive study on the gender gap, but rather a step along the way to solving the problem of the gender gap in political knowledge.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### **Policy Preferences and Partisanship**

Traditionally the gender gap refers to the gap between men and women and their policy preferences and partisan identification. Although this is not directly related to the issue at hand, it provides interesting background on the differences between men and women in other areas of political activity. Research examining gender differences in regard to policy preferences (Alvarez and McCaffery 2000; Haas and Wilson 2004; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986) generally tends to find women on the liberal side of the political spectrum focusing on social spending and social services. Men tend to be more fiscally minded. Shapiro and Mahajan (1986, 53) describe women's policy concerns to be a mixture of economic liberalism, government activism and traditional social conservatism with some social liberalism. Both Alvarez and McCaffery (2000) and Haas and Wilson (2004) stress the importance of looking at how the issues affect men and women as an explanation of the different policy preferences.

As a result of more compassionate policy preferences women are generally thought of as being drawn more to the Democratic Party as opposed to men who find their fiscal preferences supported by Republicans. However, women have not been flocking to the Democratic Party. Rather men have been moving more rapidly away from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party (Wirls 1986; Norrander 1999; Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999). It is this uneven shift in party make-up that has caused more women to be Democrats than men. However, this difference is important because women feel that their concerns and interests are best represented by Democrats. Here the gender gap is caused by men moving more quickly away from the Democratic Party than women. The gender gap in this area demonstrates that men and women have different attitudes about politics and place different salience levels on issues. These differences are manifested in their political affiliations and politicians then craft their campaigns to whichever camp they are trying most to attract (Alvarez and McCaffery 2000).



The gender gap has recently gained attention in a new area separate from, yet related to the policy and party identification gap. This new area examines the differences in political knowledge levels between men and women. Political knowledge is often the basis for political participation, policy preferences, and decision making, therefore any differences found between men and women are helpful in understanding what men and women know and how that informs the rest of their political lives.

### **The Gender Gap and Political Knowledge**

Rapoport (1981) examines some of the differences between the willingness of men and women to answer political knowledge questions. He argues that willingness to express political views requires a certain level of subjective political competence. Subjective political knowledge is derived from objective political knowledge. Intuitively this makes sense. If one is confident in their knowledge of objective facts then he/she will be more confident in expressing subjective opinions. His conclusion is that women need to have more objective knowledge to overcome their lower subjective knowledge levels. Male knowledge levels are thus the standard and women's lack of subjective/objective knowledge and confidence is the cause of the gender gap.

Elisabeth Gidengal challenges this argument and suggests that it is not women's socialized reticence that causes the gender gap, but men's willingness to offer opinions even if they do not necessarily know the answer. Gidengal offers an alternative explanation. She suggests that men's higher levels of opinion expression are really masking a lack of political opinions. She implies that men and women fall prey to the social desirability theory, which states that individuals will answer according to how society thinks they should answer. This is particularly relevant when discussing the gender gap. Men may think they have to answer political questions because traditionally the political arena is reserved for men. Women may be more hesitant or willing to answer "don't know" because they are not supposed to be politically knowledgeable. Gidengal however suggests that women may offer "don't know" responses more than men, but when they do express opinions they are more informed and more confident of their answers. In

other words, women may not feel pressure to answer political knowledge questions, especially while being interviewed by a woman, while men may feel pressure. Women with feminist leanings, on the other hand, would be expected to answer just as much as men and be just as correct in their answers. These women would not subscribe to the idea that women cannot and should not learn about politics. Therefore, they could be expected to give substantive answers more often than women who do not hold that point of view.

Social desirability is especially relevant when interviewer effects are taken into consideration (Banducci 2000; Davis and Silver, 2003). Davis and Silver (2003) examine the stereotype threat in the context of race of interviewer affecting the respondents' answers to political knowledge questions. They find that black respondents do not answer as many questions when the interviewer is white as when the interviewer is black. This idea of the interviewer greatly affecting the respondent can be applied to studying the gender gap. Banducci does just this and finds that both men and women exhibit conforming behavior with men overestimating political interest and women underestimating political interest. A potential problem arises in the fact that there are more female interviewers than male. With more female than male interviewers the results could possibly be skewed to represent men as having more political knowledge than women while women would be represented as having less political knowledge than men. However, even if this is not a problem the fact still remains that the gender of the interviewer greatly affects how respondents answer questions particularly those relating to politics.

Researchers have also examined how individuals gather their information, as this can have an impact on how they learn. Putnam (1995) presents the idea of social capital, suggesting that social ties or associations have an impact on what people learn. He argues that social capital allows political information to spread because people gathering in social situations provide an opportunity for political conversation to take place. Gidengal et al. (2003) question this assumption by arguing that people are not necessarily going to talk about politics when they are in social situations. They test Putnam's theory and find that the type of social network is more

important than the number of organizations belonged to. At first this may seem strange. If political knowledge is gained by conversing with other people then one would want to belong to as many groups as one could. Unfortunately, Banducci finds that women's associational involvements tend to isolate them because they are often homogeneous and family or community oriented. Men, on the other hand, have more diverse and instrumental networks. They are more heterogeneous and work based so men are exposed to a variety of individuals often with conflicting viewpoints while women often do not have that benefit. She concludes that women will only begin to close the gap if they belong to instrumental organizations and if they participate in more political discussion.

Once men and women engage in political discussion and receive political information, how they use that information is significant. Kenski and Jamieson (2001) study the 2000 presidential campaign and the effect of information presented in that campaign. They examine the online processing theory which proposes that women tally information and then they forget it while men record the information and the tally. However, as the election got closer the gap in knowledge decreased. This suggests that women become more interested as issues that are more relevant to them are presented. Jamieson (2000) suggests that women have cognitive strategies that are different from men's and so are able to arrive at decisions in a short amount of time. She also finds that women retain political information long enough to determine if it is consistent with their vote preferences. If it is they retain it, but if it is not they discard it. Kenski and Jamieson also find that education plays a significant role in information retention. Information campaigns, like during a presidential election, are beneficial to all citizens because so much information is being provided; however, those who are more educated learn more than uneducated individuals because they already have the skills necessary to understand and process political information.

The gender gap also applies to other areas and is not just limited to political knowledge. Mondak and Canache (2003) investigate cross-national differences and differences between men and women with regards to knowledge levels of science and the environment. Although they do

not study political knowledge their findings pose the interesting question of whether their study can be applied to a cross-national approach to studying the gender gap in political knowledge. They find that cross-nationally there is a lot of variation between the different countries they examined, but the gender gap was consistent across the different countries with men outscoring women. They find that men are more knowledgeable about science and the environment, but they were just as likely to be uninformed. This is somewhat confusing. They propose that men may only appear to be more knowledgeable, but that the problem of the gender gap is really rooted in measurement. They advocate not offering the “don’t know” option as way of not contaminating knowledge scores. The question of “don’t know” responses and measuring political knowledge will be addressed in the following section. Whether “don’t know” responses should be encouraged or discouraged is an interesting question and one that needs to be discussed and researched because if political knowledge is not being accurately captured then the results achieved have the strong possibility of being contaminated perhaps exaggerating the gender gap itself.

The gender gap is interesting in light of the advances both socially and politically that women have made in the last forty years. Women are now as educated, if not more so, than men; they vote more than men in national elections, and they hold more political offices than they used to (Delli Carpini and Fuchs, 1993). Yet still the gender gap in political knowledge remains. Bennett and Bennett (1989) examine political interest in men and women and find that, even though women vote more than men, they remain less informed and less interested. Perhaps, one reason that there is a gender gap is because women are just not as politically interested as men. If there is no interest then there will be no motivation to become more informed and more active on levels other than voting. Bennett and Bennett find that political dispositions and education are important determinants of political interest. What are the political dispositions of men and women? These authors suggest that duty motivates women while interest motivates men. This helps explain why women vote, but why they do not engage in other political activities as much

as men. Voting is the basic political activity in this country and many people feel it is their duty to vote while other political activities such as working on campaigns, donating money, or attending political rallies are above and beyond the duty of the average citizen. Plus, these other activities often call for specific skills or resources in which women may be disadvantaged (Verba, Schlozman, and Burns 1997).

Bennett and Bennett (1989) also discover that increased education will not change women's ideas regarding their ability to comprehend and participate politically. They argue that the substance of education must be changed before women will develop the confidence they need to close the gender gap. The role of education is vitally important and is always included in statistical analysis. I also include education because formal education helps to provide individuals with skills that are necessary in the political world (Verba, Schlozman, and Burns 1997).

### **Measuring Political Knowledge**

As already seen in the previous discussion how political knowledge is measured, both in the questions asked and the responses offered, is significant because if the measurements are not accurate then the results will not be accurate. In this section two questions will be addressed. The first is the question of whether to group "don't know" responses with incorrect responses. The second is the question of what constitutes political knowledge, i.e. factual, surveillance, or historical knowledge or a combination of any or all of these areas. Whichever the area that is chosen to study political knowledge it is important that the choices are clearly presented and explained so that what exactly is being captured is understood.

The Don't Know Problem. The problem of "don't know" responses is a well known one and has been addressed by many researchers (Mondak 1999; Jamieson 2000; Sanchez and Morchio 1992; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986). Mondak (1999) argues that "don't know" and incorrect answers should not be grouped together because they do not act in the same way. Individuals may be informed, uninformed, and partially informed. These are not differences without distinctions. Individuals who are uninformed will give incorrect answers while those who

are partially informed will sometimes give correct and sometimes incorrect answers. Mondak argues that when these distinctions are not made there is a loss of meaning. Those who are completely uninformed are not attentive to politics and therefore do not understand and cannot process what is going on. Those who are partially informed are attentive to a certain degree and partially process political activities.

Another aspect that must be taken into account is the fact that political knowledge has the potential of tapping into personal characteristics (Jamieson 2000; Mondak 1999; Oyserman et al). Giving a “don’t know” response could mean the respondent truly does not know the answer or it could mean that the respondent does not have enough confidence to guess or that the respondent does have a good idea, but is afraid of looking ignorant if they are wrong. There is a strong case made for keeping “don’t know” and incorrect answers separate so that the “purest” observations can be made.

Defining Political Knowledge. The second question that needs to be addressed is how to define political knowledge. Political knowledge can be measured in different ways. Measurements include factual, surveillance, textbook or civic, on the national level or on the state and local level (Jennings 1996; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1991; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1993; McAllister 2001; Nadeau and Niemi 1995). Factual measurements include questions concerning processes of government; surveillance questions cover current office holders, while textbook or civic class questions concern historical figures as well as processes of government. In this way factual and textbook knowledge cover facts that are taught while surveillance knowledge tests political attentiveness and understanding. Delli Carpini and Keeter (1991) for example find that taught facts remain relatively stable over the years while knowledge of surveillance facts declined over time. Conversely, Jennings (1996) finds that the “forgetting curve” comes into play with younger people knowing more textbook knowledge than their parents, but as they age the gap narrows.

Delli Carpini and Keeter (1993) set out to find and test a reasonably good measure of political knowledge. To do this they construct their own survey and they find that measures of national political knowledge in one domain, e.g. surveillance knowledge, provide a good measure of overall knowledge about national politics. Although all categories do not need to be included to accurately capture the political knowledge of respondents, the type of measurement must be clearly understood and explained because all are not equal (McAllister 2001, Jennings 1996).

### **The Media and Political Knowledge**

An aspect that I expect to have an impact on the gender gap and political knowledge is the media use of respondents. Norris (2000) finds that media use does affect knowledge even controlling for education and interest. Watching the news or reading a newspaper increases exposure to political events and can increase knowledge. Traditionally, individuals who read newspapers have higher levels of political knowledge than those who receive information only through television news because news that is read seems to be retained more easily than news that is heard or seen on television. In my models I also include a variable measuring whether the respondent listens to the radio and if so how often. I expect this variable to have negative or at least non-significant effects on political knowledge, because many people listen to the radio but the amount of political information they receive is most likely minimal. Norris does not explicitly examine the different effects, but she finds knowledge levels are roughly similar across the different media outlets. She examines the effect of the media on Europeans' knowledge of various issues ranging from economic to social issues. Although not strictly focusing on political issues she finds that news exposure results in an increase of knowledge.

Genova and Greenberg (1979) also find a correlation between political interest, media usage and political knowledge. Those who are more politically interested and/or educated are more likely to watch the news or read a newspaper. This potential bias is acknowledged by Norris (2000) and it is important to realize that other factors like political interest could actually be capturing the political knowledge that is being measured. However, media usage is an important

variable to include in analysis measuring political knowledge, not only because it is frequently used in the research in this area, but also because most individuals receive their information from television news or newspapers. Thus the media becomes an integral part of whether political knowledge increases or decreases.



## THEORY AND METHODS

Why do political scientists care about the gender gap? What does it matter if women tend to have less political knowledge than men? The theory that drives this research in the gender gap is democratic theory. What are the implications for democracy if one group is less knowledgeable, less active, and as a result, underrepresented? Politicians pay more attention to those who are active than to those who are not. Therefore, those who are active have a better chance than those who are not of having their concerns heard and dealt with. The question that may be posed here is what does this have to do with political knowledge? Political knowledge in unison with other skills that one learns, in part, in school help individuals have the confidence and tools they need to have their voices heard. The danger of women being less politically informed than men lies in the fact that they will not be as equipped to present their concerns and voice their opinions.

The issue of political knowledge and democracy has been addressed by several authors (Claibourne and Sapiro 2001; Verba, Schlozman, and Burns 1997; Conover, Searing, and Crewe 2002). Claibourne and Sapiro (2001) ask how women fit into the norms and practices of democratic politics. By examining a variety of democratic nations, both old and new, they find that women are generally satisfied with democracy. Conover, Searing and Crewe (2002) examine the benefits of political discussion and deliberation. They argue that deliberation is a better form of communication than discussion because it implies that various views are presented and thoughtfully considered by all. For the authors, deliberation “should relate to matters of public concern, issues dealing with the common good, and should consist of arguments employing ‘public reason’” (Conover, Searing, and Crewe 2002, 26). Political discussion does not necessarily concern the public good and implies a more casual setting where various conflicting issues are not necessarily presented and thought about. Deliberation also implies a careful analysis of all the different options while discussion implies a more limited range of topics and

concerns. However, they realize that deliberation is the ideal and discussion is the reality. They argue that democratic theory places a premium on contested discussions. In a democracy everyone is entitled to their own opinions so fruitful discussion will have a representative sample of those various opinions. Political discussion offers everyone a chance to express their opinions and listen to other opinions. Deliberation and discussion might more directly relate to democracy, but they also have implications for the gender gap as Conover, Searing, and Crewe (2002) find. Although no one expects that a consensus will be achieved through political discussion many people think they can learn something from other people's views. If nothing else, it gives individuals a chance to debate, argue their point of view, and try to convert others to their way of thinking knowing that everyone is free to think what they want.

Conover, Searing, and Crewe (2002) find that Americans are more open to political discussion than the British and that public discussion will not happen unless private discussion first takes place. They also find that the setting matters with people being more hesitant to discuss politics in bars or with people they do not know. "Women, the old and the poor are consistently underrepresented among high discussants and over-represented among the low discussants for both private and public discussion" (Conover, Searing, and Crewe 2002, 43). I hypothesize that this under-representation among high discussants is due, in part, to the fact that women tend to have less political knowledge than men. This results in a lack of confidence and so women are left out of political discussion. Other factors are used to explain this such as the socialization theory or women's personal characteristics; however, I am focusing on what causes women to have less political knowledge with the idea that when that is identified it can be remedied.

### **Hypotheses and Methods**

In this thesis I address two questions. The first is whether men have more political knowledge than women and what the determining variables are. The second is whether the gender gap remains exists in other countries. My first hypothesis is that men will have greater political knowledge than women. This is consistent with previous research (Garand, Guynan, and Founet

2004; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1993; Mondak and Canache (2003); Mondak 1999; and Delli Carpini and Keeter 1991). I expect men to have greater political knowledge than women. My second hypothesis is that the gender gap in political knowledge will vary across the United States, Canada, and Great Britain.

The main dependent variable is political knowledge. Because I use five surveys from three separate countries, the dependent variable is measured differently for each survey. Each survey has several knowledge variables. First, I code each variable -1=incorrect, 0=don't know, and 1=correct. This allows estimation of crosstabulations for each knowledge item with gender to see the distribution of answers among men and women. Then, I create a dummy variable for each knowledge item coding them 1=correct and 0=other. Dummy variables allow the knowledge items to be summed together to form an additive knowledge scale. I do this for each data set. The knowledge scale is used as the dependent variable in the regression models as well as being estimated in a crosstabulation with gender to examine the percentage of correct responses for men and women in each survey.

Political knowledge is measured by knowledge of four items in the 1996 National Election Study. The four items are knowledge of the offices of Newt Gingrich, Al Gore, William Rehnquist, and Boris Yeltsin. This is a measure of what is termed "surveillance facts" (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1991). This measure captures how much attention the respondent pays to what is currently happening in the political world by asking them to identify important political figures. For the 2000 American National Election Study political knowledge is measured by asking respondents to identify the political offices of Trent Lott, Janet Reno, William Rehnquist, and Tony Blair as well as the home states of George W. Bush and Al Gore. Political knowledge in the 1997 Canadian Election Study is measured by three knowledge variables asking the respondent to identify the President of the United States, the first female Prime Minister, and the Minister of Finance. For the 2000 Canadian Election Survey political knowledge is measured by questions regarding the capital of the United States, the Prime Minister during NAFTA, the

Minister of Finance, and the leaders of the Alliance, Conservative, Liberal, and NDP political parties. The 1997 British Election Study contains measures of factual and civics political knowledge. In the survey there is a section entitled 'Political Knowledge Quiz.' These questions ask the respondent about the partisan identification of Margaret Thatcher; whether elections must be held every four years; whether MPs from different parties can be on the same committee; whether individuals have to pay a deposit to stand for office; whether there are only one hundred MPs in Parliament; whether Great Britain has proportional representation; and if Britain has separate elections for the British and European Union Parliaments. Because these are factual questions they tap into a different area of political knowledge. They require the respondent to pay attention to what is going on the political world and also to know some procedures of government.

Included in my model are several independent variables. The independent variables vary by survey, but several of the main variables are present in each model. The main independent variable is, of course, gender, and it will be included in all the models. I expect women to have lower levels of political knowledge and so I expect the coefficient for gender to be negative, indicating that women have less knowledge. This variable is coded 1 for women and 0 for men.

There are several demographic variables that I include in the model in order to see how much of an effect they have on political knowledge. These demographic variables have been tested and shown to affect political knowledge levels (Delli Carpini, 1996; Gidengal et al, 2003; Mondak, 1999; Garand, Guynan, and Fournet, 2004). The first is age. I expect age to have a positive effect on political knowledge; older citizens will have more exposure to the political world and will presumably have learned more about the political world. As a result, I expect that older citizens will be more politically knowledgeable than younger citizens.

Education is a very strong predictor of political knowledge (Garand, Guynan, and Fournet, 2004). Niemi and Junn (1999) examine the affects of education on political knowledge and find three main ways education affects the attainment of political knowledge. First, by

providing direct exposure to political information through civics courses students become aware of the political world and governmental processes. Second, formal education provides skills that are necessary to comprehend and participate in the political world. Third, individuals with higher education have more complex cognitive capabilities and thus are able to learn more easily about the political world than less educated individuals. Thus, I expect education to be strongly and positively related to political knowledge.

Income also has been shown in previous research to have a positive impact on political knowledge (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996). It is hard to argue that those with higher incomes have more at stake than those with lower incomes and so self-interest mobilizes higher income individuals to be more politically knowledgeable. Those with lower incomes also have an interest in what goes on in the political world, but those with higher incomes also have the advantage of resources and skills that lower income individuals most likely do not have. More specifically, individuals with higher incomes usually have higher educations than those with lower incomes. They also have the potential to become politically involved thereby becoming exposed and gaining more political knowledge. I expect income to have a positive impact on political knowledge with more income resulting in more political knowledge.

I also include a measure of marital status. I expect marital status to have a positive effect on political knowledge because of the potential of political discussion between the husband and the wife. Even if no political discussion takes place the political views of the spouse, especially the husband, often have an affect on the views of the other spouse, i.e. the wife. On the other hand, I expect the effect of children on political knowledge to be negative because individuals with children, especially small children, often do not have the time or energy to devote to politics that individuals without children have.

I include several political variables that measure interest and engagement as well as political identification and ideology. I include these variables because I believe they have a strong and direct effect on political knowledge levels. If one is interested in politics presumably they

will pay attention and internalize information they hear. I expect that the variables measuring political interest in general and specifically relating to elections to be a strong and positive indicator of political knowledge. Likewise, I expect the variable measuring how well the respondent follows politics to have a positive effect on knowledge levels. If one is interested in politics and follows political events then I expect that they internalize that information and have high levels of political knowledge. I also expect political efficacy to have a positive effect on knowledge. In several of the surveys there are three or four efficacy questions. They are summed together to form an additive scale of political efficacy. If an individual feels that they can make a difference in the political world and that the government/politicians listen to them then they are more likely to pay attention to political events and to understand what is going on because they feel that their input is important and matters. Related to efficacy is political participation. Where there are enough variables measuring participation (1996 NES, 2000 NES) I summed the participation variables together to form an additive participation scale; even something as simple as wearing a button or putting a political sticker on one's car can indicate political knowledge. I expect individuals who participate politically to have more knowledge than those who do not participate in politics.

Partisan identification and ideology are also expected to have a significant impact on political knowledge. This is not to say, for example, that Republicans know more or Democrats know more. Rather, the intensity of party identification and ideology are expected to have an impact. For the American National Election Studies I create folded ideology and party identification variables. The folded ideology variable is coded 3=extreme Liberals and Conservative, 2=liberal/conservative, 1=slightly Liberal and Conservative and 0= Moderate. The folded partisan identification variable is coded 3= strong Democrats and Republicans, 2=weak Democrats and Republicans, 1=Independent leaning Democrats and Republicans, and 0=Independents. This way the intensity of ideology and party id are captured and we are able to capture the effect of that intensity on political knowledge. Individuals who feel strongly related to

a political party or a particular ideology are more likely to be interested in what is going on in the political world and more likely to have higher levels of political knowledge. Part of their self-identification is related to politics and so I expect these individuals to have more at stake than individuals who are not connected or interested in politics. For the Canadian and British surveys I include a separate variable measuring the strength of party id.

I also include a variable measuring participation in political discussion. This is a very important variable because if one engages in political discussion with other people they show an interest in politics and some level of knowledge. They also are exposed to other people's views and have the potential of being educated in the process. Conover, Searing, and Crewe (2002) examine the effects of political discussion and find that discussion can lead to more knowledge, especially if the individuals participating view it as an educative opportunity. I expect political discussion to have a positive and strong impact on political knowledge.

Religious variables are included and coded so that the more important religion is to the respondent the less knowledge they should have. I do not expect certain religions to have greater tendencies towards more political knowledge, but I do expect frequency of church attendance to have an impact on knowledge because frequent church attendance provides the opportunity of getting together with other individuals and the opportunity of discussion which could include political discussion.

A final area that I examine is how media exposure affects political knowledge. I include measures for national television news, local television news, listening to the radio and newspaper exposure. Previous research has shown that media exposure does have an effect on knowledge (Norris, 2000 and Garand, Guynan, and Fournet, 2004). I expect that respondents who have high levels of media exposure will have higher levels of political knowledge than those who do not watch the news or read newspapers. In order to gain political knowledge one must be exposed to it. I expect national television news and newspaper reading to have a stronger and more significant effect than local television news or listening to the radio.

## **Statistical Methods**

I use five data sets. They are as follows: 1996 National Election Study; 2000 National Election Study; 1997 Canadian Election Study; 2000 Canadian Election Study; and the 1997 British General Election Cross-Sectional Study. I utilize several statistical methods in order to test my hypotheses and to find the relation of gender to political knowledge. First, I estimate a crosstabulation of the additive knowledge scale and gender for each data set. The results are presented in percentage points and allow for easy comparison of the number of items that men and women got correct in the knowledge scale. I also estimate crosstabulations for each knowledge question in each data set. The results present a distribution of correct, incorrect and “don’t know” responses for each political knowledge variable measured. This provides an idea of how the respondents answered and allows us to compare the responses of men and women for each item measured. The main statistical analysis that is performed is multiple regression. Regression models allow us to examine the effect of gender on political knowledge at the same time controlling for the effects of other variables.



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Crosstabulations

1996 National Election Study. The 1996 National Election Study measures political knowledge by asking the respondent to identify the positions of Newt Gingrich, Al Gore, William Rehnquist and Boris Yeltsin. These items are first coded as dummy variables with 1=correct and 0=other. Next, I combine these four knowledge items together to form an additive knowledge scale. Then, I estimate a crosstabulation of the additive knowledge scale controlling for gender. The results are presented below. The results are as expected. There is a large gap of 9.5% in the highest knowledge category. Only 3.7% of women got all four knowledge questions correct while 13.5% of men got all knowledge items correct.

**Table 1. Crosstabulation of knowledge scale with gender, 1996 National Election Study.**

	Men	Women
<b>KNOW</b>		
0	7.8% (53)	12.5% (105)
1	10.7% (73)	15.5% (130)
2	26% (177)	32.4% (272)
3	42.4% (289)	36% (302)
4	13.2% (90)	3.7% (31)
Mean	2.43	2.03
Standard deviation	1.09	1.08
Number of cases	682	840

At the same time women were more likely than men to get no questions correct with 12.5% of women and 7.8% of men getting zero questions correct. The overall mean is 2.21 and the overall standard deviation is 1.10.

Turning to the distribution of answers for the individual knowledge questions we see that the knowledge gap remains with women being less likely to answer the questions correctly and at the same time more likely to answer “don’t know” than men. For the individual items both men and women are highly likely to know what office Al Gore held and the gap is only 4.3%. The gap is largest for knowledge of Boris Yeltsin, where 72% of men are correct and 58.9% of women are correct with a gap of 13.1%. The gap is somewhat smaller at 10.6% for knowledge of William Rehnquist, but both men and women have very low percentages of correct answers.

**Table 2. Distribution of correct, incorrect and don’t know answers to political knowledge questions by gender, 1996 National Election Study.**

	Correct	Incorrect	Don’t Know
<b>Newt Gingrich</b>			
Men (N=686)	64.4% (442)	19.4% (133)	16.2% (111)
Women (N=844)	52.7% (445)	20.1% (170)	27.1% (229)
<b>Al Gore</b>			
Men (N=686)	90.5% (621)	1.5% (10)	8% (55)
Women (N=842)	86.2% (726)	1.5% (13)	12.2% (103)

**Table 2. Cont.  
William Rehnquist**

Men (N=685)	15.2% (104)	29.8% (204)	55% (377)
Women (N=846)	4.6% (39)	22.9% (194)	72.5% (613)

**Boris Yeltsin**

Men (N=686)	72% (494)	10.9% (75)	17.1% (117)
Women (N=846)	58.9% (489)	14.7% (124)	26.5% (224)

Both men and women are more likely to answer “don’t know” and at the same time the incorrect answers are highest for this knowledge question among both men and women.

Knowledge levels are obviously at their highest for men and women among the two more visible political figures of Al Gore and Boris Yeltsin. Newt Gingrich and William Rehnquist, perhaps less well known figures, both have higher percentages of incorrect and “don’t know” answers than the other two items.

2000 National Election Study. The same analysis is estimated with the 2000 National Election Study. An additive knowledge scale is composed of the dummy variables of the political knowledge items. These include – knowledge of Trent Lott, Janet Reno, William Rehnquist, Tony Blair, the home state of Al Gore, and the home state of George W. Bush. The only knowledge item that is the same is knowledge of the office of William Rehnquist. However, the other questions concern well known political figures including the presidential candidates. The results for the crosstabulations of the knowledge scale and individual knowledge items controlling for gender are shown below.

Although there are two more knowledge items and they are different than in the 1996 survey we see that the knowledge gap has decreased in the highest knowledge category. 7.6% of

men got all six questions correct while only 1.1% of women answered them all correctly. The gap is 6.5%, a decrease of 3% from 1996. In the first three categories - zero questions correct, one question correct, and two questions correct – women have higher percentages, but for the categories of three correct to all six correct men pull ahead. It is interesting to note that the numbers of those who answered all six questions correctly is very low, only ten women and fifty men. The overall mean is 2.66 and the overall standard deviation is 1.51. The breakdown of the individual knowledge items helps us to see exactly how men and women are answering the questions.

**Table 3. Crosstabulation of additive knowledge scale and gender, 2000 National Election Study.**

	Men	Women
<b>KNOW</b>		
0	4.6% (31)	10.4% (91)
1	10% (67)	18.9% (165)
2	21.8% (146)	27.1% (237)
3	23.7% (159)	21.4% (187)
4	22.2% (149)	16.3% (143)
5	10.1% (68)	4.8% (42)
6	7.6% (51)	1.1% (10)
Mean	3.10	2.33
Standard deviation	1.53	1.41
Number of cases	671	875

The results from the distribution of answers for the 2000 National Election Study confirm what we observe in the 1996 NES results. For each knowledge item women have lower percentages of correct responses than men and they quite a bit more likely to answer “don’t know.” The difference between men and women for correct answers ranges from 8.1% to 20.2%. These are extremely large gaps and somewhat disturbing. Interestingly enough, the item with the largest gap for correct answers is the item that asks respondents to name the office of Janet Reno. Janet Reno was Attorney General under President Clinton and it could be assumed that women would take note of a woman in a high political office; however, only 46.5% of women answered correctly while 18.9% answered incorrectly and 34.6% answered “don’t know”.

The item measuring knowledge of William Rehnquist is the same for both surveys and so is arguably a good mark of how knowledge has changed between the 1996 election and the 2000 election. The gap has increased from 10.6% in 1996 to 13.1% in 2000. This seems to be due to the fact that men increased in their knowledge of Chief Justice Rehnquist in the four years between the elections. In 1996, 15.2% of men answered the question correctly while in 2000 18% answered correctly. Women’s knowledge of Rehnquist increased by a very minute 0.3%. Because correct answers are so low, incorrect answers and “don’t know” answers are very high for both men and women. Knowledge of Tony Blair fares much better with men and women answering correctly at a much higher rate than for Rehnquist. At the same time, incorrect answers are very low, while “don’t know” responses are still at and above 50%.

The two knowledge questions that have the highest correct percentages are the questions concerning the home states of George W. Bush and Al Gore. This makes sense because of the heated race for the presidency which both were engaged in. 94.2% of men knew the home state of Bush while 86.1% of women knew with a gap of 8.1%. Incorrect and “don’t know” answers are fairly low as well. Interestingly, correct answers are lower for knowledge of Gore’s state even though he has been in public office for eight years. 75.8% of men know Gore is from Tennessee

**Table 4. Distribution of correct, incorrect and don't know answers to political knowledge questions by gender, 2000 National Election Study.**

	Correct	Incorrect	Don't Know
<b>Trent Lott</b>			
Men (N=673)	14% (94)	36.1% (243)	49.9% (336)
Women (N=880)	4.7% (41)	20.9% (184)	74.4% (655)
<b>Janet Reno</b>			
Men (N=672)	66.7% (448)	15.9% (107)	17.4% (117)
Women (N=879)	46.5% (409)	18.9% (166)	34.6% (304)
<b>William Rehnquist</b>			
Men (N=674)	18% (121)	34.9% (235)	47.2% (318)
Women (N=880)	4.9% (43)	28.5% (251)	66.6% (586)
<b>Tony Blair</b>			
Men (N=674)	41.2% (278)	8.9% (60)	49.9% (336)
Women (N=879)	29.4% (258)	9.3% (82)	61.3% (539)
<b>Gore's Home State</b>			
Men (N=674)	75.8% (511)	12.6% (85)	11.6% (78)
Women (N=880)	61.6% (542)	16.5% (145)	21.9% (193)

**Table 4. Cont.**

**Bush's Home State**

Men (N=674)	94.2% (635)	2.1% (14)	3.7% (25)
Women (N=880)	86.1% (758)	4.8% (42)	9.1% (80)

while 61.6% of women know. The gap here is much higher than for Bush at 14.2%. Incorrect and “don’t know” answers are also higher.

Although, it is hard to directly compare knowledge levels from 1996 with those from 2000, it is evident that for both surveys women are more likely to have lower percentages of correct answers and much higher percentages of “don’t know” answers. Knowledge seems to have gone up in comparing the crosstabulations of the knowledge scales and gender keeping in mind that the number of items in each scale is different for each year. However, there is an undeniable gap in correct answers for men and women and not for a single knowledge item did women have a higher percentage of correct answers than men.

1997 Canadian Election Study. Turning now to the crosstabulation of the knowledge scale and gender for the 1997 Canadian Election Study, we see that women are more likely than men to answer zero or one question correctly than two questions or all three. 26.2% of men answered all three questions correctly while 18.5% of women did with a gap of 7.7%. There is a gap of 5.4% with women being more likely to answer no questions correctly. The overall mean is 1.61 and the overall standard deviation is 0.97. Again, we cannot make hard and fast comparisons between the surveys in the different countries because they do not have the same knowledge questions. However, I am interested in measuring the political knowledge of Americans, Canadians, and the British and in order to get an accurate idea of the political knowledge in each country the questions must be aimed at the major political figures/institutions of that country. To ask Canadians about American politics or Americans about British politics would be unfair

because most likely people in these countries would know nothing about the political figures (aside from the major ones) of other countries.

The distribution of answers for the 1997 Canadian Election Study reveals fairly low knowledge gaps for two of the three knowledge questions. As with the NES surveys, men have correct answers at higher percentages than women; while women have higher percentages of “don’t know” answers. Knowledge of the President of the United States is very high for both men and women, but considering the notoriety of Bill Clinton it is not surprising. 87.3% of men and 81.4% of women knew Clinton was the President of the United States.

**Table 5. Crosstabulation of additive knowledge scale and gender, 1997 Canadian Election Study.**

	Men	Women
<b>KNOW</b>		
0	9.5% (178)	14.9% (305)
1	31.4% (586)	39.3% (807)
2	32.8% (611)	27.3% (560)
3	26.2% (489)	18.5% (380)
Mean	1.75	1.48
Standard deviation	0.95	0.97
Number of cases	1846	2069

I expected the knowledge levels to be higher for the first female Prime Minister especially among women, but only 38.8% of women knew the first female PM and only 43.4% of men answered correctly. On the other hand, 56.5% of women answer “don’t know” while 51.5% of men did not know. The results for knowledge of the Minister of Finance are not



surprising. 45.1% of men answer correctly while only 29.2% of women answer correctly with a gap of 15.9%. 48.8% of men answer “don’t know” while 63.5% of women answer “don’t know” with a gap of 14.7%. The gaps are very high for this item, but that is not surprising. Traditionally, men are more concerned/interested in economic and financial matters while women are more concerned/interested in social matters. This is what appears to be happening here.

**Table 6. Distribution of correct, incorrect, and don’t know answers to political knowledge questions by gender, 1997 Canadian Election Study.**

	Correct	Incorrect	Don’t Know
<b>President of U.S.</b>			
Men (N=1846)	87.3% (1627)	1.4% (26)	11.3% (211)
Women (N=2054)	81.4% (1671)	2.5% (51)	16.5% (332)
<b>First female PM</b>			
Men (N=1866)	43.4% (808)	5.2% (97)	51.5% (961)
Women (N=2054)	38.8% (797)	4.7% (97)	56.5% (1160)
<b>Minister of Finance</b>			
Men (N=1868)	45.1% (843)	6% (113)	48.8% (912)
Women (N=2058)	29.2% (600)	7.4% (152)	63.5% (1306)

2000 Canadian Election Study. For the 2000 Canadian Election Study there are seven knowledge items which I combine to form an additive knowledge scale. Those items are knowledge of the United States capital, knowledge of the Prime Minister of Canada during

NAFTA, knowledge of the Minister of Finance, and knowledge of the party leaders (Alliance, Conservative, Liberal and NDP). The table is presented below. Again, the knowledge gap is quite large for the highest knowledge bracket. 36.9% of men answered all seven questions correctly while only 20.1% of women did. This leaves a gap of 16.8%. It is interesting to note that women are more likely than men to answer zero through five questions correctly, but in the highest categories of answering six or seven questions correctly men led women. The overall mean is 4.64 and the overall standard deviation is 2.24.

**Table 7. Crosstabulation of additive knowledge scale and gender, 2000 Canadian Election Study.**

	Men	Women
<b>KNOW</b>		
0	2.8% (49)	7.8% (147)
1	5.6% (99)	10.6% (200)
2	6.5% (114)	9.3% (175)
3	7.4% (130)	10% (188)
4	9.4% (165)	11.1% (209)
5	11.2% (197)	12.2% (230)
6	20.2% (355)	18.8% (353)
7	36.9% (648)	20.1% (377)
Mean	5.14	4.18
Standard deviation	2.06	2.31
Number of cases	1758	1879

The distribution of answers for the individual knowledge questions supports the evidence we examined earlier – women answer “don’t know” substantially more than men and are less likely to answer the questions correctly. For most of the knowledge items, the knowledge gap is over 10% with men answering correctly more than women. The item with the smallest gap also has the highest percentage of correct responses for both men and women. 88.4% of men answer the question concerning the Liberal party leader correctly while 80.4% of women answer correctly. The largest gap concerns knowledge of the Prime Minister during the North American Free Trade Agreement. 65% of men answer correctly while 43.1% of women answer correctly leaving a gap of 21.9%. The only knowledge item that was the same in the 1997 survey as in the 2000 survey concerns knowledge of the Minister of Finance. The number of observations for the 2000 survey is much higher, but there is still a substantial increase in knowledge of this item for both men and women. 71.2% of men answered correctly while 58.7% of women answered correctly. This is compared to the 1997 levels of 45.1% and 29.2% respectively. The knowledge gap also decreased from 15.9% in 1997 to 12.5% in 2000.

Another interesting thing to note is that the “don’t know” responses are lower in 2000 than in 1997. For two out of the three knowledge items in 1997 over 50% of the women answer “don’t know”. In only one of the seven items in 2000 did over 50% of women answer “don’t know.” There is only one item (PM NAFTA) which has large percentages of incorrect answers for both men and women. Again, it is clear that women answer “don’t know” more than men while men more often answer correctly. I am surprised that the incorrect answers are similar for both men and women. I thought that men would have larger numbers of incorrect answers, given their propensity to give answers/opinions even though they may be wrong. The incorrect percentages are much higher for the American National Election Studies, often going into double digits while for the Canadian surveys they remain fairly low for most of the knowledge items.

1997 British General Election Cross-Sectional Study. The final data set I examine is the 1997 British General Election Study. The same techniques are used that are used with the earlier

data sets. This survey actually has a “Political Knowledge Quiz” section which contains seven questions. The dummy variables (1=correct, 0=other) are summed together to form the additive knowledge scale which is used to estimate crosstabulations with gender. The items are: knowledge of whether Margaret Thatcher was a Conservative; knowledge of how often elections must be held; knowledge of whether MPs from different parties can be on the same committee; whether individuals have to pay a deposit to stand for office; knowledge of the number of MPs in Parliament; whether Britain has proportional representation; and whether there are separate elections for the European Union and British parliaments. The results are presented in Table 9.

**Table 8. Distribution of correct, incorrect, and don’t know answers to political knowledge questions by gender, 2000 Canadian Election Study.**

	Correct	Incorrect	Don’t Know
<b>U.S. capital</b>			
Men (N=1760)	89.4% (1574)	2.5% (44)	8.1% (142)
Women (N=1888)	76.1% (1437)	3.8% (71)	20.1% (380)
<b>PM NAFTA</b>			
Men (N=1761)	65% (1145)	15.8% (279)	19.1% (337)
Women (N=1887)	43.1% (813)	21.5% (406)	35.4% (668)
<b>Minister of Finance</b>			
Men (N=1760)	71.2% (1253)	2% (36)	26.8% (471)
Women (N=1888)	58.7% (1109)	3.3% (62)	38% (717)

**Table 8. Cont.**

**Alliance leader**

Men (N=1761)	75.9% (1336)	1.2% (21)	22.9% (404)
Women (N=1883)	63.4% (1194)	1.6% (31)	34.9% (658)

**Conservative leader**

Men (N=1761)	72.9% (1284)	2.4% (43)	24.6% (434)
Women (N=1884)	57.5% (1083)	2.7% (51)	39.8% (750)

**Liberal leader**

Men (N=1761)	88.4% (1557)	1.1% (20)	10.4% (184)
Women (N=1884)	80.4% (1514)	1.6% (31)	18% (339)

**NDP leader**

Men (N=1760)	50.6% (890)	6.5% (114)	43% (756)
Women (N=1885)	38.7% (729)	7.3% (138)	54% (1018)

The most interesting thing to note about this table is that the knowledge gap for the highest category of all seven questions correct is very large. 38.6% of men and only 17.8% of women answer all seven questions correctly. This leaves a gap of 20.8%. Of all the data sets examined this is the largest gap. The next largest is 16.8% in the 2000 Canadian Election Study. What makes this so interesting is that the next category of answering six knowledge questions correctly has a gap of only 2.3% and for the previous six categories (0-5) women have the higher percentage. So men pull ahead in the last two knowledge categories and only in the very last

category do men have a substantial lead over women. The overall mean is 5.01 and the overall standard deviation is 1.78. The case is similar for the 2000 Canadian survey, but for the other data sets the size of the gaps for all categories are fairly similar. Table 10 presents the distributions for each knowledge item in the British survey. The results are presented below.

**Table 9. Crosstabulation of additive knowledge scale controlling for gender, 1997 British General Election Cross-Sectional Study.**

	Men	Women
<b>KNOW</b>		
0	0.1% (1)	0.7% (13)
1	1.6% (26)	5.1% (99)
2	4.1% (67)	9.9% (193)
3	7.4% (121)	14% (274)
4	10.9% (179)	15.5% (304)
5	16.7% (275)	18.7% (365)
6	20.7% (341)	18.4% (361)
7	38.6% (635)	17.8% (348)
Mean	5.53	4.57
Standard deviation	1.58	1.81
Number of cases	1645	1957

Once again, the research that finds that women tend to answer “don’t know” more than men is supported. In every instance, women answer “don’t know” in greater numbers than men while men continue to answer all of the questions correctly more than women. The percentages of men and women who answer correctly are fairly high for every question. There was only one question where less than 50% of women answer correctly. The question is whether Britain has proportional representation in Parliament. 65.4% of men answer correctly while 45.7% of women answer correctly. This leaves a gap of 19.7%. For this question the gap in “don’t know” responses is also very large with women answering “don’t know” 24.9% and men giving the same response at a rate of 8.3%. The item with the highest correct response rate is the first question regarding the party identification of Margaret Thatcher. 99.4% of men and 98.3% of women answer correctly that Thatcher is a Conservative. This is not surprising since Margaret Thatcher is a very well known political figure and a very powerful woman.

**Table 10. Distribution of correct, incorrect and don’t know answers to political knowledge questions by gender, 1997 British General Election Cross-Sectional Study.**

	Correct	Incorrect	Don’t Know
<b>Margaret Thatcher</b>			
Men (N=1646)	99.4% (1646)	0.2% (4)	0.4% (6)
Women (N=1959)	98.3% (1926)	0.6% (11)	1.1% (22)
<b>Knowledge of Elections</b>			
Men (N=1646)	69.3% (1140)	28.5% (469)	2.2% (37)
Women (N=1959)	55% (1078)	38.8% (761)	6.1% (120)

**Table 10. Cont.**

**MPs on Committees**

Men (1645)	76.7% (1261)	8.7% (143)	14.7% (241)
Women (N=1958)	61.3% (1201)	9.1% (179)	29.5% (578)

**Deposit to stand for office**

Men (1646)	80% (1316)	13.4% (220)	6.7% (110)
Women (1958)	63.7% (1248)	20.4% (400)	15.8% (310)

**MPs in Parliament**

Men (1646)	81.7% (1344)	10.2% (168)	8.1% (134)
Women (1958)	63.5% (1243)	15.5% (304)	21% (411)

**Proportional Representation**

Men (1646)	65.4% (1077)	26.3% (433)	8.3% (136)
Women (1959)	45.7% (896)	29.4% (575)	24.9% (488)

**Separate Elections**

Men (1646)	81.2% (1337)	10% (164)	8.8% (145)
Women (1958)	69.7% (1364)	9.2% (180)	21.1% (414)



The preliminary results of the crosstabulations confirm my hypothesis that men answer political knowledge questions correctly more than women (and hence have more political knowledge than women). Previous research is supported in that women are not answering these political knowledge questions incorrectly, but rather giving the “don’t know” response much more frequently than men. An interesting observation is that men are not necessarily more prone to incorrect answers than women, but they definitely offer the “don’t know” response less than women.

Although it is difficult to make a hard and fast comparison between the countries examined it is safe to say that the evidence follows in the direction that previous research has pointed to. The evidence points to a political knowledge gap in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain. Not in a single case did women answer knowledge questions in higher percentages than men. Regression analysis reveals what the significant determining factors are of political knowledge within these countries and the results from the regression analysis are presented below.

### **Regression Results**

1996 National Election Study. One of the most important findings for the 1996 NES in Table 11 is that the gender coefficient is negative and significant at 0.028. Every time the independent variable of gender moves up one unit the dependent variable of political knowledge moves down 0.117 units. Since women are coded 1 and men 0, the negative sign indicates that women have less political knowledge than men. Controlling for the effects of other variables, women score 0.117 units lower than men on the 1996 political knowledge scale. Several other variables are significant in the model. The coefficients for education, income, and efficacy are all highly significant at the 0.01 level as well as being in the expected direction. This is expected and is strongly supported by the model. The coefficients for more days one watched of local news and national news are in the opposite directions of what is expected and neither are significant. This is the opposite of what one would expect. I can only hypothesize that local news help individuals to

gain more political knowledge overall, but that those individuals did not pay particular attention to information about the 1996 campaign on local news. The coefficient for national news is more troubling since it should be positive. The coefficient for attention to the campaign in the newspaper has the same effect as the coefficient for attention to the local news, that is, the coefficient is negative while the coefficient for how often respondent reads newspaper is positive. Those who read about the campaign show a significant increase in political knowledge.

The amount of attention paid to the campaign and the level of interest the respondent has in the campaign both have coefficients in the expected direction; however, only the coefficient for the amount of attention paid to the campaign is significant. Political discussion with others is an important way for political information to spread and the regression indicates that the coefficient for political discussion with others results in more political knowledge. Those who engage in political discussion show a significant increase in political knowledge. The coefficient for political participation is in the right direction, but it is not statistically significant.

Included in the model are three dummy variables measuring the respondent's employment status. I measure them as dummy variables because being unemployed, employed, and retired are not necessarily ordinal variables, but rather knowledge levels can be greatly affected separately by whether one is unemployed, employed, or retired. The results indicate that while the coefficients are in the expected direction, none have a significant affect on knowledge. I expect unemployed individuals to have less political knowledge than those who are employed or retired because it can be argued that they are more concerned about their situation than what is going on in the political world. Each of these employment categories brings its own particular needs, often used by politicians to gain votes, and these needs can determine how much the respondent pays attention to politics to make sure they are heard by the people who can affect their situation.

**TABLE 11. Regression model of political knowledge with control variables, 1996 National Election Study.**

Variable	b	se	t-ratio	Prob.
Constant	-0.056	0.208	-0.270	0.394
Gender	-0.117	0.061	-1.911	0.028**
Age	0.006	0.002	2.346	0.010***
Marital status	-0.046	0.069	-0.660	0.255
Education	0.151	0.022	6.900	0.000***
Income	0.032	0.006	5.153	0.000***
Folded ideology	0.069	0.034	2.002	0.023**
Folded party id	0.024	0.033	0.739	0.230
Employed	0.007	0.090	0.076	0.470
Unemployed	-0.041	0.198	-0.207	0.418
Retired	0.132	0.117	1.125	0.131
Efficacy scale	0.047	0.012	3.942	0.000***
Participation scale	0.025	0.038	0.642	0.261
Attention to campaign	0.122	0.052	2.347	0.010***
Interest in campaign	0.041	0.056	0.726	0.234
Watch local news	0.010	0.014	0.748	0.227
Watch national news	-0.003	0.014	-0.251	0.401
Read newspaper	0.032	0.011	2.943	0.002***
Political discussion	0.165	0.078	2.101	0.018**
Frequency of attendance	0.004	0.018	0.245	0.404
Guidance from religion	-0.092	0.041	-2.275	0.012***

N = 1061

R<sup>2</sup> = 0.27

Adj R<sup>2</sup> = 0.26

\*\*\* prob. < 0.01, one-tailed test, with coefficient in expected direction

\*\* prob. < 0.05, one-tailed test, with coefficient in expected direction

I include in all of the models certain variables measuring religiosity or religious behavior. I hypothesize that the more one attends church the more likely an increase of political knowledge will occur. This is because the more often one attends church the more likely one is to have the chance to talk with fellow parishioners and more opportunities for discussion can lead to opportunities for political discussion. The coefficient for frequency of attendance is in the expected direction, but it fails to achieve significance. Guidance from religion, on the other hand, has a negative coefficient and the significance affect of a decrease in political knowledge. The more important religion is or the more guidance one receives from religion the more likely it is that politics and knowing what is going on the political world will not be important.

The coefficient for age is positive and significant which supports the hypothesis. Older citizens have more experience in the political world and in the world in general and so an increase of knowledge is expected with an increase in age. Surprisingly though, my hypothesis for marital status is not supported. The coefficient indicates that being married does not result in more political knowledge. I hypothesize that being married results in more political knowledge because of the greater chances of political discussion with one's spouse.

In general, my model supports my hypotheses and is significant at the 0.01 level explaining 27% of the variance in political knowledge. The coefficients for gender, education, income, attention to campaign, and efficacy are some important predictors of political knowledge.

2000 National Election Study. The 2000 National Election Study model supports the findings in the 1996 with almost all of the same variables showing significance. The coefficients for gender, age, education, and income are all significant determinants of political knowledge. Again, I find that gender has a significant negative impact on political knowledge. On a political knowledge scale of 0-6 women answer correctly about half a point less than men. This is not a huge difference; however, it is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. In the 1996 NES model the marital status variable has a negative coefficient while in the 2000 NES model the coefficient

is in the right direction, though not significant. The coefficient for the variable measuring children under the age of eighteen is not statistically significant, but the directionality is as expected.

As expected the coefficients for the variables measuring folded ideology and partisan identification are positive and strong predictors of political knowledge. Individuals who are more strongly attached to their ideology or political party are likely to have more political knowledge than those who are not as cognitively attached to their political identification. Likewise, the coefficients for participation, efficacy, and attention to the campaign are strong predictors of political knowledge. This is intuitive and supports my hypotheses concerning these variables. Individuals who are active, both physically and mentally, in the political world have the skills and the initiative to acquire political knowledge.

Other political variables that have coefficients in the expected direction, but do not have an effect on political knowledge are how much the respondent cares about the election and interest in the campaign. The coefficient for measuring political discussion is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Political knowledge is one of the main ways that people learn about politics and is an integral part of the political gain acquired through participation.

Surprisingly, the coefficient for being a member of an organization is not in the expected direction. This variable does not specify which organizations the respondent belongs to. This variable supports the claim of Gidengal et al (2003) who argues that the type of organization is more important than the number of organizations belonged to. Unfortunately, women often belong to the type of organization that hinders rather than helps the flow of political information.

Again, I find that the media plays a very important role in how much political knowledge individuals gain. This is expected because the media, whether it is television, newspapers, the radio, or the internet, is the main source of news for people. The coefficients for watching the national news and reading a daily newspaper are significant indicators of political knowledge. Reading a newspaper is an even better predictor of knowledge than watching television.

**TABLE 12. Regression model of political knowledge with control variables, 2000 National Election Study.**

Variable	b	se	t-ratio	Prob.
Constant	-0.364	0.284	-1.280	0.101
Gender	-0.506	-0.171	-5.997	0.000***
Marital status	0.086	0.092	0.933	0.176
Education	0.237	0.031	7.738	0.000***
Age	0.007	0.004	2.089	0.019**
Income	0.027	0.013	1.994	0.023**
Children	-0.044	0.042	-1.037	0.150
Ideology folded	0.095	0.050	1.912	0.028**
Party id folded	0.079	0.043	1.842	0.033**
Interest in campaigns	0.056	0.077	0.730	0.233
Attention to campaigns	0.309	0.074	4.154	0.000***
Care about election	0.058	0.116	0.499	0.309
Watch nat'l news	0.033	0.016	2.042	0.021**
Days read paper	0.050	0.015	3.210	0.001***
Political discussion	0.030	0.018	1.630	0.052
Participation scale	0.081	0.040	1.998	0.023**
Efficacy scale	0.034	0.015	2.237	0.013***
Member of organization	-0.020	0.085	-0.244	0.404
Church attendance frequency	0.028	0.031	0.889	0.188
Guidance from religion	-0.146	0.043	-3.436	0.001***

N = 839

R<sup>2</sup> = 0.42

Adj R<sup>2</sup> = 0.40

\*\*\* prob. < 0.01, one-tailed test, with coefficient in expected direction

\*\* prob. < 0.05, one-tailed test, with coefficient in expected direction

Finally, the coefficients for the religious variables indicate that attendance at religious services has an insignificant affect on political knowledge while the coefficient for the more guidance one receives from religion tends to significantly decrease knowledge. This is as expected and is supported in my other models. More frequent church attendance, even if religion is not highly important to the individual, places the individual in more frequent social situations with others and those social situations provide the opportunity for political discussion. However, individuals who receive a great deal of guidance from religion or who place a great deal of importance on religion, most likely have religion at the top of their priorities and not politics. This does not exclude those who do place a great deal of importance on religion from being politically knowledgeable; however, the chances are greater that they are not as knowledgeable as others. The model has an R square of 0.41 and the overall significance is at the 0.01 level. Turning to the 1997 and 2000 Canadian surveys we will see if these variables are equally significant in determining political knowledge in Canada.

1997 Canadian Election Study. Several of the coefficients are consistent with my hypotheses. First, the gender coefficient indicates that women have less political knowledge and this is significant at 0.071. Although, the coefficient for gender is not as significant in this model as in the two previous models it demonstrates that women score 0.091 less on a knowledge scale of 0-3. The coefficients for age, marital status, education, income, being employed, being unemployed and retired are all in the expected direction, although only the coefficients for marital status, education, and unemployment have a significant effect. The coefficient for having children under the age of 18 indicates a decrease in political knowledge. This is expected because individuals with small children, often women, do not usually have the time needed to pay attention and to follow what is going on in the political world.

The coefficient for interest in politics is highly significant in determining political knowledge. The more interest one has in politics the more likely they are to increase in political knowledge. The coefficient for political discussion with family and friends is positive and highly

significant. This supports the hypothesis that political discussion is important in assisting individuals in gathering political information and increasing political knowledge. The coefficient for political efficacy is an important predictor of political knowledge and is both positive and highly significant. Individuals who feel that they can make a difference or that the government listens to them are more likely to have more positive feeling about the government and thus be knowledgeable about what is going on so that if they have to they can know when to be politically active by contacting MPs, etc.

The coefficient for attention to the election on television is significant at the 0.10 level. The coefficients for attention to the election in the newspapers and on the radio have no statistical effect. Surprisingly, the coefficients for hours spent watching television and listening to the radio have no affect while the more days one reads a newspaper positively affects political knowledge. Obviously, the different media outlets affect political knowledge differently with reading the newspaper being the most positive and significant, followed by watching the news on television, and listening to the radio.

Finally, the coefficient for importance of religion has no statistical effect on political knowledge and the directionality of the coefficient is the opposite of what is expected. The coefficient for strength of partisan identification is likewise statistically insignificant however the directionality supports the hypothesis. The final coefficient for voting indicates a positive effect with significance at the 0.10 level. If one takes the time to vote then one is more likely to have greater political knowledge than one who does not. The model is overall significant at the 0.01 level with an R square of 0.24. So far the demographic and socioeconomic variables play an important role in determining political knowledge as well as media habits and of course, interest in politics.



**TABLE 13. Regression estimates of political knowledge with control variables, 1997 Canadian Election Study.**

Variable	b	se	t-ratio	Prob.
Constant	-0.148	0.245	-0.605	0.272
Gender	-0.091	0.062	-1.470	0.071*
Age	0.000	0.000	0.348	0.364
Marital status	0.271	0.068	4.005	0.000***
Education	0.113	0.016	6.938	0.000***
Income	0.016	0.012	1.277	0.101
Children	-0.081	0.031	-2.560	0.006***
Employed	0.030	0.101	0.297	0.383
Unemployed	-0.234	0.166	-1.404	0.081*
Retired	0.144	0.126	1.137	0.128
Efficacy scale	0.026	0.012	2.263	0.013***
Importance of religion	-0.022	0.034	-0.651	0.256
Interest in politics	0.030	0.014	2.093	0.019**
Attention to election- tv	0.018	0.013	1.463	0.072*
Attention to election- papers	0.009	0.013	0.691	0.245
Attention to election- radio	-0.012	0.011	-1.098	0.137
Hrs watching television	0.003	0.017	0.191	0.424
Hrs listening to radio	-0.002	0.009	-0.192	0.424
Days reading newspaper	0.024	0.014	1.769	0.039**
Political discussion- f/r	0.091	0.051	1.773	0.039**
Strength of party id	0.046	0.046	0.994	0.160
Vote	0.135	0.091	1.486	0.069*

N = 801

R<sup>2</sup> = 0.24

Adj R<sup>2</sup> = 0.22

\*\*\* prob. < 0.01, one-tailed test, with coefficient in expected direction

\*\* prob. < 0.05, one-tailed test, with coefficient in expected direction

\* prob. < 0.10, one-tailed test, with coefficient in expected direction

2000 Canadian Election Study. In the 2000 CES model I find many of the same variables from the 1997 CES model have the same effects. That is, these variables are consistent predictors of political knowledge. Gender, marital status, education, income, having small children, being employed, unemployed or retired have coefficients that are all in the expected direction and all of them are highly significant. Gender proves to have a strong negative effect with women scoring 0.586 of a point less than men on a scale of 0-7. The coefficient is highly significant at the 0.01 level. Surprisingly, the coefficient for age is in the wrong direction and it has no effect on knowledge.

The coefficient for interest in politics is highly significant. The coefficient for attention to the election on the television and radio are significant while the newspaper coefficient is not. The coefficient for frequency of media usage indicate watching more television results in a decrease of knowledge while the coefficient for reading the newspaper more often is highly significant as a predictor of increased knowledge. Listening to the radio more does not have a statistical effect. It would seem that the more one watches television the more likely it is that other programs besides news programs will be watched. Previous research has shown that reading the newspaper is more intellectually challenging than watching television or listening to the radio with the result that news is more fully absorbed while reading about it. This appears to be happening here.

The coefficient for political discussion with others is a strong indicator of political knowledge as well as contacting an MP. Two coefficients that have significantly negative affects are strongly disagreeing that the government does not care what individuals think and helping political candidates. Both of these coefficients have the opposite effect of what I expect and what has been demonstrated in the earlier models. The coefficient for belonging to an interest group has no effect on knowledge although I expected it to have a positive effect.

The first variable is an efficacy variable and the second is a participation variable. Both the 1997 CES and 1996 NES models indicate that the more efficacious one feels and the more politically active one is the more knowledge one has. This is not supported by these two variables

in the 2000 CES. One reason may be that the efficacy variables in the previous models are efficacy scales composed of several efficacy variables while in the present model efficacy is measured by only one variable. A possible explanation for the participation variable is that only certain kinds of participation result in political knowledge, for example contacting an MP or belonging to an interest group. The question does not specify how the respondent helped the candidate only that he/she did help a candidate.

The coefficient for the importance of religion supports my hypothesis in that it has a significant, negative impact on political knowledge. This is the opposite of what the 1997 CES model showed; however, the religion variable in that model has no effect on knowledge. The directionality for the coefficient for strength of party identification is also the opposite of the 1997 finding and of my hypothesis. However, it has no significant impact on knowledge. The model overall is highly significant and explains 37% of the variance. The 2000 CES supports the findings in the 1997 CES by demonstrating the fact that certain variables are strong predictors of political knowledge even over the span of three years. Many of these variables are also strong indicators across countries as seen by 1996 NES model.

1997 British General Election Cross-Section Study. The regression model for the 1997 British Study reaffirms what the earlier models demonstrate. The results are presented in Table 15. Overall the model has an R square of 0.33 with significance at the 0.01 level. The coefficients for gender, age, income, whether one voted in the election and interest in politics are all highly significant and in the expected direction. In this final regression model gender once again proves to have a negative effect on political knowledge. Women score 0.549 less than men on a knowledge scale of 0-7. For one unit move up on the independent variable, the dependent variable of political knowledge moves down 0.549. This is not a tremendously large difference; however, the coefficient is negative and significant at the 0.01 level. The coefficients for individuals with children under eighteen and marital status have no statistical effect, although the

**TABLE 14. Regression estimates for political knowledge with control variables, 2000 Canadian Election Study.**

Variable	b	se	t-ratio	Prob.
Constant	2.457	0.425	5.778	0.000***
Gender	-0.586	0.082	-7.182	0.000***
Age	-0.000	0.000	-0.781	0.218
Marital status	0.342	0.088	3.876	0.000***
Education	0.188	0.022	8.735	0.000***
Income	0.037	0.015	2.504	0.006***
Children	-0.123	0.041	-2.979	0.002***
Employed	0.367	0.133	2.766	0.003***
Unemployed	-0.313	0.222	-1.406	0.080*
Retired	0.805	0.156	5.157	0.000***
Interest in politics	0.054	0.018	2.983	0.002***
Attention to election- tv	0.080	0.017	4.717	0.000***
Attention to election- radio	0.028	0.014	1.937	0.027**
Attention to election- papers	-0.012	0.017	-0.727	0.234
Hrs watching television	-0.043	0.024	-1.795	0.037**
Hrs listening to radio	-0.017	0.013	-1.242	0.107
Days read newspapers	0.116	0.019	6.214	0.000***
Political discussion	0.399	0.066	6.050	0.000***
Political efficacy	-0.086	0.043	-2.011	0.022++
Interest group	0.077	0.132	0.580	0.281
Help candidates	-0.205	0.145	-1.420	0.078+
Contact an MP	0.353	0.090	3.905	0.000***
Importance of religion	-0.144	0.044	-3.284	0.001***
Strength of party id	-0.066	0.062	-1.077	0.141

N = 1813

R<sup>2</sup> = 0.32

Adj R<sup>2</sup> = 0.31

- \*\*\* prob. < 0.01, one-tailed test, with coefficient in expected direction
- \*\* prob. < 0.05, one-tailed test, with coefficient in expected direction
- \* prob. < 0.10, one-tailed test, with coefficient in expected direction
- + prob. < 0.10, one-tailed test, with coefficient in unexpected direction
- ++ prob. < 0.05, one-tailed test, with coefficient in unexpected direction

direction of the coefficients are as expected. The coefficients for the employed, unemployed and retired variables have no statistical significance.

This is different from the previous results where the employment variables have had some affect on knowledge. The coefficient for attendance at church services results in a significant increase in political knowledge while the coefficient for the more religious one is has a significant negative effect on knowledge.

Once again “attention to the media” variables are important indicators of political knowledge. The coefficients for attention to politics in the newspaper and on television are significant predictors of knowledge. The coefficients for frequency of reading the newspaper and watching more local and national television news have no effect on knowledge. The fact that reading the newspaper does not affect political knowledge is surprising considering that for all of the previous models the coefficient for that variable has had a significant positive effect.

Finally, the coefficient for strength of party identification indicates a significant decrease in political knowledge. This does not support my hypothesis and is the opposite of what is found in the American National Election Studies. The Canadian data indicates that strength of party identification has no effect on political knowledge and the directionality is different for both regressions. Party identification is obviously a variable that behaves differently in each country in the acquisition of political knowledge.

**TABLE 15. Regression model of political knowledge with control variables, 1997 British General Election Study.**

Variable	b	se	t-ratio	Prob.
Constant	2.281	0.308	7.409	0.000***
Gender	-0.549	0.078	-7.041	0.000***
Marital status	0.033	0.079	0.418	0.338
Age	0.162	0.033	4.909	0.000***
Children	-0.035	0.043	-0.811	0.209
Income	0.279	0.039	7.205	0.000***
Employed	0.083	0.112	0.742	0.229
Unemployed	0.251	0.203	1.236	0.109
Retired	0.117	0.141	0.834	0.203
Religiosity	-0.154	0.050	-3.078	0.001***
Church attendance	0.044	0.017	2.643	0.004***
Attention to politics – papers	0.166	0.052	3.213	0.001***
Attention to politics – tv	0.155	0.051	3.044	0.001***
Interest in politics	0.385	0.050	7.716	0.000***
Newspaper frequency	-0.061	0.051	-1.192	0.117
Local tv news	-0.007	0.017	-0.394	0.347
National tv news	0.013	0.025	0.511	0.305
Vote	0.241	0.098	2.446	0.008***
Strength of party id	-0.099	0.053	-1.866	0.031++

N = 1510

R<sup>2</sup> = 0.33

Adj R<sup>2</sup> = 0.32

\*\*\* prob. < 0.01, one-tailed test, with coefficient in expected direction

\*\* prob. < 0.05, one-tailed test, with coefficient in expected direction

++ prob. < 0.05, one-tailed test, with coefficient in unexpected direction

## CONCLUSION

The gender gap in political knowledge poses the question of why men seem to have more political knowledge than women especially considering that today women have the same political opportunities as men. The gender gap is not a simple question and many different factors must be taken into account. My analysis shows that men do have more knowledge when it comes to answering surveillance or factual knowledge questions in surveys. Women overwhelmingly answer fewer questions correctly and more often answer “don’t know” to questions than men. “Don’t know” responses do not necessarily mean that women really are ignorant, but either they do not know the answer or they are not certain their answer is correct. The higher percentages of “don’t know” responses lend some support to Gidengal’s claim that women may respond “don’t know” more than men, but when they do answer they are more likely to have better informed opinions than men.

The statistical results support my two hypotheses. The first is that men have greater political knowledge than women. This is supported by the crosstabulations and regressions for each survey used. In each year and in each country there is a gender gap with men having more political knowledge than women. The gender gap does vary according to the question asked, but the results follow previous research and lend greater support to earlier findings. The coefficient for gender is a significant negative predictor of political knowledge in every regression estimated. Other significant predictors include the coefficients for education, income, attention to politics, media variables, marital status and the number of young children the respondent has. Many of the same variables have the same effect in each of the countries examined. Some of the variables, for example, the media variables, have slightly different effects in some of the countries. Strength of party identification also has different effects in each country. In the United States, the coefficients for folded party identification and folded ideology are significant predictors of knowledge and if

they were not significant the directionality was expected. In Canada and Great Britain, strength of party identification has either a negative effect or no effect. My second hypothesis is also supported. The gender gap exists in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain. The percent of the range of the gender gap varies for each country. To compare the percent of range for each country I standardize the gender coefficient by dividing the coefficient by the number of knowledge items for each year. The results show that the 1996 NES and the 1997 CES models have a range of 3% while the 2000 NES and the 2000 CES models have a range of 10%. The 1997 British model also has a range of 10%. Although, it is hard to say that one country has a larger gap than another a ten percent gap is a serious gap. Also, the fact that the gap increases from 3% to 10% for four of the models is interesting.

Another way the effect of gender on political knowledge can be compared is to standardize the coefficient by dividing the gender coefficient by the overall standard deviation of the respective knowledge scale. Gender accounts for 12% of a standard deviation on the 1996 NES knowledge scale. Gender accounts for 36% of a standard deviation for the 2000 NES; 9% of a standard deviation for the 1997 Canadian Election Study; 26% of a standard deviation for the 2000 Canadian study, and 31% of a standard deviation for the 1997 British study. Gender has a varying effect on the knowledge scales ranging from 9% of a standard deviation to 36%. Although, more testing is necessary to determine which country has a smaller or larger gap than the other countries it is evident that the gender gap does exist and for the most part it is not insignificant.

The difference between men and women can be attributed, in part, to the different concerns that men and women face in their daily lives. For the most part, women are the primary care givers of children. My regression results indicate that having children under the age of eighteen has a negative effect on knowledge. Women and men who have to take care of children often do not have the time and energy necessary to acquire political knowledge. Putnam (1995) finds that social networks foster social capital which is helpful in gaining political knowledge.



Gidengal et al. (2003) tests this theory and finds that the type of association is what affects political knowledge. Men and women have different social networks and as a result political knowledge is not equally distributed.

All of this is not to say that women are incapable of acting in the political world. The opposite is true. There is a difference between knowing how to act and voting, but the two are related. Women turn out in great numbers to vote and they often use different criteria for choosing their candidates. Men may use pocket-book considerations while women may use character or social policies as determinants for voting (Alvarez and McCaffery, 2000). Short-cuts or heuristics are common devices used in helping to make decisions since rational choice voting is very difficult and impossible for most individuals and they are perfectly acceptable. However, I contend that if women use character more than policy or voting record considerations how will they be able to judge the character of a political figure if they do not even know the basic facts about that figure, i.e. the office Al Gore holds? The political knowledge questions do not all concern well known nationally elected figures. William Rehnquist, Newt Gingrich, Boris Yeltsin, and Tony Blair are some examples of political figures that are not elected by the people, indeed the last two are not even political figures in this country. But, the larger point remains that individuals who are even minimally attentive to politics should know who these figures are.

My thesis is not the last word on the gender gap in political knowledge, but it does demonstrate that the gender gap in political knowledge exists in other countries and that the gap varies from country to country. The topic of the gender gap in political knowledge can be taken in many directions. Future research should examine more years and more countries in an effort to precisely discover the determinants of the gender gap. Future research should also focus more specifically on the variables that have been shown to affect political knowledge; for example, why do the religious variables included in my research affect knowledge they way they do? There is still much work to be done with the gender gap in political knowledge and I hope that this thesis has added knowledge to the discussion as well as pointed it in new directions.

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## APPENDIX A – MEASUREMENTS OF VARIABLES

### 1996 American National Election Study

*Gender* – dummy variable measured 1=female, 0=male.

*Frequency of attendance at religious services* – measures how often respondent attends religious services. 1=never, 2=a few times a year, 3=once or twice a month, 4=almost every week, 5=every week.

*Attention to campaigns* – measures how much interest the respondent has in the campaigns. 1=not much interested, 2=somewhat interested, 3=very much interested.

*Political participation* – measured by making an additive scale of participation questions. The political participation questions include: whether respondent wore a political button or sticker, whether the respondent attended a meeting for a candidate, whether respondent contributed money to a candidate, and whether the respondent talked to other people in an effort to persuade their vote. They were all measured as dummy variables with 1=yes and 0=no. They were then summed together to form the additive scale of **prticip=btnstck+meeting+money+talkvote**. The scale runs from 0=no participation to 4=participation in all four activities.

*Political efficacy* – measured by making an additive scale of efficacy questions. The efficacy questions include: whether the respondent thinks politics is too complicated, whether the respondent thinks public officials don't care, and whether people like them have no say in the government. The individual questions are measured on a scale of 1-5 where 1=agree strongly, 2=agree somewhat, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=disagree somewhat, and 5=disagree strongly. The variables were then summed together to form the equation **efficacy= comp+dontcare+nosay**.

*Folded ideology* – measures the ideology of the respondent on a scale of 0-3 where 0=purely moderate, 1=weak Liberals and Conservatives, 2=Liberals and Conservative, and 3=extreme Liberals and Conservatives.

*Folded partisan identification* – measures the partisan identification of the respondent on a scale of 0-3 where 0=pure Independent, 1=Independent Republicans and Democrats, 2=weak Republicans and Democrats, and 3=strong Republicans and Democrats.

*Education* – measures the highest level of education completed by the respondent on a scale of 1-7 where 1=8<sup>th</sup> grade or less, 2=9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> grade, 3=high school diploma, 4=more than 12yrs, 5=junior college degree, 6=BA, and 7=advanced degree.

*Employment status* – three dummy variables measure whether the respondent is employed, unemployed, or retired. 1=employed, 0=other; 1=unemployed, 0=other; 1=retired, 0=other.

*Guidance that religion provides for respondent* – measures how much guidance religion provides on a scale of 1-3 where 1=some, 2=quite a bit, and 3=a great deal.

*Income* – measured in 24 categories.

*Interest in campaigns* – measures respondents’ interest in campaigns on a scale of 1-3 where 1=not much interested, 2=somewhat interested, and 3=very much interested.

*Days last week watching local news, national news, or reading a newspaper* – three separate variables measure how many days in the last week respondents watched local news, national news, or read a newspaper on a scale 0-7 where 0=no days and 7=every day.

*Marital status* – dummy variable where 1=married and 0=other.

*Political discussion* – dummy variable measures whether respondent had political discussion with others. 1=yes and 0=no.

*Age* – measures respondents’ age by actual age.

*Political knowledge* – Variables are measured in two ways. First, the four individual variables are measured on a scale where -1=incorrect, 0=don’t know, and 1=correct. The knowledge questions ask the respondent to identify the political offices of prominent political figures. Those figures are William Rehnquist (Chief Justice of the Supreme Court), Newt Gingrich (Speaker of the House of Representatives), Al Gore (Vice-President of the United States), and Boris Yeltsin (President of Russia). Dummy variables were then created for each item with 1=correct and 0=other. These items are then summed together to form an additive scale of political knowledge. The equation is **know=renquist+gingrich+gore+yeltsin**.

## **2002 American National Election Study**

*Gender* – dummy variable measured 1=female, 0=male.

*Marital status* – dummy variable measured 1=married, 0=other.

*Age* – measured by respondents’ actual age.

*Education* – measures the highest level of education completed by the respondent on a scale of 1-7 where 1=8<sup>th</sup> grade or less, 2=9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> grade, 3=high school diploma, 4=more than 12yrs, 5=junior college degree, 6=BA, and 7=advanced degree.

*Income* – measured in 22 categories.

*Children* – measured by the number of children the respondent has under 18.

*Folded ideology* – measures the ideology of the respondent on a scale of 0-3 where 0=purely moderate, 1=weak Liberals and Conservatives, 2=Liberals and Conservative, and 3=extreme Liberals and Conservatives.

*Folded partisan identification* – measures the partisan identification of the respondent on a scale of 0-3 where 0=pure Independent, 1=Independent Republicans and Democrats, 2=weak Republicans and Democrats, and 3=strong Republicans and Democrats.

*Political efficacy* – measured by making an additive scale of efficacy questions. The efficacy questions include: whether the respondent thinks politics is too complicated, whether the respondent thinks public officials don't care, and whether people like them have no say in the government. The individual questions are measured on a scale of 1-5 where 1=agree strongly, 2=agree somewhat, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=disagree somewhat, and 5=disagree strongly. The variables were then summed together to form the equation **efficacy= comp+dontcare+nosay**.

*Political participation* – measured by making an additive scale of participation questions. The political participation questions include: whether the respondent wore a political button or sticker or displayed a sign, whether the respondent did any other campaign work, whether the respondent voted, whether the respondent attended a meeting for a candidate, whether the respondent contributed money to a candidate, whether the respondent contributed money to a party, and whether the respondent talked to other people in an effort to persuade their vote. They were all measured as dummy variables with 1=yes and 0=no. They were then summed together to form the additive scale of **prticip= btnstck+meeting+moneycan+moneypar+campwork+inflvote+vote**. The scale runs from 0=no participation to 7=participation in all four activities.

*Member of orgs.* – measures whether the respondent is a member of an organization; 1=yes, 0=no.

*Frequency of Political discussion* – measures how many days respondent engages in political discussion on a scale of 1-7 where 1=one day and 7=every day.

*Interest in campaigns*- measures the respondents' interest in the campaigns on a scale of 1-3 Where 1=not much interested, 2=somewhat interested, and 3=very much interested.

*Attention paid to campaigns* – measures the respondents' attention to the campaigns on a scale of 1-3 where 1=not much interested, 2=somewhat interested, and 3=very much interested.

*Watch national news* – measures the days respondents watch the national news on a scale of 0-7 where 0=no day and 7=every day.

*Read newspaper* – measures the days respondents read a daily newspaper on a scale of 0-7 where 0=no day and 7=every day.

*Care* – dummy variable measuring whether the respondent cares about the presidential election where 1=yes, 0=no.

*Frequency of attendance at religious services* – measures how often respondent attends religious services. 1=never, 2=a few times a year, 3=once or twice a month, 4=almost every week, 5=every week.

*Guidance that religion provides for respondent* – measures how much guidance religion provides on a scale of 1-3 where 1=some, 2=quite a bit, and 3=a great deal.

*Political knowledge* – Variables are measured in two ways. First, the four individual variables are measured on a scale where -1=incorrect, 0=don't know, and 1=correct. The knowledge questions ask the respondent to identify the political offices of prominent political figures. Those figures are Trent Lott, Janet Reno, William Rehnquist, Tony Blair, the

home state of George W. Bush and the home state of Al Gore. Dummy variables were then created for each item with 1=correct and 0=other. These items are then summed together to form an additive scale of political knowledge. The equation is:  
**know=lott2+reno2+renquis2+blair2+bush2+gore2.**

### **1997 Canadian Election Study**

*Gender* – dummy variable where 1=female and 0=male.

*Age* – respondent's age by year of birth.

*Attention to news about election* – three separate variables measure the amount of attention the respondent paid to news about the election on the television, radio, and in the newspaper. All three variables are measured on a scale of 0-10 where 0=no attention at all and 10=a great deal of attention.

*Interest in politics in general* – measured on a scale of 0-10 where 0=no interest at all and 10=a great deal of interest.

*Political discussion* – measured by asking respondent how often he/she discusses politics with friends and relatives on a scale of 1-3 where 1=not at all, 2=occasionally, and 3=often.

*Importance of religion* – measure how important religion is to the respondent on a scale of 1-4 where 1=not at all important, 2=not very important, 3=somewhat important, and 4=very important.

*Political efficacy* – measured by making an additive scale of efficacy questions. The efficacy questions include: whether the respondent thinks those elected to Parliament lose touch with the people, whether people like them have no say in government, whether politics and government seem so complicated, and whether they think the government doesn't care what people think. The individual questions are measured on a scale of 1-4 where 1=strongly agree, 2=somewhat agree, 3=somewhat disagree, and 4=strongly disagree. The variables were then summed together to form the equation: **efficacy=parlose+nosay+comp+govcare.**

*Strength* – strength of party id is measured on a scale of 1-3 where 1=not very strong, 2=fairly strong, and 3=very strong.

*Marital status* – dummy variable where 1=married and 0=other.

*Political knowledge* – Variables are measured in two ways. First, the three individual knowledge questions are measured -1=incorrect, 0=don't know, and 1=correct. The questions ask who prominent political officials are – who is the President of the United States (Clinton), who is the Minister of Finance (Martin), and who is the first female Prime Minister (Kim Campbell). Dummy variables are then created where 1=correct and 0=other. These items are then summed together to form an additive scale of political knowledge. The equation is: **know= presus+mfinance+fempm.**



*Education* – measured on a scale of 1-11 where 1=no schooling, 2=some elementary, 3=completed elementary, 4=some high school, 5=completed high school, 6=some technical school, 7=completed technical school, 8=some university, 9=BA, 10=MA, and 11=professional/PhD.

*Employment status* – measured by three dummy variables. 1=employed, 0=other; 1=unemployed, 0=other; 1=retired, 0=other.

*Income* – I collapsed the variable measuring income in thousands and the category income variable together to form one variable which captures all the respondents. Income is measured in ten categories. 1=less than 20k, 2=20-29k, 3=30-39k, 4=40-49k, 5=50-59k, 6=60-69k, 7=70-79k, 8=80-89k, 9=90-99k, 10=more than 100k.

*Children* – measures the number of children under 18 in the house on a scale of 0-7.

*Hours watching television and listening to the radio* – two variables measure how many hours a day respondents watched tv or listened to the radio on a scale of 1-23 for television and 1-24 for radio.

*Days a week reading a newspaper* – measures how many days respondents read a newspaper a week on a scale of 0-7 where 0=no days and 7=every day.

*Vote* – measures whether respondent voted or not. 1=yes, 0=no.

## **2000 Canadian Election Study**

*Gender* – dummy variable measured 1=female, 0=male.

*Age* – measured by the year the respondent was born.

*Attention to news about the election* – three separate variables measure how much attention the respondent paid to news about the election on the television, on the radio, and in the newspaper. All three variables are measured on a scale of 0-10 where 0=no attention at all and 10=a great deal of attention.

*Interest in politics in general* – measured on a scale of 0-10 where 0=no interest at all and 10=a great deal of interest.

*Political discussion with others* – this variables measures political discussion with others on a scale of 1-3 where 1=not at all, 2=occasionally, and 3=often.

*Political efficacy* – measured by a single variable which asks the respondent how strongly they agree or disagree with the statement “I don’t think the government cares about what I think.” 1=strongly agree, 2=somewhat agree, 3=somewhat disagree, and 4=strongly disagree.

*Marital status* – dummy variable measures whether respondent is married or not; 1=married, 0=other.

*Strength of party identification* – measured on a scale of 1-3 where 1=not very strong, 2=fairly strong, and 3=very strong.

*Education* – measured on a scale of 1-11 where 1=no schooling, 2=some elementary, 3=completed elementary, 4=some high school, 5=completed high school, 6=some technical school, 7=completed technical school, 8=some university, 9=BA, 10=MA, and 11=professional/PhD.

*Employment status* – measured by three dummy variables. 1=employed, 0=other; 1=unemployed, 0=other; 1=retired, 0=other.

*Income* – I collapsed the variable measuring income in thousands and the category income variable together to form one variable which captures all the respondents. Income is measured in ten categories. 1=less than 20k, 2=20-29k, 3=30-39k, 4=40-49k, 5=50-59k, 6=60-69k, 7=70-79k, 8=80-89k, 9=90-99k, 10=more than 100k.

*Children* – measures the number of children under 18 in the house on a scale of 0-10.

*Hours watching television and listening to the radio* – two variables measure how many hours a day respondents watched tv or listened to the radio on a scale of 0-20 for television and 0-20 for radio.

*Days a week reading a newspaper* – measures how many days respondents read a newspaper a week on a scale of 0-7 where 0=no days and 7=every day.

*Interest group* – measures whether respondent has ever been a member of an interest group. 1=yes, 0=no.

*Contact an MP* – measures whether respondent has ever contacted an MP. 1=yes, 0=no.

*Help candidates* – measures whether respondent ever helped any candidates. 1=yes, 0=no.

*Political knowledge* - Variables are measured in two ways. First, the seven individual knowledge questions are measured -1=incorrect, 0=don't know, and 1=correct. The questions ask what the capital of the United States is, who the Minister of Finance is, who the PM during NAFTA was, and the leaders of the political parties (Alliance, Conservative, Liberal, and NDP). Dummy variables are then created where 1=correct and 0=other. These items are then summed together to form an additive scale of political knowledge.  
**know=allianc2+cons2+liberal2+ndp2+uscapit2+mfinanc2+pmnafta2.**

## **1997 British Data**

*Age* – measured by groupings. 1= 18-24, 2=35-44, 3=45-54, 4=55-59, 5=60-64, 6=65+.

*Gender* – 1=female, 0=male.

*Income* – measured in quartiles. 1=lowest quartile, 2=second quartile, 3=third quartile, 4=highest quartile.

*Marital status* – 1=married, 0=other.

*Children under 18 in the house* – the number of children under 18 in the house ranging from 0-8.

*Employment status* – three dummies to measure employed, retired, and unemployed.  
1=employed, 0=other; 1=retired, 0=other; and 1=unemployed, 0=other.

*Religiosity* – measured by asking respondent how religious they are now.  
1=not at all religious, 2=not very religious, 3=somewhat religious, 4=very religious.

*Attendance at religious services* – measured by asking how often respondent attends religious services. 1=never or practically never, 2=varies too much to say, 3=less often, 4=once a year, 5=twice a year, 6=once a month, 7=once in two weeks, 8=once a week or more.

*Attention to politics in newspapers* – measured by asking respondent how much attention he/she pays to politics in the newspaper. 1=none, 2=a little, 3=some, 4=quite a bit, 5=a great deal.

*Attention to politics on television* – measured by asking respondent how much attention he/she pays to politics on television. 1=none, 2=a little, 3=some, 4=quite a bit, 5=a great deal.

*Strength of party identification* – measures how strength of respondents' party identification on a scale of 1-3 where 1=not very strong, 2=fairly strong, and 3=very strong.

*Interest in politics* – measured by asking respondent how much interest he/she has in politics.  
1=none at all, 2=not very much, 3=some, 4=quite a lot, 5= a great deal.

*Hours watching local and national television* – two questions measure how many days the respondent watches local and national television. Measured on a scale of 0=no days to 7= seven days.

*Political knowledge* - Variables are measured in two ways. First, the seven political knowledge questions are measured - 1=incorrect, 0=don't know, and 1=correct. The seven knowledge questions are: 1=knowledge of whether elections are held every four years or not.  
2= knowledge of whether Margaret Thatcher was a Conservative or not.  
3= knowledge of whether Britain has proportional representation or not.  
4=knowledge of whether MPs from different parties can be on the same committee or not. 5= knowledge of whether the number of MPs in Parliament is 100 or not.  
6=knowledge of whether individuals have to pay a deposit to stand for office or not.  
7= knowledge of whether there are separate elections for the EU and Great Britain Parliaments or not. These knowledge items are then summed together to form a knowledge scale. The equation for this scale is:  
**know= elect4yr+mthatcher+prorep+mpcomm+parlment+paydep+sepelec.** The scale ranges from 0-7 where 0 tells how many respondents got 0 questions correct and 7 tells how many respondents got all the questions right.

## APPENDIX B – DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Descriptive statistics – 1996 National Election Studies

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Gender	0.55	0.50	0	1
Knowledge scale	2.21	1.10	0	4
Attend church frequency	2.58	1.95	0	5
Attention to campaign	2.04	0.71	1	3
Participation scale	0.50	0.82	0	4
Read about campaign	0.43	0.50	0	1
Efficacy scale	7.91	2.66	3	15
Education	4.10	1.65	1	7
Age	47.54	17.41	18	93
Employed dummy	0.64	0.48	0	1
Unemployed dummy	2.51E-02	0.16	0	1
Retired dummy	0.20	0.40	0	1
Folded ideology	1.12	0.90	0	3
Income	15.03	6.34	1	24
Interest in political camp.	2.16	0.67	1	3
Knowledge scale	2.21	1.10	0	4
Watch local news	4.11	2.59	0	7
Watch nat'l news	3.54	2.73	0	7
Read newspaper	3.39	2.88	0	7
Marital status	0.54	0.50	0	1
Guidance from religion	2.25	0.79	1	3
Folded party id	1.88	0.96	0	3
Folded ideology	0.86	0.91	0	3
Political discussion	0.78	0.41	0	1

Descriptive statistics – 2000 National Election Study

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Gender	0.56	0.50	0	1
Age	47.21	16.96	18	97
Marital status	0.52	0.50	0	1
Education	4.29	1.62	1	7
Income	6.76	3.75	1	22
Children <18	0.96	1.25	0	11
Interest in campaigns	2.27	0.70	1	3
Attention to campaigns	2.07	0.71	1	3
Folded ideology	1.46	0.81	0	3
Folded party id	1.81	1.02	0	3
Political discussion frequency	4.38	2.53	1	7
Efficacy scale	8.52	2.95	3	15
Participation scale	1.42	1.16	0	7
Membership in orgs.	0.41	0.49	0	1
Knowledge scale	2.66	1.51	0	6
Care about election	0.78	0.41	0	1
Watch nat'l news	3.29	2.80	0	7
Read paper	3.44	2.92	0	7
Church attendance frequency	2.87	1.60	1	5
Guidance from religion	1.74	1.19	0	3

Descriptive statistics – 1997 Canadian Election Study

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Gender	0.53	0.50	0	1
Age	2084.72	1024.09	1896	9999
Attn to election-tv	4.39	3.21	0	10
Attn to election-paper	3.50	3.21	0	10
Attn to election-radio	3.51	3.17	0	10
Interest in politics	5.38	2.85	0	10
Poli discussion-frs/rels	1.79	0.68	1	3
Efficacy	8.29	2.69	4	16
Strength of party id	2.00	0.67	1	3
Knowledge scale	1.61	0.97	0	3
Marital status	0.50	0.50	0	1
Education	6.22	2.13	1	11
Employment dummy	0.62	0.48	0	1
Unemployment dummy	5.85E-02	0.23	0	1
Retired dummy	0.18	0.39	0	1
Children < 18	0.72	1.06	0	1
Income	4.52	2.89	1	10
Hrs watching tv	2.25	1.88	0	23
Hrs listening to radio	2.67	3.16	0	24
Days reading paper	3.75	2.68	0	7
Importance of religion	2.91	0.96	1	4
Vote	0.82	0.38	0	1

Descriptive statistics – 2000 Canadian Election Study

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Gender	0.52	0.50	0	1
Age	2021.69	738.61	1902	9999
Attn to election- tv	4.91	3.02	0	10
Attn to election- radio	3.34	3.19	0	10
Attn to election- paper	3.85	3.33	0	10
Interest in politics	5.41	2.84	0	10
Political discussion	1.94	0.70	1	3
Efficacy	2.10	0.94	1	4
Knowledge scale	4.64	2.24	0	7
Marital status	0.49	0.50	0	1
Education	6.24	2.14	1	11
Employed dummy	0.61	0.49	0	1
Unemployed dummy	4.81E-02	0.21	0	1
Retired dummy	0.22	0.42	0	1
Income	5.31	3.28	1	10
Children < 18	0.67	1.06	0	9
Hrs watching tv	2.50	1.96	0	20
Hrs listening to radio	2.35	3.16	0	20
Days reading newspaper	3.65	2.76	0	7
Member of interest group	0.10	0.31	0	1
Help candidates	7.42E-02	0.26	0	1
Contact an MP	0.33	0.47	0	1

Descriptive statistics – 1997 British General Election Cross-Section Study

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Gender	0.54	0.50	0	1
Age (categories)	4.27	1.86	1	7
Income	2.22	1.13	1	4
Marital status	0.52	0.50	0	1
Children <18	0.62	1.00	0	8
Employed	0.52	0.50	0	1
Unemployed	4.57E-02	0.21	0	1
Retired	0.24	0.43	0	1
Religious	2.19	0.93	1	4
Attendance at church	3.21	2.67	1	8
Attention to politics-papers	2.91	1.11	1	5
Attention to politics-tv	2.99	1.12	1	5
Knowledge scale	5.01	1.78	0	7
Read paper	0.60	0.49	0	1
Read paper frequency	3.62	0.71	1	4
Interest in politics	3.01	1.06	1	5
Watch local news	5.27	2.47	0	7
Watch nat'l news	5.74	2.17	0	7
Strength of party id	1.80	0.71	1	3
Vote	0.79	0.41	0	1



## VITA

Emily Marie Guynan was born in Schuyler, Nebraska, on July 16, 1980. She is the oldest of seven children, the daughter of Joseph and Mary Ann Guynan. Emily attended the local public grade school until the seventh grade at which time she was home-schooled through high school. After graduation from high school in 1998, Emily attended The Thomas More College of Liberal Arts in Merrimack, New Hampshire, where she majored in political science. She also participated in the Social Council eventually becoming Director of the Social Council which entailed planning school events such as trips, dances, and coffee houses. In May of 2002 Emily graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in political science. During the summer of 2002 she returned to The Thomas More College of Liberal Arts to participate on the staff of the Summer Program for High School Students where she was in charge of planning the daily activities for the students and in directing their daily writing assignments. In August of 2002 Emily moved to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where she began work on her Master of Arts degree in political science. Emily's primary field is in American politics where she is interested in public opinion, political knowledge, and political behavior. Her secondary field is in political theory where her main interests lie in American political thought and the founding of America.