Gendered Political Socialization

The Diagnosis, Long-Term Consequences, and Cures

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In Canada and other Western countries, men and women are about as likely to vote (Blais and Loewen 2011), to participate in unconventional forms of politics such as protesting, signing petitions and boycotting products (Mahéo, Dejaeghere, and Stolle 2012; Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007), and to win their elections when they run for office (Sevi, Arel-Bundock, and Blais 2019). However, studies have also found that men are more likely to be interested in politics, to discuss politics, to give correct answers to most types of political knowledge questions (Coffé 2013; Dolan 2011; Stolle and Gidengil 2010; Verba, Burns, and Schlozman 1997), and to run for political office (Fox and Lawless 2005). The end result is that politics is still mainly a men’s game in the country: political issues are mainly discussed by men and settled by assemblies with a majority of men legislators at all levels of power (Tolley 2011), even though policies often have different effects on men and women which can be influenced by policymakers’ gender (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004; Donato et al. 2008).

The puzzle I want to investigate is why, when and how women and men’s different political attitudes and behaviours emerge. Going back to children’s education at school and by parents, what factors lead to a gender discrepancy — which is found as early as teenage (Jennings 1996; Mayer and Schmidt 2004)? Then, why do these attitudes and behaviours endure in the long-run and become obstacles to some forms of political involvement? In an article-based dissertation with 4 articles, I plan to investigate (1) why adolescent boys and girls differ on measures of politicization by testing two new theories, the parental gender bias theory and the duty-efficacy theory; (2) how citizenship education classes (for children), campaign pledge evaluation tools, and voting advice applications (for adults) can act either to reinforce these gender differences or to alleviate them by providing more information about politics that reach certain types of people; (3) what kinds of recruitment strategies succeed in encouraging women to run for political office; and (4) what are the differences in how women and men members of parliament interact during parliamentary debates and committees, with a special concern for aggressive words, consensus searching and rational debating.

Overall, my thesis will answer the following research question: “How does political socialization lead to gender differences in politicization, and how do these differences affect the ways in which men and women behave in parliaments?” Politicization is meant to include interest, knowledge, and discussion of politics. This question is a causal one, as I expect parents’ treatment of boys and girls and classroom experiences to have an effect on various indicators of politicization and, eventually, on political representation. I argue that biological approaches which explain political interest or electoral participation with genetics (Fowler, Baker, and Dawes 2008; Klemmensen et al. 2012) do not have as much explanatory power as socialization approaches (Bashevkin 1993) for explaining gender gaps in politicization and political involvement.

My interest for political socialization comes from the fact that even though I attended a good high school, I didn’t feel I got enough information to be able to fully participate in political life at adult age. That has led me to ask myself how certain kinds of citizenship education classes and voter information tools could get citizens more interested in politics. My own personal experiences have also led me to believe that women’s lower political interest and representation might be rooted in early socialization, and my personal belief is that efforts should be made so that more people in society pay attention to collective decision-making at the societal level.

# Article 1: class-climate

Research question: Does an open classroom climate favour girls’ politicization and participation to the same extent than boys’? Do girls participate as much as boys in these sessions?

*Research query 1: “open classroom climate” (interesting results to keep checking; there seems to be a big body of literature going back to at least the 1990s)*

Research query 2: “open classroom climate” gender (uninteresting results because gender does not seem to be mentioned as a main variable)

Research query 3: class debates boys girls (uninteresting results because debate is not used in the classroom context)

Research query 4: (“class debate” OR “classroom debate”) boys girls (uninteresting results)

Research query 5: open class climate effect on girls (uninteresting results)

Research strategy: search for “gender,” “wom,” “fem,” “sex,” “girl,” “climat,” “debat” and “discu” in each article.

Only about citizenship education: Hooghe et al. (2011), Mahéo (2018), Mahéo (2019)

Only about open classroom climate: Brownell and Rashid (2020), Campbell (2008), Dassonneville et al. (2012), Desjardins and Schuller (2006), Gniewosz and Noack (2008), Godfrey and Grayman (2014), Hoskins, Janmaat, and Villalba (2012), Knowles and McCafferty-Wright (2015), Manganelli, Lucidi, and Alivernini (2015), Martens and Gainous (2013), McCafferty-Wright and Knowles (2016), Persson (2015)

Only about gender stereotypes at school: Lay et al. (2019)

Campbell (2007) finds that 9th-grade girls are more likely than boys to report an open classroom climate. Blankenship (1990) finds the same for 9th- to 12th-graders. Maurissen, Claes, and Barber (2018) find the same for 8th-graders.

Gendered differences in effects of open classroom climate: Pilkauskaite-Valickiene, Zukauskiene, and Raiziene (2011)

# Article 3: vaas-cpets

Research question: Are information communication technologies (ICTs) such as Campaign Pledge Evaluation Tools (CPETs) used as much by men as by women? Do CPETs and Voting Advice Applications (VAAs) lead to higher political interest and greater political discussion as much for women as for men users? Do effects diverge for voters who have the chance to vote for the first time?

Research query 1: (“vote advice application” OR “voting advice application” OR “vote advice applications” OR “voting advice applications”) gender (first page pertinent, keep on searching)

Research query 2: (“vote advice application” OR “voting advice application” OR “vote advice applications” OR “voting advice applications”) “political interest” gender (interesting)

Men are more likely to use VAAs than women in most countries where they have been tested, including European countries and Brazil (Andreadis, Wall, and Krouwel 2014, 2015; Marzuca, Serdült, and Welp 2011; Pianzola 2014; Raab 2013; Vassil 2011; Wheatley 2016), but not Denmark (Hoff and Farimagsgade 2013) and the Netherlands (Gemenis and Rosema 2014). This might be because “Men use the internet twice as much as women do and also their time periods spend on the internet are longer. In addition, men use the internet for information seeking whereas women tend to use it for social-networking” (Raab 2013, 4–5). Men are more likely to use the Internet than women, but even more likely to use VAAs than women (Andreadis, Wall, and Krouwel 2014, 2015). The difference is less stark among users less than 20 years old (Marzuca, Serdült, and Welp 2011).

However, female voters are more likely to value most visual and technical features of VAAs when asked (Alvarez et al. 2014).

VAAs can activate voters, i.e. make them switch from a position where they say they do not intend to vote to a position where they say they intend to vote. This activation effect is as strong for women as for men in Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom (Ramos, Padilla, and Chueca 2019). However, it seems to be stronger for young, less knowledgeable and less educated voters (Gemenis and Rosema 2014; Vassil 2011).

# Article 4: extra-party

Research question: Do extra-party recruitment programs that try to attract women legislators work? What are the most effective strategies they have to recruit women candidates?

Research query 1: “equal voice” canada women (first two pages interesting)

Research query 2: “campaign school” experiment (uninteresting results)

Research query 3: “campaign school” experiment women politics

Research query 4: “institute for future legislators” experiment (nothing or almost)

Dhima (2020) finds that elites discriminate against men when it comes to providing advice to political aspirants.

# Article 6: assemblies-changes

Research question: How do women discuss politics relative to men? Are they better or worse at de-escalating, finding common ground or arguing? Do they interrupt, heckle or dissent less often? When more women are elected, how do assemblies change relative to the way politics is discussed?

Research query 1: gender debate aggressive (not linked to politics)

Research query 2: gender political debate aggressiveness (interesting results)

Research query 3: “substantive representation” women consensual decisions (nothing interesting)

Research query 4: “substantive representation” women aggressive (nothing interesting)

Research query 5: machine learning identify men women speakers (interesting)

Research query 6: machine learning identify men women textual analysis (interesting but related to written text)

Research query 7: machine learning identify men women textual analysis speech transcript (interesting)

Research query 8: machine learning identifying gender textual analysis speech transcript (uninteresting)

Research query 9: parliament proceedings identifying gender (very interesting, did up to p. 3)

Och (2020) finds that in Germany, “manterruptions are neither systemic and frequent enough to constitute a form of resistance against women in politics nor do they prevent female representatives from engaging in the substantive representation of women.”

Banwart and McKinney (2005) find that “while female and male candidates use logical appeals and a deductive structure of reasoning, they discuss stereotypically masculine and feminine issues at almost identical frequencies. Although masculine character traits (e.g., aggressiveness) are much more frequently emphasized by both female and male candidates than are feminine character traits, both female and male candidates develop their debate responses by using feminine communication strategies (e.g., use of personal tone) more frequently than masculine communication strategies” (p. 370).

“Gender does not influence how people perceive aggressive messages” (Yuan and Besley 2018).

“on, male and female chairs do not conduct hearings in the same way, and these differences affect the behavior of witnesses and committee members. The findings suggest that as the proportion of women increases in a legislative body, men become more verbally aggressive and controlling of the hearing. Women legislators may be seriously disadvantaged and unable to participate equally in legislative policymaking in committee hearings” (Kathlene 1994).

Kabil, Muckenhirn, and Magimai-Doss (2018) use machine learning to identify men and women speakers using their voice and other attributes. Cheng, Chandramouli, and Subbalakshmi (2011) use a textual analysis way of identifying author gender, but focus on linguistic features instead of kinds of words used (aggressive, consensual), just like Argamon et al. (2003), and do not include transcripts of speeches but instead written content, just like Argamon et al. (2003), Deitrick et al. (2012), Koppel, Argamon, and Shimoni (2002) and Beltran et al. (2020). Beltran et al. (2020) find that “male politicians use more words related to politics, sports, ideology and infrastructure, while female politicians talk about gender and social affairs. The choice of emojis varies greatly across genders.” Still, machine learning can create discrimination (Leavy 2018; Bolukbasi et al. 2016).

Mandravickaitė and Krilavičius (2017) use Lithuanian Parliament data to show there are gender differences in word and topic use. Hansen, Navarretta, and Offersgaard (2018) show that women in the Danish Parliament speak less often (just like Shaw (2002)) and for shorter lengths of time. “The Danish data seem to confirm the findings of Bäck et al. (2014) in the Swedish data that female MPs often spoke about ‘softer’ political areas for which they were responsible, while male MPs spoke about ‘harder’ subjects” (p. 72). They also find differences in topic use.

Shaw (2002) shows that women in the UK House of Commons are less likely to resort to joking, filibustering, and adversarial language.

There is also a literature on how power is distributed in parliaments.

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