# Answers to Prof. Sylvia Bashevkin's comments (original file = Word doc)

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| **Commented excerpt in the manuscript** | **Comment by Prof. Bashevkin** | **Page number on the original version** | **My answer and changes** | **Page number on the new version (might be one page above in a few cases)** |
| 1. (in our discussion) | find a model study which studies the same age group | - | I found two studies which, together, look like the kind of study I want to do.  Bos, Angela L., Mirya R. Holman, Jill S. Greenlee, Zoe M. Oxley, and J. Celeste Lay. 2020. “100 Years of Suffrage and Girls Still Struggle to Find their "Fit"" in Politics.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 53 (3): 474–78.  This survey is done among elementary school students and asks them about political interest and political ambition, among other things.  Campbell, Rosie, and Kristi Winters. 2008. “Understanding Men’s and Women’s Political Interests: Evidence from a Study of Gendered Political Attitudes.” *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 18 (1): 53–74.  This study looks at the gender gaps in interest for health care, partisan politics, education, foreign policy, etc. It questions the concept of political interest. | - |
| 2. (in our discussion) | start by explaining that (political) socialization is still important (and why) and that political interest encompasses more topics than usually admitted | - | I reframed the first paragraph of the introduction (relevant parts in bold): "Traditional political science studies suggest that men are generally more interested in politics than women (Verba, Burns, and Schlozman 1997). However, **recent studies (R. Campbell and Winters 2008; Ferrin et al. 2020; Rebenstorf 2004) show that people do not think about the full range of political actions when they are asked questions about their political interest, and that men are more interested than women in certain political topics — notably partisan politics — but less interested in others, such as health care and education**. In parallel, **studies have found parents and peers play an important role in children’s political socialization** (Dostie-Goulet 2009; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Mayer and Schmidt 2004; Neundorf, Smets, and Garcia-Albacete 2013), especially when they share the children’s gender (Beauregard 2008; Owen and Dennis 1988). **While structural, institutional, biological and life-cycle factors have also been linked to the development of political interest, childhood socialization is one of its most important determinants** (Jennings and Niemi 2014) – and political interest remains stable from an early age (Prior 2010, 2019). However, parent transmission of political interest has only been studied using the traditional one-item measure of political interest, while the gendered aspects of peer transmission of political interest have not been formalized. This dissertation wishes to address both issues by suggesting a unified theory: *children’s interest for specific political topics comes mainly from socialization by their same-gender parent and peers*. Notably, it is argued that interest in *partisan* politics is distinctly transmitted by men and to boys." | 1 |
| 3. (in our discussion) | reduce the discussion on other aspects of political behaviour & attitudes than political interest | - | I rewrote the central section to talk about political interest and avoid political knowledge, political participation, political efficacy, etc. I feel it is much clearer now! That was needed. | 10-13 |
| 4. (in our discussion) | mention the fact that families are not always heterosexual and nuclear | - | I added the following footnote when talking about mothers and fathers for the first time: "This dissertation uses the words "mother" and "father" without implying that there is exactly one mother and one father per family. Other situations are very common." | 9 |
| 5. (in our discussion) | better define politics… theoretically AND based on people's views of what is politics | - | I added two paragraphs in the introduction, just after the study's description: "Before digging deeper into concepts such as political interest and political ambition, it is important to define what is understood by politics. Politics is a contested concept (Gallie 1956). It has been defined in multiple ways by various authors. For Weber (1919), “[t]he concept is extremely broad and comprises any kind of leadership in action” (p. 1). A more recent and comprehensive definition is provided by Heywood (2007) (p. 34): “Politics, in its broadest sense, is the activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live. Politics is inextricably linked to the phenomena of conflict and cooperation. On the one hand, the existence of rival opinions, different wants, competing needs and opposing interests guarantees disagreement about the rules under which people live. On the other hand, people recognize that, in order to influence these rules or ensure their enforcement, they must work with others.” Other sources have variously described politics as the art of government, as public affairs in general, as the non-violent resolution of disputes, or as power and the distribution of resources (Heywood 2007).  In this dissertation, for the sake of clarity, politics is defined according to Heywood’s main definition. Politics is therefore not necessarily related with the notion of leadership, and it is more than a partisan game. It includes actions that preserve the policy status quo as well as actions which aim at disrupting it, including contentious politics and interest groups which seek to influence the rules — from the international level to the local level."  I reiterate this definition later on: "Studies report men are more likely than women to discuss politics, but men and women tend to think about *partisan politics* more specifically when they think about politics (R. Campbell and Winters 2008; Ferrin et al. 2020; Rebenstorf 2004). Still, per Heywood (2007)’s definition, partisan politics is only one way in which people make and change the rules that govern them." | 1-2; 4 |
| 6. "This dissertation hypothesizes that gender differences in political interest are mainly due to childhood political socialization, and in particular to the influence of same-gender peers and adult role models in early political discussions." | What about other explanatory factors? Why use men as the normative type? Why not ask how it is that over time, lots of men have become like women, i.e. disengaged from institutional politics? | 1 | For other explanatory factors, I now separate them in three main categories, each with a section in the literature review: structural, institutional, and individual factors. Individual factors are then subdivided in life-cycle events, biology, and socialization. I conclude this discussion like this: "Overall, structural, institutional, life-cycle and biological factors provide a partial explanation of the gender gap in political interest, but socialization seems to be an especially fruitful avenue." In the introduction, I mention explicitly that "While structural, institutional, biological and life-cycle factors have also been linked to the development of political interest, childhood socialization is one of its most important determinants (Jennings and Niemi 2014)."  I make it clearer at the beginning of the introduction that women and men have different political interests, none of which are necessarily more important than the other ones – and men are therefore not the normative type (see answer to comment #2).  In terms of political interest, which is my main DV, the preliminary (unweighted) CES data I analyzed thus far show that political interest has increased since 1997, while the gender gap in political interest is mostly stable – though there was a slight uptick in the size of this gap in 2015 and 2019. | 9; 1 |
| 7. "Findings about gender differences in other aspects of political engagement, including political interest, political knowledge and voter turnout, are more complex but also point to important gender differences." | Do you mean engagement in parliamentary politics? What about social movement or protest politics? This first page is far too embedded in ideas and concepts from the 1970s and 1980s. | 1 | With the definition of politics mentioned earlier, I make it clearer I am also including social movements and protest politics when I speak about political engagement or political participation (see answer to comment #5). | - |
| 8. "Throughout this dissertation, the umbrella term *political engagement* is used to describe forms of commitment to politics through attitudes and actions — leaving aside the ideological content of these attitudes and actions." | Politics of what variety? What about family politics? Community politics? | 2 | This paragraph is now preceded with the definition of politics (see answer to comment #5). Activities which seek to influence rules that govern a group of people – be it through family or community politics – are included. | - |
| 9. "More narrowly, political participation is used to refer to political actions, such as boycotting, participating in protests, donating money to candidates, intending to vote, or voting." | Again, this is highly focused on institutional politics and not the politics that tends to draw women toward public engagement. | 2 | I added to the list "working with interest groups or voluntary associations which seek to influence policy at any level — international, national, provincial, local, school board, and so on." | 2 |
| 10. "Unless otherwise specified, political interest refers to self-reported interest in politics in general." | Politics in general would include local school boards, community politics, social protest, etc. | 2 | It should, but studies show that people mostly think about partisan politics and leave aside other considerations when they are asked about their political interest. I made it clearer by adding this: "and studies show that women and men tend to think about *partisan politics* more specifically when they answer survey questions on political interest (R. Campbell and Winters 2008; Ferrin et al. 2020; Rebenstorf 2004). This measure therefore has a bias towards partisan politics. Only when studies explicitly measure interest in *partisan politics*, this dissertation uses *interest in partisan politics* instead of *political interest*." I could talk about "interest in partisan politics" every time I mention a study which uses the general (gender-biased) measure of political interest, but both concepts are slightly different so I prefer to warn the reader at the beginning of the proposal ("Unless otherwise specified, political interest refers to self-reported interest in politics in general.") and then use the shorter "political interest" afterwards, since this is the name of the (gender-biased) concept they are using. | 2 |
| 11. "Introduction" | This section requires careful interrogation of the concepts of politics, engagement, interest, etc. It also requires a clear acknowledgement of the realities of social inequality, marginalization and discrimination that rest at the heart of work on gender differences in social research. | 1 | I provided a definition of politics, which clarifies the definitions of political engagement and interest, and only after this definition do I mention the definition of political engagement and political interest. I also clarified the concept of political participation (see answer to comment #9), which is a component of political engagement.  For acknowledging the realities of inequality, marginalization and discrimination, I reframed the second paragraph: "Among various topics, interest in partisan politics is important because it is correlated with greater political ambition, which leads to men’s higher levels of representation (Fox and Lawless 2005). Since 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 fact that women are under-represented in the legislative and executive spheres has practical consequences on the kinds of legislation adopted. By studying the inception and causes of gender differences in political interest, potential solutions can be sought by relevant actors who seek assemblies that are more gender-balanced."  On discrimination, I also develop this further in a footnote in another section, when further discussing women's under-representation in political institutions: "Studies have also found that highly visible politicians are covered more negatively by the media (Fernandez-Garcia 2016), are more likely to be the targets of uncivil tweets (Rheault, Rayment, and Musulan 2019) and have a lower income than men — even in Canada (Thomas 2013). These factors could also help to explain women’s lower political ambition and representation."  And again, in the next paragraph, I further address the issue of discrimination: "Women’s lower level of political ambition is not the only factor contributing to their legislative under-representation. Discrimination against women by gatekeepers (Ashe and Stewart 2012) and by parties who make them candidates in hopeless ridings (Thomas and Bodet 2013) might explain part of the gender gap in legislative representation in the country, among other factors. Still, women are not discriminated at the polls by Canadian voters (Sevi, Arel-Bundock, and Blais 2019) and are more likely than men to win elections at the municipal level when they run (Lucas et al. 2021). An international study also finds voters discriminate against *men* candidates by 2 percentage points (Schwarz and Coppock 2021). Moreover, Canadian elites discriminate against men when it comes to providing advice to political aspirants (Dhima 2020)." | 1; 5; 5-6 |
| 12. (in our discussion) | in the intro, talk about egalitarianism | - | See answer to comment #11. | - |
| 13. (in the email) | placing your study of gender as well as politics in a more critical framework that speaks to contemporary scholarship in the field | - | I added a reference to Spierings (2012), who makes a feminist/intersectional critique of the gender gap in political interest: "While this dissertation focuses on the gender gap in self-reported political interest, different groups of women also differ on political interest. In the Dominican Republic, Spierings (2012) finds that Protestant women report levels of political interest similar to men and higher than Catholic women, while Mestizo women report lower levels of political interest than Indigenous women." I also added Rebenstorf (2004) to the list of studies which deconstruct political interest into interest in different political topics and analyze gender gaps.  Other feminist critiques that came up in my research and which I went back to include Stolle & Gidengil 2010, Dolan 2011, Campbell & Winters 2008, and Coffé 2013. | 3 |
| 14. "However, other aspects of political engagement point in the direction of men being overall more politically engaged. Studies have found that they are more likely to be interested in politics in general, including national and international politics (Verba, Burns, and Schlozman 1997); to discuss politics (Beauvais 2020; Rosenthal, Jones, and Rosenthal 2003); to have an opinion on political issues (Atkeson and Rapoport 2003) [...]" | I've highlighted terms that need to be explained. How is politics defined and measured in these studies? | 4 | The definitions of politics and political interest I use in the literature review are now defined in the introduction (see answer to comment #5). It is specified that they apply to all uses in this dissertation (whatever concept the authors of individual works might have said they were measuring). | - |
| 15. "Finally, some aspects of political engagement suggest women are more politically engaged." | You need to directly address the differences between formal institutional versus informal and sometimes anti-system engagement in which genders have engaged, and why these categories matter. | 5 | I added the following paragraph just after: "Overall, the types of political engagement in which men appear to be more involved are more related to political institutions, while those in which women are more involved are more informal and — in the case of boycotts and petitions — anti-system. Since more power is typically concentrated in political institutions than in private activism in Canada, the aspects of politics in which men feel more engaged, such as interest in partisan and national politics, are the ones that matter the most for the daily conduct of politics in the country. The overall influence of women in Canadian politics is therefore limited." | 4 |
| 16. "Gender differences in political engagement — whatever their direction — influence each other (Bennett and Bennett 1989; Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010; Coffé 2013; Ondercin and Jones-White 2011) and have consequences for at least two types of substantive citizen participation: discussing politics with other people and running for elected political office." | "political engagement": defined as what? "politics": how defined? | 5-6 | This is now more explicit in the introduction (see answer to comment #5). | - |
| 17. "As people usually discuss the topics they are most interested in, it seems likely that women discuss more often political topics for which they report more interest, such as health care or gender issues. Political discussion of various topics is seen as something desirable in participatory democracy." | But who values what? Political science is a highly masculine discipline at least in historical terms and values partisan over community or non-institutional protest politics. There needs to be a sociology of knowledge dimension to this proposal. | 6 | I added a footnote for this sentence: "The long-standing concept of participatory democracy is also well accepted among feminist and intersectional theorists (Collins 2017; Phillips 1992)."  For the sociology of knowledge component, I have considered feminist critiques to the main concepts used in the study (see answer to comment #13) and incorporated them better throughout the text, including talks about protest politics (see answers to comments #5 and #15). | 5 |
| 18. "Discussing with people with different ideas and views also creates a phenomenon of collective intelligence (Landemore 2013), which is seen as a desirable outcome from a democratic point of view, since it has been found both to reduce political polarization and to produce better reasoning, i.e., a better capacity at finding and evaluating arguments in deliberative context (Mercier and Landemore 2012). It therefore seems relevant to identify the socialization elements that lead to more diversity in political discussions — and men and women have different life experiences but also, often, different ideological viewpoints (Gidengil et al. 2005)." | Diversity is all well and good, but who decides what matters and how scholarship values different types of citizen engagement? | 6-7 | For who decides what matters, it is academics, and as I now emphasize earlier in the study, political interest should now be measured by sub-topic, taking into account each gender's average preferences. These studies (R. Campbell and Winters 2008; Ferrin et al. 2020; Rebenstorf 2004) and the ones mentioned here are conducted mainly by women scholars (7 women, 2 men), although I do not expect men scholars would find different results. | - |
| 19. "Political interest, self-perceived qualifications, and family socialization all predict political ambition — i.e., having previously considered the possibility of running for office. Gender differences in political interest and political efficacy might therefore help to explain why women are under-represented in legislative assemblies in the vast majority of countries (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2021)." | This is highly unlikely in contemporary terms. Where are the economic barriers to contesting public office? Discriminatory gatekeepers inside parties? Problems of media framing? This section needs to be systematically embedded in the comparative gender and politics literature | 7 | Recent studies such as Fox & Lawless (2005) have found that "political interest" (mainly partisan) highly predicts ambition to run for political office, which highly predicts whether a person will run for political office.  I added "while not the only causes" after political efficacy and added the following footnote: "Studies have also found that highly visible politicians are covered more negatively by the media (Fernandez-Garcia 2016), are more likely to be the targets of uncivil tweets (Rheault, Rayment, and Musulan 2019) and have a lower income than men — even in Canada (Thomas 2013). These factors could also help to explain women’s lower political ambition and representation."  For discriminatory gatekeepers, I mention this point in the next paragraph. | 5; 5-6 |
| 20. "Women’s lower levels of political ambition are not the only factor contributing to their legislative under-representation." | Again, readers need to see your ability to acknowledge multiple explanations of a given phenomenon. Ambition might have been relevant to Jeane Kirkpatrick's work on state legislators in the US in the 1970s, but newer work casts doubt on the current relevance of that argument. | 7 | See answer to comment #19. | - |
| 21. "Still, women are not discriminated at the polls by Canadian voters (Sevi, Arel-Bundock, and Blais 2019) and elites discriminate against men when it comes to providing advice to political aspirants (Dhima 2020)." | A great deal happens before a name gets on a ballot | 8 | See answer to comment #19. | - |
| 22. "For the sake of simplicity, and because political interest is an antecedent to both political ambition and political discussion, this literature review focuses on political interest, with references to other aspects of political engagement when relevant." | "political interest", "political engagement": highlighted terms need clear definitions that avoid privileging some forms or interpretations of what constitutes 'real politics' | 8 | This is now explicitly acknowledged in the introduction (see answer to comment #5). | - |
| 23. (in our discussion) | cite older literature on interest in racial policy / social policy | - | I added a discussion of Rebenstorf 2004, who also distinguishes between interest in various political politics and finds similar results to those of Campbell & Winters and Ferrin *et al.* Rebenstorf (2004)'s chapters 6 and 8 are two studies which include as topics various social policy topics and immigration/asylum issues. | 1 |
| 24. "Mayer and Schmidt (2004) find that adolescent boys and girls in the United States, Mexico, Japan, and China all think politics is a men’s domain, and girls are more likely than boys to report so. Adolescent boys also report higher political interest." | How do Mayer and Schmidt measure political interest? Do you agree with their definition? | 9 | As I now mention it in the introduction, "Throughout this dissertation [...] Unless otherwise specified, *political interest* refers to self-reported interest in politics in general — and studies show that women and men tend to think about *partisan politics* more specifically when they answer survey questions on political interest (R. Campbell and Winters 2008; Ferrin et al. 2020; Rebenstorf 2004)." Mayer & Schmidt measure political interest in a similar way as the other studies cited there. For the work I am planning to conduct, I instead plan on measuring political interest through multiple questions targeting various political topics – including aspects of politics for which women generally report higher levels of interest. You can see examples in my survey draft. | 2 |
| 25. "Bühlmann and Schädel (2012)’s study of 33 European countries finds political interest is higher among men than women, but this gap is smaller in countries with higher proportions of women in the legislative assembly." | (legislative) "assembly": Again, how is the concept defined and measured? | 9 | In this case, it is countrywide legislative assemblies, so I added "their countrywide legislative assembly". | 6 |
| 26. "Second, Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer (2010) find that proportional election systems — but not federalism and parliamentary systems — reduce gender gaps in political interest and political discussion compared with plurality systems. However, this distinction does not address the root cause of the gender gap." | "gap": Again, what's being measured by these authors? | 10 | "Political discussion" and "political interest" are used in the same way as what is mentioned in the introduction (see answer to comment #5). I added "in political interest" at the end of the sentence to be clearer. | 7 |
| 27. "Third, being newly a first-time parent has a bigger negative impact on political discussion and participation for women than men in the United States." | Participation in what? Some research suggests young moms are highly engaged in child care and community politics. See Thomas and Bittner, eds., Mothers and Others (UBC Press) | 10 | The definition is now more explicit in the introduction and includes domains for which women typically participate more (see answer to comment #9).  I added the reference to Thomas & Bittner (2017) at the end of the paragraph, when I specify this does not apply to Canada: "Nevertheless, while earlier Canadian studies also found that childbirth was negatively related with political participation (Kay et al. 1987), more recent Canadian studies do not find a link between childbirth, political discussion and political participation (Gidengil, Giles, and Thomas 2008; O’Neill et al. 2017)." | 7 |
| 28. "Fourth, Jennings and Niemi (2014) fail to find strong effects of labour force participation on the gender gap in political interest. Similarly, Schlozman, Burns, and Verba (1999) “had expected that exposure on the job to a broader array of people and issues would heighten engagement with politics [including political interest], especially among women” (p. 44), but they instead find null results." | This paragraph considers work I presume about the US that's published 15 years apart. Your lit review needs to organize material by country and by chronological time. | 11 | For this section, I took into account comments from you and Prof. Dassonneville and reorganized this section by type of factor (structural vs. institutional vs. individual, with subdivisions in individual factors for life-cycle events, biology, and socialization). I included all studies' country and, for every factor or sub-argument, I included studies in chronological order. | 6-9 |
| 29. "Fifth, the impact of genetics on political engagement has been confirmed by many studies (Dawes and Loewen 2009; Fowler, Baker, and Dawes 2008; Loewen and Dawes 2012). Klemmensen et al. (2012) specifically find that political interest and political efficacy are heritable and come from the same underlying genetic factor, but it remains unclear whether this underlying factor is more present among men, women or none of them. These studies also emphasize that genetic differences, when they are found, add to but do not replace differences in political socialization." | So political kids come from political parents? Is this a new insight? | 11 | What is new with this literature is that, controlling for socialization and environmental factors, genetics are found to have an independent impact on political engagement in general and political interest more specifically. This impact of genetics was mostly unknown to my knowledge before 2008. I added the following sentence: "This relatively recent literature therefore suggests some biological differences in political engagement are independent of environment and socialization." | 8 |
| 30. "Both studies conclude that men and women are simply interested in different domains of politics and that politics is mentally associated with elections and parties, topics in which men have more interest." | "mentally associated": By whom? Does Western culture and Western political science not value institutional engagement in elections and parties ahead of non-partisan coalition building to install a school crosswalk? | 11-12 | These studies do not answer this question. I added the following footnote: "This mental association might be culture-specific to some degree. Conceptions of politics cannot be based on partisan politics in other situations such as Northwest Territories’ and Nunavut’s non-partisan legislative assemblies, but also in authoritarian one-party regimes." | 8 |
| 31. "Infante and Rancer (1996) similarly find that men are more likely than women to value arguing and engage in it, except for workplace-related arguing. Men are also more likely to engage in verbal aggressiveness, while women tend to believe that arguing is hostile and combative." | There is an enormous literature on gender roles and gender stereotyping that needs to be considered here. Who or what tells women to avoid showing assertiveness and other power-related repertoires? | 12 | I added the following sentence: "Beliefs about gender differences in agency and communality also lead people to think men are better than women in negotiating, something that is then internalized by women which behave according to gender-based expectations, according to a United States study and a literature review (Kray *et al.* 2001; Schneider 2017)." In future iterations of this dissertation, I am willing to further engage with this literature, although for the 15-page limit I limited the number of sources added here. | 8-9 |
| 32. "Interest in partisan politics stemming from men being more assertive and less communal than women seems to explain the endurance of gender differences in overall self-reported political interest through life. However, it remains somewhat unclear why men become more agentic and women become more communal." | Have you consulted the work of psychologist Carol Gilligan for starters? | 12-13 | I had a quick look at Carol Gilligan's work but didn't find the reference, so I removed the interrogation about why more become more agentic and women become more communal – this is not part of the two formal hypotheses I am making. If you can find the specific source you were citing I would be happy to add it. | - |
| 33. "Most studies find that political participation is higher among girls" | "participation": how measured? involvement in what activities? | 15 | This part has been removed. | - |
| 34. "Bos et al. (2020) find that boys are more interested in politics in elementary school" | "interested": again, how defined? | 16 | This is now more explicit in the introduction (see answer to comment #10). | - |
| 35. "Merrill (2003) find that girls are more politically interested than boys" | in what? | 16 | In general. This is now more explicit in the introduction (see answer to comment #10). | - |
| 36. "Hooghe and Stolle (2004) find that 14-year-old girls want to engage in social movement-related forms of participation, while boys favour more radical and confrontational action repertoires." | like joining a terrorist group? Best to be specific | 16 | Good point, "such as spraying slogans or blocking traffic" is the answer but this part has been removed. | - |
| 37. "Malin, Tirri, and Liauw (2015) also show that adolescent girls’ motivations to participate in politics are about helping other people, while boys’ motivations are about defending their values, which reinforces Campbell and Winters’s (2008) suggestion that men are more agentic and women are more communal — already in high school." | Maybe women have communal agency, i.e. they are ready to act to help others as opposed to simply themselves. Core concepts need to be explained and interrogated at the outset. | 16 | This part has been removed. For the more general point I agree, but the concept of agentic as I use it refers to a focus on self-assertion, not simply having agency. I mention the distinction between agentic and communal in the individual factors/socialization section: "a recent British study by R. Campbell and Winters (2008) shows that men’s higher *partisan political interest* derives from the fact that they are more *agentic*, i.e., focused on self-assertion, while women are more *communal*, i.e., focused on cooperation. Since the concept of *politics* is typically seen as more adversarial, it appeals more to agentic types — mostly men — who then develop higher political efficacy and overall self-reported political interest." | 8 |
| 38. "Among older adults, Bhatti and Hansen (2012b) find that electoral participation among Danish women declines earlier than men because their social capital declines earlier." | Are you interested in addressing questions of social networks among women versus men? I thought women's social capital is on average higher and more stable across the life cycle than men's. | 17 | This part has been removed. I feel this would get me a bit too far from the focus of my dissertation, which is the development of political interest during childhood. But this question is super-interesting, I agree! I never thought about that neither. | - |
| 39. "Studies have also investigated the gender patterns in parent–child political discussions, but the amount of political discussions does not seem to vary based on parents and children’s gender." | "political discussions": Again, what's being measured here? How much mom and dad talk about elections and leaders? How much they discuss building bicycle lanes in the neighbourhood? | 20 | I now mention political discussion in the intro: "*Political interest*, or being aware of politics and caring about it, is this study’s main variable of interest. Unless otherwise specified, it refers to self-reported interest in politics in general — and studies show that women and men tend to think about *partisan politics* more specifically when they answer survey questions on political interest (R. Campbell and Winters 2008; Ferrin et al. 2020; Rebenstorf 2004). *Political ambition* refers to ambition to run for political office (Fox and Lawless 2005). Unless otherwise specified, when *political discussion* and *political efficacy* are mentioned in this dissertation, they also refer to concepts which are likely tilted towards partisan politics." | 2 |
| 40. "mothers, often the primary caregivers, have more opportunities to influence their children’s political engagement than fathers and therefore have a stronger overall influence on their children’s political engagement (Bhatti and Hansen 2012a)." | What about the 40 percent of North American family households where mom earns more than dad, and is often less present at home than dad? | 21 | This part has been removed since my focus is now more on political interest than on political engagement. Interestingly, findings about political interest are not as clear about mothers having a bigger influence on daughters than fathers on sons, contrary to findings about political engagement. | - |
| 41. "Using longitudinal data on 16- to 21-year-olds, Quintelier (2015) finds that political discussion among peers has more influence on political participation than parents, schools, and the media." | What types of involvement do they study? | 22 | This part has been removed, since Quintelier (2015) does not talk too much about political interest. | - |
| 42. "Other studies also find that political discussions with friends and acquaintances increase political engagement among child and adult respondents (B. A. Campbell 1979; Hoskins, Janmaat, and Villalba 2012; Klofstad 2007; McClurg 2003; Pattie and Johnston 2009; Šerek and Umemura 2015) and that social networks can be vectors of political engagement (La Due Lake and Huckfeldt 1998)." | Sociological research indicates women and men often have different kinds of networks, i.e. instrumental vs expressive. Are these variations considered in the studies you're summarizing? | 22 | I kept only the part of this paragraph that deals with political interest (Klofstad 2007), which still shows the same thing but does not make the distinction between expressive and instrumental networks. The research I found on instrumental and expressive networks seems to be centered on corporate settings. |  |
| 43. "Political discussions among peers typically exhibit gender effects. Among adults, leaving aside relatives, 84% of men report discussing politics only with men, while 64% of women report discussing politics only with women (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995). Moreover, voters tend to vote for same-gender candidates under some circumstances (Golder et al. 2017; Holli and Wass 2010). Some studies have found same-gender voting is more common among men (Holli and Wass 2010), but others have found it is more common among women (Golder et al. 2017). These findings seem to confirm the impact of gender homophily in political discussions." | I believe these studies are from varied political systems. Are you going to consider the potential sources of cross-national variation? | 23 | This seems a bit too ambitious for this Canadian-based study, but I will study provincial differences using multilevel regressions, to make sure results apply not only in some provinces. As suggested by Prof. Dassonneville, I removed this part on same-gender voting, since it is not directly related to gender homophily. | - |
| 44. "Political disagreement has been found to have a negative impact on political participation, but a positive impact on other indicators of political engagement (Mutz 2002; Pattie and Johnston 2009)." | You're using political participation and political engagement here in the same sentence, so the terms need to be defined earlier to make sense of the finding. | 23 | This part has been removed, but I further explain the distinction between political engagement and political participation in the introduction: "Throughout this dissertation, the umbrella term *political engagement* is used to describe forms of commitment to politics through attitudes and actions — leaving aside the ideological content of these attitudes and actions. Political engagement has been used to refer to political interest, political discussion, political knowledge, voter turnout, political efficacy, and/or party membership (Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010; Gidengil, O’Neill, and Young 2010; Verba, Burns, and Schlozman 1997). More narrowly, *political participation* is used to refer to political actions, such as boycotting, participating in protests, donating money to candidates, intending to vote, voting, or working with interest groups or voluntary associations which seek to influence policy at any level — international, national, provincial, local, school board, and so on." | 2 |
| 45. "Studies on media use among boys and girls do not find systematic gender differences. Roe (1998) shows that 9- to 12-year-old boys and girls’ media consumption becomes more and more different. More specifically, boys watched more television, while girls listened more to the radio — at a time when the Internet was not widespread. Gender differences in TV consumption are not found by S.-J. Lee, Bartolic, and Vandewater (2009) however." | (after the first sentence) This sentence is contradicted in the next sentence. | 26 | This part has been removed. | - |
| 46. "Rosenthal, Jones, and Rosenthal (2003) show that, while girls’ presence has a slight positive impact on girls’ speaking time, interruptions occur as frequently between adolescents whatever their gender, and studies find that 8th- to 12th-grade girls are more likely than boys to report an open classroom climate (Blankenship 1990; D. E. Campbell 2007; Maurissen, Claes, and Barber 2018)." | Is this in mixed or co-ed classes? What about when girls are in classes of only girls? | 29 | Then they speak even more. I added the following footnote (since I find no studies testing that with children): "Among adults, Karpowitz and Mendelberg (2014) and Beauvais (2020) also show that women and men’s relative speaking time in a deliberative and decision-making setting depends on the number of women. When decisions are made by a majority, the presence of more women leads to more speaking time for each woman." | 12 |
| 47. "For political leaders, Lay et al. (2019) also find gendered characterizations in TIME for Kids, a children’s magazine widely used in classrooms across the United States: women politicians are portrayed as having feminine and communal traits more than men politicians." | Is this perhaps a reflection of the empirical reality? | 30 | It likely is, to some degree. But that might also reinforce them, perhaps. This part has been removed, since this is not directly related to political interest. | - |
| 48. "Again, most of these findings imply definitions of politics that implicitly emphasize partisan politics over other aspects, but without formally hinting at it." | Is this an inherent limitation of the existing research? Where is a clear summary of the intellectual puzzle motivating the dissertation, at theoretical and/or empirical levels? | 32 | No. Instead, I plan to test some of the questions asked by this literature while using a topic-by-topic approach to political interest, to avoid gender bias. I now provide a better overview of my theoretical puzzle in the next paragraph: "This dissertation asks *"How do gender differences in interest for different political topics emerge?"* It hypothesizes that political socialization plays a central role in explaining the emergence of gender differences in political interest, with parents and peers the most important agents of political socialization, especially during childhood and adolescence.  While gender tendencies towards agency vs. communality contribute to women's interest in health care and men's interest in partisan politics, a broader application of socialization theory that includes parents and peers would provide a more comprehensive understanding of who influences girls and boys in how much interest they have in varied aspects of politics. Gender homophily and parental socialization both suggest that children are influenced by same-gender models, but these theories need to be further specified. Parental socialization predicts a parent's political interest influences political interest more strongly for their same-gender children than other-gender children, but it is not clear if this applies for interest in political topics other than partisan politics. On the other hand, gender homophily predicts more same-gender than mixed-gender peer discussions, and this finding applies to political discussions as well. However, no study has thus far examined the implications of this theory for gender differences in political interest.  The study seeks to bridge two literatures on gender, socialization and political interest; one that emphasizes agency/communality leading to interest in different political topics, and the other suggesting the transmission of political interest by same-gender models. The goal is to measure interest in various political topics and link it to parents’ interest for those same topics. This is something that has not been done beforehand; parents’ and children’s political interest is typically compared using a single measure of political interest, but we don’t know if same-gender models have the same impact on interest transmission for each political topic. [I then describe both hypotheses.] Put neatly, the general theory is that *children's interest for specific political topics comes mainly from socialization by their same-gender parent and peers*." | 13 |
| 49. "The literature on gendered political socialization lacks a bit of consensus and clarity." | Readers need a more emphatic and explicit statement at the beginning of this proposal as to (a) what specifically is problematic in the literature at conceptual and empirical levels and (b) how your thesis will address these weaknesses. | 32 | The first paragraph now gets to the main point (see answer to comment #2). | - |
| 50. "For instance, the father–son link in political interest transmission has been found to hold or not to hold in different studies." | Does it hold more in some countries than others? Why study Canada? | 32 | This sentence was actually incorrect. When I refocused the literature review on political interest instead of broad political engagement, I found a father-son link in all studies.  In the Data and methods section, I also further clarify why I study Canada: "Canada is often classified by reports as one of the best countries for women (Conant 2019; Equal Measures 2030 2020; US News & World Report 2020), but only 29% of its elected MPs are women (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2021). Moreover, CES data since 1997 show that the gender gap in political interest has remained fairly stable despite an increase in the percentage of women politicians at the national and provincial levels (Sevi 2021). Still, studies that measure interest in different political topics have been conducted in Europe and the Middle East, so it is unclear how the gender differences they find apply in North America. These characteristics make Canada a country worth studying to better understand the underlying reasons behind the stability of the gender gap in the aggregate measure of political interest, which mainly taps into interest for partisan politics." | 14 |
| 51. "Hypothesis 1: Children’s interest and knowledge for specific political topics is more affected by political discussions with their same-gender parent and same-gender peers than other-gender parent and other-gender peers.  For example, a father will transmit his interest for specific political topics to his sons through political discussion more easily than a mother. A mother will have more transmission potential of her interest for specific political topics to her daughters than sons through political discussion, however." | where? when? what if the mom or dad travels extensively and has little daily contact with the kids. | 33 | I added "on average" since I am not making hypotheses about the amount of daily contact. I also removed knowledge from this hypothesis. The questionnaire will ask students what topics they discuss the most with their mother and with their father, but also which parent they discuss the most with in general, so I will be able to control for that. | 13 |
| 52. "For example, a woman teacher will transmit her knowledge for specific political topics to girls through teaching more easily than a man teacher. A man teacher will have more transmission potential of his interest for specific political topics to boys than girls through teaching, however." | But research shows most kids in Canadian elementary schools have overwhelmingly female teachers. So girls should be highly engaged in politics as a result if their teachers are engaged. | 34 | This part has been removed, since I removed my hypotheses about teachers. | - |
| 53. "Hypothesis 4: Interest and knowledge for health care, education and gender issues is transmitted mainly by women and to girls, therefore perpetuating these gender gaps." | Is there no reason here to interrogate change over time? Are increasingly flexible gender roles perhaps making men more interested in social policy and women more interested in "hard politics?" Is it worth asking just one question and answering it well? | 34 | Yes, I need to be more focused. Your hypothesis is very interesting. However, I do not have historical data on women's interest in partisan politics vs. other political topics which I can compare with more recent data (with the same survey question), so I cannot verify this. This hypothesis has been removed. | - |
| 54. "Third, data will be gathered among surveyed children’s parents. Parents will be contacted by selected schools and given the questionnaire to be filled if they so wish. Contrary to children, only one poll before the election will be conducted." | (after the last sentence) not clear what this sentence means | 38 | I wrote this instead: "Contrary to children, only one poll will be conducted with parents." | 15 |
| 55. (in the email) | I believe you have too many hypotheses and datasets [...] I urge doctoral students to address one question well rather than to try to answer multiple questions superficially |  | I kept only two hypotheses: "Children's interest for specific political topics is more affected by political discussions with their same-gender parent than other-gender parent." and "Children's interest for specific political topics is more affected by political discussions with their same-gender peers than other-gender peers." I also removed the focus group part of the data collection. The CES and WVS datasets already exist and I have used them in the past, leaving only two new datasets to collect: one among children and one among their parents – to be able to compare students' perceptions about the political topics they discuss with their parents and not just take them at face value. | 13 |
| 56. (in our discussion) | aim for 15 pages |  | The proposal is now 16 pages long. I was not able to cut further. | - |

# Answers to Prof. Ruth Dassonneville's comments (original file = PDF)

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| **Commented excerpt in the manuscript** | **Comment by Prof. Dassonneville** | **Page number on the original version** | **My answer and changes** | **Page number on the new version** |
| 57. "Gender differences in political engagement — whatever their direction — influence each other (Bennett and Bennett 1989; Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010; Coffé 2013; Ondercin and Jones-White 2011) and have consequences on at least two types of substantive citizen participation: discussing partisan politics with other people and running for elected political office." | not entirely clear what you mean here, that the different indicators of engagement are all correlated? but if so, then howe come there is a gender bias for some but not for others? | 2 | I changed the statement: "Many aspects of political engagement are correlated and influence each other (Bennett and Bennett 1989; Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010; Coffé 2013; Ondercin and Jones-White 2011). This means that a gender gap in one aspect of political engagement can contribute to a gap in another aspect. More importantly, when gender differences in *partisan political interest* emerge, they can have consequences for at least two types of substantive citizen participation: discussing partisan politics with other people and running for elected political office." | 4 |
| 58. "Studies report men are more likely than women to discuss politics, but women and men tend to think about partisan politics more specifically when they think about politics (R. Campbell and Winters 2008; Ferrin et al. 2020). Traditional political discussion survey questions therefore mostly measure discussion of partisan politics, which is one aspect of politics on which men typically report more interest. As people usually discuss the topics they are most interested in, it seems likely that women discuss more often political topics for which they report more interest, such as health care or gender issues." | but this is not typically measured/captured by survey items? | 3 | Yes, correct. I added the following after this statement: "although survey questions typically do not ask what kinds of political questions people discuss the most." | 5 |
| 59. "Political discussion of various topics is seen as something desirable in participatory democracy." | are you saying it is desirably not \*only\* to think about partisan politics but about a variety of topics? so ideal would be a mix between partisan topics and other issues? | 3 | Yes. I added "since partisan politics is only the means through which relevant issues are addressed." I also mention in the following paragraph that "Discussing with people with different ideas and views also creates a phenomenon of collective intelligence (Landemore 2013), which is seen as a desirable outcome from a democratic point of view, since it has been found both to reduce political polarization and to produce better reasoning, i.e., a better capacity at finding and evaluating arguments in deliberative context (Mercier and Landemore 2012). It therefore seems relevant to identify the socialization elements that lead to more diversity in political discussions — and men and women have different life experiences but also, often, different ideological viewpoints (Gidengil et al. 2005)." | 5 |
| 60. "Still, women are not discriminated at the polls by Canadian voters (Sevi, Arel-Bundock, and Blais 2019)" | this JOP paper also seems relevant to discuss the absence of a bias against women at the voter level https://alexandercoppock.com/schwarz\_coppock\_2020.pdf | 3 | Thanks for the reference! I added it: "An international study actually finds voters discriminate against *men* candidates by 2 percentage points (Schwarz and Coppock 2021)." | 6 |
| 61. "Since 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 fact that women are under-represented in the legislative and executive spheres has practical consequences on the kinds of legislation adopted. Studying the inception and causes of gender differences in political engagement therefore seems relevant. By identifying causes, potential solutions can be sought by relevant actors who seek assemblies that are more gender-balanced." | My suggestion would be to focus somewhat less on legislators/candidates to motivate a focus on political engagement at the citizen level. Political participation by citizens, where women’s disadvantage in interest will also have consequences, seems like a more proximate but also consequential effect of differences in e.g., political interest.  Because women are less interested/have less ambition, they are less likely to be candidates,  but they also participate less in politics in general, in conventional and sometimes non-conventional ways, so what is worrisome is that their voices risk being heard less. That can serve as a more direct motivation than one focusing on a select number of people who end up as candidates or legislators. | 3 | I also mention discussion of various political topics as a motivation (see answer to comment #57), but Prof. Bashevkin has suggested that I include my discussion of women's under-representation as a motivation in the introduction, so I moved this paragraph to the first page.  I added the following sentences have been added right after this excerpt: "Moreover, political interest has also been linked with other forms of political participation (Cicognani *et al.* 2012). It is therefore possible that interest in various political topics increases the range of political actions in which men and women take part." | 1 |
| 62. "First, women politicians’ relative absence in politics might explain part of the gender gap in political interest." | this is an additional reason not to put to much weight on women as candidates/in the legislature as a motivation to study political interest: you are also considering the possibility that the presence of women in politics is a precursor for the development of political interest - I would avoid a too cyclical theoretical argument in which female politicians are both an independent and a dependent variable of political interest. | 3 | I added the following sentences to this paragraph: "Bühlmann and Schädel (2012)'s study of 33 European countries finds political interest is higher among men than women, but this gap is smaller in countries with higher proportions of women in the legislative assembly. They suggest the relationship is not simply an artifact of reverse causality since it holds just as well in countries with gender quotas as those without gender quotas." This is followed by a footnote: "There is thus a feedback loop: political interest leads to political ambition, which leads to political representation, which in turn leads to political interest for the group with a higher level of representation."  For the course of this study, I focus on political interest (in various topics) as an outcome instead of political representation directly, to avoid losing focus and also to avoid that cyclical argument. | 6 |
| 63. "Puzzle: explaining the emergence of gender differences in political interest  This section reviews the main theories that have been suggested to account for women’s lower overall levels of political interest and concludes that no unified theory has been proposed thus far to account for the emergence of this gap." | Would be good to organise the discussion of different factors a bit more by category, here you are moving from institutional/macro level factors to individual-level determinants, would be good to distinguish more clearly between both and also to structure a bit what sorts of factors you look at within each category. | 3-5 | Very good suggestion. I now have 3 broad categories in that section: institutional factors, structural factors, and individual factors. I then subdivide individual factors in life-cycle events, biology, and socialization. I suggest this last category is the most promising. | 6-9 |
| 64. "The first five theories — women’s political under-representation, political institutions, motherhood, employment, and genetics — seem to provide at best a partial explanation of the gender gap in political interest." | I would - at least - categories macro factors as separate from individual-level determinants. | 4 | See answer to comment #63. This part now reads like this: "Overall, structural, institutional, life-cycle and biological factors provide a partial explanation of the gender gap in political interest, but socialization seems to be an especially fruitful avenue." | - |
| 65. "Interest for partisan politics stemming from men being more assertive and less communal than women seems to explain the endurance of gender differences in overall self-reported political interest through life." | I think it would be useful to make the point that political interest is a very stable trait within individuals more strongly/explicitly, you could build on the work from Prior (Hooked) to do so. | 4-5 | I added the reference to Prior when discussing the stability of political interest: "Moreover, international and longitudinal studies find that political interest remains remarkably stable through life, including for high-school students, whose political interest is already high (Fraile and Sánchez-Vıtores 2020; Neundorf, Smets, and Garcia-Albacete 2013; Prior 2010, 2019). Still, studies suggest that political interest becomes stronger from adolescence through early adult life (Neundorf, Smets, and Garcia-Albacete 2013), and even more so for men (Jennings and Niemi 2014, 276). Political socialization keeps happening at the adult age — but it does so at a lower rate than among children and teenagers, which are therefore at the center of this dissertation. It seems worthwhile to study political socialization in the period of life where political interest is developed to better understand gender differences, since there seems to be some level of path dependency in individuals’ political interest afterwards." | 10 |
| 66. "Two other theories that have been used to explain the relation between gender and political interest are mobilized to provide a tentative response to this question: gender homophily theory and social learning theory. Both theories point to the broader role of role models and gendered influences in political socialization." | if you make the point that political interest is super stable, you could more clearly motivate your focus on factors that come early. From that perspective, likely determinants would be genetics (which you mentioned before) and factors of political socialisation. | 5 | I made this point clearer in the section of the text where I speak about political interest's stability by removing unnecessary nuances and making a paragraph just for it (see answer to comment #65). | 10 |
| 67. "Research has found that social learning exhibits gender effects: observer-model similarity leads children to model their behaviour based on the behaviour of models that resemble them (Bandura 1969). Indeed, past research has shown that the trickle-down effect of political engagement is stronger for mother–daughter dyads than other parent–child dyads (Gidengil, Wass, and Valaste 2016)." | but wouldn’t the theory also predict strong father-son trickle down effects then ? | 5 | You are correct. This part has been removed. When I refocused the literature review on political interest instead of broad political engagement, I found a father-son link in all studies. This section is simpler now: "Research has found that the trickle-down effect of political interest from parents to children works in gendered ways. Mothers’ political interest has a stronger effect on their daughters than sons’ political interest, while fathers’ political interest has a stronger effect on their sons’ political interest. From the other perspective too, daughters’ political interest seems to be influenced mostly by their mothers’ political interest, while sons’ political interest seems to be influenced mostly by their father’s political interest (Beauregard 2008; Owen and Dennis 1988)." | 10 |
| 68. "Social learning theory has been used to study mothers and fathers’ relative impact on sons and daughters’ political engagement, but not to explain overall gender differences in political engagement, such as women’s higher interest for health care politics and men’s higher tendency to discuss partisan politics." | I could see how this theory would predict a continuation/confirmation of pre-existing gender differences in political interest, but less so as an explanation of where those gender differences initially come from. | 5 | You are correct. I removed social learning theory and replaced it by parental socialization theory, which is presented this way: "*Parental socialization theory* suggests that parents transmit political interest to their children and that this process is gendered, as political interest is more strongly correlated between mothers and daughters and between fathers and boys than any other combination (Beauregard 2008; Neundorf, Smets, and Garcia-Albacete 2013; Owen and Dennis 1988)." | 9 |
| 69. "4 The transmission of political engagement through childhood  socialization" | A bit more guidance here would be good. Your goal is to explain why girls/women are less politically interested than boys/men. You make the argument that political interest is fairly stable, so you should look at an earlier period/the period of socialisation to identify the sources of that gender gap. Given that socialisation is arguably driven/done by parents, peers, media and schools, you look at each of those actors in turn to see if there are indications of a gendered pattern of political socialisation. | 5 | I added the following paragraph at the beginning of this section: "Children's political interest has been found to be influenced by four main agents of socialization: parents, peers, media and the Internet, and schools. Before making formal hypotheses about their gendered effects, this dissertation assesses their role in transmitting political interest to children."  For the stability of political interest, see answer to comment #65. | 10 |
| 70. "Children’s political engagement has been found to be influenced by four main agents of socialization: parents, peers, schools, and the media, including the Internet." | se eventually you focus on children nevertheless? that’s ok, but the previous section seemed to suggest a focus on later life (too) | 6 | Yes. I moved this paragraph at the beginning of this section with some tweaks to make it clearer that socialization is more important during childhood and adolescence than adulthood (see answer to comment #69). | 10 |
| 71. "Most research has found that the trickle-down effect of political engagement from parents to children suggested by social learning theory works in gendered ways. Mothers’ political engagement has a stronger effect on their daughters than sons’ political engagement (Atkeson and Rapoport 2003; Beauregard 2008; Cicognani et al. 2012; Owen and Dennis 1988; Rapoport 1985), while the effect of fathers’ political engagement is much less clear: it might have a stronger effect on their sons’ political engagement (Beauregard 2008; Owen and Dennis 1988; Rapoport 1985), on their daughters’ political engagement (Cicognani et al. 2012) or none of them (Atkeson and Rapoport 2003; Gidengil, Wass, and Valaste 2016)." | so the conclusion would be that it is mostly mothers taking care of the political socialisation of children? and they have most effect on their daughters? | 6 | See answer to comment #67. | 10 |
| 72. "Finally, sons’ political engagement seems to be influenced mostly by their father’s political engagement (Beauregard 2008; Bhatti and Hansen 2012a; Owen and Dennis 1988; Rapoport 1985), though some studies again show the same impact of both parents on their sons (Atkeson and Rapoport 2003; Cicognani et al. 2012; Gidengil, Wass, and Valaste 2016)." | so overall, we don’t know very much about this, or at least the debates have not been settled yet? | 7 | See answer to comment #67. | 10 |
| 73. "Political discussions among peers typically exhibit gender effects. Among adults, leaving aside relatives, 84% of men report discussing politics only with men, while 64% of women report discussing politics only with women (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995). Moreover, voters tend to vote for same-gender candidates under some circumstances (Golder et al. 2017; Holli and Wass 2010)." | not so clear how this is linked to homophile in political discussions | 7 | You're correct. I removed the discussion about same-gender voting. | 11 |
| 74. "In more politics-related media uses, keeping up with news through media is related to increased youth political engagement (Bakker and De Vreese 2011; N.-J. Lee, Shah, and McLeod 2012; Quintelier 2015). Digital media seem to have a stronger impact than traditional media in that regard, due to their interactive aspects (Bakker and De Vreese 2011; N.-J. Lee, Shah, and McLeod 2012; Warren and Wicks 2011). Seeking political information online, sharing political opinions online (N.-J. Lee, Shah, and McLeod 2012), and participating in online political discussion groups (Conroy, Feezell, and Guerrero 2012) have been found to be positively related to youth political engagement, though discussion groups do not seem to increase political knowledge (Conroy, Feezell, and Guerrero 2012)." | but in each of these cases, causality might run the other way? | 8 | Good point! These studies are all correlational, but others (Pan et al. 2006; Shah et al. 2005) find a causal relationship between information and participation. Anyway, this section has been removed, as the DV is not political interest. | - |
| 75. "The role of classroom political discussions in political socialization might be gendered. For instance, Mahony (1985) finds that girls are less likely to participate in classroom discussions of politics because boys make the classroom climate aggressive. However, Rosenthal, Jones, and Rosenthal (2003) show that, while girls’ presence has a slight positive impact on girls’ speaking time, interruptions occur as frequently between adolescents whatever their gender, and studies find that 8th- to 12th-grade girls are more likely than boys to report an open classroom climate (Blankenship 1990; D. E. Campbell 2007; Maurissen, Claes, and Barber 2018)." | To inform this discussion, I think you could build on Mendelberg and Karopwitz’s “The Silent Sex” | 9 | Thanks for the reference! I added the following in a footnote, since conclusions mostly apply to adults instead of children: "Among adults, Karpowitz and Mendelberg (2014) and Beauvais (2020) also show that women and men’s relative speaking time in a deliberative and decision-making setting depends on the number of women. When decisions are made by a majority, the presence of more women leads to more speaking time for each woman" | 12 |
| 76. "M. L. Inglehart (1981) shows that women are more interested in politics in traditionally Protestant countries than in traditionally Catholic countries. R. Inglehart and Norris (2003) further suggest that modernization has a positive effect on cultural attitudes towards gender equality: as societies move from agrarian to industrial and from industrial to postindustrial, people, especially younger generations, become more open to the idea of gender equality, though history, religion and institutions also play a role in shaping countries’ trajectory. However, D. E. Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006) find that beliefs about the appropriateness of politics for women have no impact on girls’ intended political participation. Fraile and Gomez (2017) find that the gender gap in political interest can only be bridged through changes in early childhood socialization, especially in traditional family values." | on gender values in society, see also my work with Filip Kostelka on the gender gap in turnout, and how that is driven by a gap in political interest - which happens to correlate with gender differences in math scores (which we conceive of as a proxy for the extent to which children are socialized in gendered ways). | 10 | Yes, very relevant! I added the following: "Dassonneville and Kostelka (2020) also demonstrate that cultural gender differences – operationalized through differences in boys and girls' math scores – explain countries' gender gap in political interest." | 6-7 |
| 77. "Hypothesis 1: Children’s interest and knowledge for specific political topics is more affected by political discussions with their same-gender parent and same-gender peers than other-gender parent and other-gender peers." | so conceptually, as indicated before, I think the socialization perspective potentially offers a useful framework for understanding why the gender gap in political interest is maintained/continues - e.g., if less interested mothers learn their daughters they should not care too much about politics the gender gap will be preserved.  But where does the gap come from to begin with? Do you want to theorize about that as well? Or is your focus on a puzzling observation: that despite much progress for women’s roles in society, in higher education, in the labour market, the gap in e.g. political engagement remains quite sizeable and quite stable ? | 10-11 | The gap partially comes from the agentic/communal difference: men are more focused on self-assertion while women are more focused on cooperation, on average. Studies have already shown this is the case in the past – and seem to link it to socialization more than biology – so I do not include it as a hypothesis. I now focus my hypotheses on how parents and peers *transmit* political interest to children through mechanisms such as parental (political) socialization and gender homophily: "This dissertation asks *“How do gender differences in interest for different political topics emerge?”* It hypothesizes that political socialization plays a central role in explaining the emergence of gender differences in political interest, with parents and peers the most important agents of political socialization, especially during childhood and adolescence.  While gender tendencies towards agency vs. communality contribute to women’s interest in health care and men’s interest in partisan politics, a broader application of socialization theory that includes parents and peers would provide a more comprehensive understanding of who influences girls and boys in how much interest they have in varied aspects of politics. Gender homophily and parental socialization both suggest that children are influenced by same-gender models, but these theories need to be further specified. Parental socialization predicts a parent’s political interest influences political interest more strongly for their same-gender children than other-gender children, but it is not clear if this applies for interest in political topics other than partisan politics. On the other hand, gender homophily predicts more same-gender than mixed-gender peer discussions, and this finding applies to political discussions as well. However, no study has thus far examined the implications of this theory for gender differences in political interest.  The study seeks to bridge two literatures on gender, socialization and political interest; one that emphasizes agency/communality leading to interest in different political topics, and the other suggesting the transmission of political interest by same-gender models. The goal is to measure interest in various political topics and link it to parents’ interest for those same topics. This is something that has not been done beforehand; parents’ and children’s political interest is typically compared using a single measure of political interest, but we don’t know if same-gender models have the same impact on interest transmission for each political topic."  I will control for the children's degree of agency/communality when analyzing the same-gender parent-child interest correlations vs. other-gender parent-child correlations (and same for peers): "The Personal Attributes Questionnaire (Spence et al. 1973; Ward et al. 2006) will also be used to assess students' degree of agency and communion and see if same-gender parent/peer--child interest correlations remain when controlling for the child's degree of agency/communality." | 13; 15 |
| 78. "For example, a woman teacher will transmit her knowledge for specific political topics to girls through teaching more easily than a man teacher. A man teacher will have more transmission potential of his interest for specific political topics to boys than girls through teaching, however." | how exactly does this create a gender gap in political interest? | 11 | This part has been removed, since I refocused my hypotheses on parents and peers. | - |
| 79. "Hypothesis 5: Gender differences in partisan political interest emerge during adolescence and reach their highest point in the early stages of adult life." | are you saying the gap declines in later life? why so? what’s the mechanism? | 11 | This hypothesis, which is not central to my dissertation, has been removed. | - |
| 80. "Women’s lack of political representation has been attributed to many factors, among which their lower levels of political ambition." | Given some discussions before about role models, I was expecting you to do something with that too - e.g., say that the lack of women’s descriptive representation in parliaments and governments also contributes to perpetuating the gender gap in interest/engagement among the public. | 11 | I had such a hypothesis, but I had to drop it because I had too many of them. Also, such a hypothesis might be confusing since I am not sure which political topics would be less interesting for women as a result of legislative under-representation. | - |
| 81. "This study relies on four sets of data, all collected in Canada. Canada is often classified by reports as one of the best countries for women (Conant 2019; Equal Measures 2030 2020; US News & World Report 2020), but only 29% of its elected MPs are women (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2021), making it a country worth studying." | why exactly? not entirely clear to me what is especially puzzling about Canada ?  what would be neat as a motivation would be if you could show there is a contrast between improvements in women’s presence in politics (e.g., in parliament or the executive) over time, while the gender gap in political interest (as captured by the CES) remains largely stable over time — suggesting something underneath is perpetuating that gap, your thesis will learn us what exactly. | 11 | Instead of "making it a country worth studying," I added the following: "Moreover, CES data since 1997 show that the gender gap in political interest has remained fairly stable despite a recent increase in the percentage of women politicians at the national and provincial levels (Sevi 2021). Still, studies that measure interest in different political topics have been conducted in Europe and the Middle East, so it is unclear how the gender differences they find apply in North America. These characteristics make Canada a country worth studying to better understand the underlying reasons behind the stability of the gender gap in the aggregate measure of political interest, which mainly taps into interest for partisan politics. The transmission of political interest to children seems like the logical place to look for explanations." | 14 |
| 82. "CES data allows time series analyses of the evolution of gender gaps through time, as some political engagement questions have been asked since 1965." | if you can use data since 1965, I think you can do more with the CES - you would have quite some variation over time, which might be interesting to estimate the over-time stability in the gender gap in e.g., interest, or context-level factors that might have contributed to reducing the gap. | 11 | None of the main hypotheses I have can be answered directly using CES data, since they do not ask about interest for various political topics – they only provide an aggregate measure. However, I am planning to analyze CES data on political interest over time for descriptive purposes – and for the love of data! My preliminary data show that since 1997 the CES shows a stable gender gap in political interest (before 1997 they were asking the "interest in the current election campaign" question only, which I might also analyse) – according to unweighted data at least. | - |
| 83. "Second, data will be gathered among 7-year-old to 17-year-old Canadians in elementary and high schools." | that is a very long time range, for feasibility I would focus on a shorter time range (otherwise, students’ comprehension of the survey questions might vary by age already) | 11 | I do not know exactly when the gender gap emerges. I am currently in talks with CIVIX to see if we can proceed with one of their programs, but I might select students from three different years – 7-8 years old, then 12-13 years old, then 16-17 years old for example. CIVIX is used to adapting questions to various age groups for their surveys in elementary and high schools. If I end up doing the survey by myself, I might stick with a shorter age range – or ask for advice on how to adapt survey questions to younger children. For now, I changed "7-year-old to 17-year-old Canadians in elementary and high schools" for "Canadian high school students." | 15 |
| 84. "The survey experimental design would compare the evolution of political engagement for boys and girls in classrooms who took part in the program and in classrooms who did not by measuring political engagement both before and after the program, while the descriptive part of the survey would look at broader trends among both groups. For descriptive purposes, schools would be selected randomly to be part of the survey without regards to their participation in the program." | how is it determined which schools take part in these initiatives/activities? if it is voluntary, then comparing schools who took part with those who did not is not random, but will likely show differences between schools who are eager for their students to take part in this (and likely care much about civic education) and schools that focus on other things…  [two lines later]  that would be really neat - if you can get the non-participating schools to participate in your survey, this will likely be very work intensive on your part, so make sure to start preparing this well in advance !  [two lines later]  but their participation in the program is not random? so assignment to ‘treatment’ isn’t random ? | 11 | I agree, and this is a point I raised with CIVIX. They also have this concern. We are looking at a program, Rep Day/Salut l'élu.e, in which schools would randomly be selected to participate or not to participate (they would not be able to participate even if they ask for it, although I guess no school would be FORCED to follow the program – we'll have to look at what % of schools accept CIVIX's invitation to make sure it is high and our experimental data is reliable). I'll make sure to prepare this in advance if we can move forward. If I do a survey of my own instead, I will most likely entirely drop this experimental part and not look at any civic education program. We decided it's probably better not to go ahead with Student Vote because it is a long-standing program and profs often re-use materials from previous years even if their class has not been selected to participate in the current year. This would compromise the experimental design. | - |
| 85. "Student Vote is the biggest Canadian citizenship education program and is offered in federal and most provincial elections in about half of classes across the country, so the next Canadian general election or the 2022 Ontario provincial election might be good occasions to conduct the experiment, with panel data being collected before the election (time 1) and after it (time 2)." | seems a bit early to get this in the field, unless you’ve already got good contacts with the organisation and the schools? | 11-12 | I removed the section on Student Vote and replaced it with shorter info on Rep Day instead: "Three of CIVIX’s programs are especially worth considering: Rep Day, Student Budget Consultation, and News Literacy. They are all school-directed citizenship education activities in elementary and high schools that are offered in a large number of classes throughout Canada. The survey experimental design would compare the evolution of political interest for boys and girls in classrooms who took part in the program and in classrooms who did not by measuring political interest both before and after the program, while the descriptive part of the survey would look at broader trends among both groups. For descriptive purposes, schools would be selected randomly to be part of the survey without regards to their participation in the program. Panel data would be collected before the program (time 1) and after it (time 2)." | - |
| 86. "Third, data will be gathered among surveyed children’s parents. Parents will be contacted by selected schools and given the questionnaire to be filled if they so wish.^[Each classroom will need to assign a personal number to children to be matched with their parents, so that I get access to anonymous but matching data.]" | wow, the project is getting even bigger - this might be a bit too big to do solo within the framework of a phd dissertation | 121 | Without parents' data, I would only be able to assess what political topics parents are interested in by asking their children – which reduces data quality quite importantly. I decided to drop the focus groups instead, since they only provide complementary data. | - |
| 87. "Finally, I will conduct participant observation of same-gender and mixed-gender peer group political discussions to get a better idea about the political topics boys and girls discuss with their mothers, fathers and peers, and in classroom and Internet political discussions, while analyzing the relative impact of same-gender and other-gender peers on the kinds of political topics discussed. These focus groups will include four to six children each." | this seems like a good idea, definitely have a look at “the silent sex” before planning your focus groups. | 12 | I had a look at that work and it seems relevant! Any chapter(s) you would recommend I pay more attention to?  For now I decided to drop the focus groups and keep the parent survey. | - |
| 88. "Chapter 5. Teachers and influencers’ influence in boys and girls’ political engagement" | how will you get data on those actors? | 13 | This part has been removed. Still, I kept the survey questions about all actors – including teachers and social media influencers – in the questionnaire, as they might increase the amount of potentially interesting/publishable data I can get out of this dissertation. You can look at the survey questionnaire file I sent. | - |
| 89. "7 Dissertation chapters" | you want to do \*a lot\* ! it might be worth focusing on a smaller number of agents of socialisation, and focus the data collection on those actors only - while collecting high-quality data on them, rather than trying to get all sorts of data from different sources (children AND parents AND teachers AND peers) but not necessarily having the resources to ensure the data you can collect is of super high quality. | 13 | I removed all hypotheses related to teachers and social media influencers. I also removed the focus groups. The most relevant agent identified in the literature is parents, followed by peers (especially with gender homophily theory). Teachers and social media influencers are secondary. | - |
| 90. (in the email) | In terms of your research plan, it seems to me that you want to do way too much (surveying 7-17 year olds, and their parents, and gather information on schools, and also on their peers). A project of this scope seems nearly impossible to do as a sole researcher within the framework of a phd project. My suggestion would therefore be to focus more, perhaps on what you think is the theoretically most interesting socialisation actor and try to get the best data possible for that actor only. |  | See answer to comment #89. | - |
| 91. (in the email) | For the motivation, I think you could do a bit more to highlight what exactly is your focus and why the attention is on political socialisation. My impression is that what is of most interest to you is the fact that the gender gap in political interest/engagement sustains/remains fairly stable over time. Given that we know that interest pretty stable over the lifetime, we thus have to look for factors that reinforce existing gender gaps in next generations, hence the focus on actors of political socialisation and gendered patterns of political socialisation in particular? |  | I agree. I reframed the introduction. The first paragraph now explains why political socialization is important: "Traditional political science studies suggest that men are generally more interested in politics than women (Verba, Burns, and Schlozman 1997). However, recent studies (R. Campbell and Winters 2008; Ferrin et al. 2020; Rebenstorf 2004) show that people do not think about the full range of political actions when they are asked questions about their political interest, and that men are more interested than women in certain political topics — notably partisan politics — but less interested in others. In parallel, studies have found parents and peers play an important role in children’s political socialization (Dostie-Goulet 2009; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Mayer and Schmidt 2004; Neundorf, Smets, and Garcia-Albacete 2013), especially when they share the children’s gender (Beauregard 2008; Owen and Dennis 1988). While structural, institutional, biological and life-cycle factors have also been linked to the development of political interest, childhood socialization is one of its most important determinants (Jennings and Niemi 2014) – and political interest remains stable from an early age (Prior 2010, 2019). However, parent transmission of political interest has only been studied using the traditional one-item measure of political interest, while the gendered aspects of peer transmission of political interest have not been formalized. This dissertation wishes to address both issues by suggesting a unified theory: *children’s interest for specific political topics comes mainly from socialization by their same-gender parent and peers*. Notably, it is argued that interest in *partisan* politics is distinctly transmitted by men and to boys." | 1 |
| 92. (in the email) | You do pretty good job reviewing the literature but I’d encourage you to organise the literature a bit more by grouping factors in broad categories, e.g., distinguishing between macro and individual-level factors. |  | I did (see answer to comment #63). | - |
| 93. (in the email) | The overview of the different actors of socialisation seems quite complete, though I think you could probably do a bit more here to really tease out what we know/can expect in terms of the gendered socialisation patterns that are driven by each of these agents of socialisation. |  | I now mention the expectations for the role of same-gender parents and peers in the the first paragraph in the introduction (see answer to comment #91). | - |