Hi Alex,

These revisions reflect a lot of work on your part.  I have some comments below for what remains to be addressed before sending a revised version and a memo summarizing your changes to Sylvia and Ruth.

The table of itemized changes is too long as a standalone file.  The goal is to make it easier and less costly for the reviewer to see that you've thought carefully about suggestions and edited accordingly.

The network of links from cells in the fourth column is challenging to follow.  The one from #12 tells me to see #11, which tells me to see # 9.  And so on.  Reviewers won't want to be scrolling up and down a table to see an answer to a question/comment.  (In the attached table, it's also not immediately clear to the reader the distinction between Commented text and Comment.  Is Commented Text the quote the reviewer commented on, and Comment the text of their comment?  Or is the Comment your comment on their comment?  This becomes apparent later on, but not initially.)

On a practical level, it will be important to craft a memo responding to the comments you've received.  This table is a good basis for thinking about and crafting such a memo, and could serve as an appendix.  It is not, for the reasons mentioned above, a sufficient response in and of itself.  I will send you a memo that I crafted with Rheault and Godbout recently.  I have received many of these memos over the years, but can't share memos by others for confidentiality reasons.  I thought the memo I included in the draft email would do the summarizing job, but if I understand well, it does not go enough into the details. The memo you sent to me is almost as long as my Word document, that’s not exactly what I had in mind. I guess comments such as “you should add the following reference” are not relevant to include in the memo? Or should I include every single comment? (I know in both cases I need to group comments by theme, but unsure if it’s all comments or just those I think are more relevant.) Grouping main comments by theme.

If I should include every response in the memo, then I should not include the Word document in my answer and simply stick to the memo I guess? But if you say that I should only keep some of the most relevant comments in the memo, then the Word document remains useful. In that case, should I simply integrate your comments and keep the Word document as it is otherwise? Or should I also remove all the “see answer to comment #x” and instead copy-paste the answer to comment #x in every place where it fits? That would make the Word document even longer. I always make sure to link back to previous comments, not future comments. I simply integrate the comments, no big changes.

More substantively, one area to work on would be to step back and think about the big picture of what these comments are asking (and indeed, what the dissertation wants to accomplish).  There is a tendency to focus on the details of specifics instead of considering the broader implications of what the analysis will accomplish.  I know it's a cliche, but the "forest and trees" metaphor is highly relevant here.

I have detailed comments on some of your responses below, but I want to flag four comments that are particularly crucial for you to think about and address substantively and in broader terms.  In order of importance:

1. #48 and 49 from Sylvia are saying, in effect, the proposal doesn't do the main thing it's supposed to do.  I.e., identify an unexplained puzzle or unanswered question, convince the reader the solution/answer is important to find, and explain how your research will resolve/answer it. Maybe my research questions is too short. What about *"How do gender differences in interest for different political topics emerge?"* My main theory is that parents and peers influence children of their gender to be interested in the same political topics in which they are interested. This brings together two literatures on gender, socialization and political interest: agency/communality leading to interest in different political topics + transmission of interest by same-gender models. Maybe I can be more specific that I want to measure interest in various political topics and link it to parents' interest for those same topics? This is something that hasn't been done beforehand; each time parents' and children's political interest is compared, it is compared using a single measure of political interest, but we don't know if parents have the same impact on interest transmission for each political topic and the extent to which mothers have more influence on daughters and fathers on sons.
2. The many comments about the need for more conceptual precision, especially with respect to politics, political discussion, and political interest.  This is crucial and also overlaps with my reading of the proposal. See my comments below for more details. In my answer #5, I define clearly what “politics” means when I use it in the dissertation proposal. 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." From that moment on, I could use terms such as “interest in partisan politics” and “discussion of partisan politics” when authors refer to “political interest” and “political discussion,” but I am afraid of conceptual stretching. Yes, current measures of political interest are biased towards partisan politics, but I do not assume there is a perfect correspondence between answers to a question on “political interest” (somewhat undefined) and a hypothetical question on “interest in partisan politics” (rarely asked but clearer). Some people may still consider something somewhat larger than simply partisan politics when answering an undefined question on political interest, but they are likely to think mostly about partisan politics. Should I mention this at the outset and then replace every time I mention “political interest” by “interest in partisan politics,” and same for other concepts? Otherwise I do not know how to address that comment concretely.
3. The comments from Sylvia (and also Ruth) pushing you to situate your contribution alongside existing work about other, non-individual-level factors explaining differences in men's and women's national-level partisan political engagement.   #31 from Sylvia is the broadest such comment, but Sylvia also mentions it elsewhere and so does Ruth.  Among other reasons, this is important for identifying intervening or confounding factors, and so on. The reason why I chose not to fully embed my comments in some other literatures (barriers to women's participation, gender stereotyping, etc.) or add many references about a specific point was because I don’t know where I can cut otherwise. Do you have any ideas of sections to cut? I would need to cut a lot to integrate all those new comments, and by Zoom Prof. Bashevkin seemed to suggest having a shorter text – sticking to 15 pages – was one of her most important comments. Should I simply add confounding variables to the tentative survey questionnaire? I already have sections on non-individual-level factors (election systems, women's presence in politics, etc.) in the literature review.
4. Why Canada? What does a study of Canada contribute to what you propose to accomplish in the dissertation?

All of the other comments are important and I flag below where I think the responses could be most improved.  You do an excellent job responding to many of them.  It is worth taking some time to think about the themes of the criticisms, revising the proposal to address those themes, and crafting a memo that explains the changes you've made in terms of those themes.

Here are my specific comments:

Re: # 6: the response does not address Sylvia's point about why men are centered as the baseline. I mention that men and women simply have different interests in terms of politics and I now make it clearer than I used to. I don't understand how to further address this point.

On item 10, Sylvia's point is about the concept of "politics in general" as you've conceptualized it, rather than a comment about public perceptions of the term "political interest." It would be easy to address her comment by clarifying that you're referring to interest in party politics, or at least not claiming that "politics in general" denotes "interest in party politics."

I don't think the response in #19 responds to Sylvia's comment, which asks for a section to be systematically embedded in comparative literature about the other barriers to women's political participation. She is asking for the proposal to reflect on the barriers women face and to contextualize the hypothesis in terms of how it fits alongside those other barriers.

Re #27: Sylvia's comment here and elsewhere reflect a broader concern with how you're defining politics. A core tenet of feminist thought is that politics is often defined exceedingly narrowly and from a male perspective.  I interpret these comments as, among other things, asking you to be more precise in your conceptualization of political interest and participation--i.e., are we talking national-level only? Party politics only? If so, why?  It's important here to be consistent. For example, while I can certainly understand why a gender gap in "political interest" -- broadly defined -- would be interesting from one perspective, it's not the same thing as a gender gap in "types of political interest," which could manifest as a gender gap in "political interest" if we interpret "political interest" purely in partisan terms.  The response that "most people interpret 'political interest' as 'interest in party politics" isn't a direct reply, as we're not ultimately interested in explaining a pattern in survey responses but rather a pattern in what those survey responses reflect about the population they measure. Overall I am interested in all aspects/topics of politics (as defined in the first paragraphs). Does that work? Otherwise I fear that by refocusing on partisan politics I am using men as the normative type.

Re: 28: no need to say you went with Ruth's suggestion instead, just that you reorganized it to take account of the comments from Sylvia and Ruth and then explain how it was re-organized.

Re 29: Sylvia is asking a rhetorical question here.  The notion that political kids come from political parents is not new.  This comment invites clarification on what is gained from the literature in genetics.  Just saying that "genes matter"--while arguably controversial--isnt sufficient. I know it's not your intention, but the current reply might be interpreted as sarcastic. Thanks for that comment. I'll improve it.

Re: 31: Sylvia has suggested a major revision by asking you to consider an "enormous literature on gender roles and gender stereotyping," which is a good point.  Adding a sentence and two sources isn't a sufficient response to this comment.

Re: 32: Having a quick look at a scholar's work is not a sufficient response.  She is asking you to start with Gilligan and build from there. I can do that, but it will be a long paragraph and she wants me to further cut.

In general, Sylvia is pushing you to be more precise in your use of terms, like 'political interest', 'political engagement', and 'politics'.  This is an important point.  It is somewhat addressed by defining the terms, but wouldn't a clearer approach just be to use the more specific terms that you're currently using those broader terms to denote?  If by 'political interest' you mean 'interest in national party politics,' then why not just say 'interest in national party politics' instead? An unclear concept will generate unclear results.

Re: 40: Why remove it? Sylvia is again pushing you to consider structural factors in your explanation.  Instead of saying "mothers have more influence on their children", it could be that "stay-at-home parents have more influence on their children," women are more likely (for cultural reasons etc.) to stay at home, and thus the finding that mothers have more opportunities to influence their children is a spurious function of these broader cultural currents. I'm not clear on the relevance of the reply about sons/fathers and mothers/daughters.

Re: 43.  Stepping back from the details, this is again a push toward structural factors.  A cross-national or cross-sectional analysis more generally could uncover sources of system-level variation that aren't apparent in a purely individual-level analysis.  You could look at interprovincial differences, for example, in a study of just Canada. I already specify I will do it as part of my multilevel data collection. I can mention it here.

Re: 44. Why do you define these terms in this way? Plus, notice that you're defining "political engagement" as "forms of commitment to politics through attitudes and actions," but not defining politics.  Sylvia is pushing you to think more broadly about what kinds of human activities the term "politics" describes.  You don't have to focus on all of them, of course, but it gets back to the point about what precisely you're trying to explain.  If it is interest in national-level party politics, then say that.  Proximate explanations for such a gender gap could include that men and women are interested in different aspects of politics, they are interested in politics to different extents, and so on.

Re: 46: Very good revision.

Re 47: Why remove it? There's a difference between, on the one hand, between media depicting women as women and men as men, which Sylvia notes, and, on the other hand, media depictions of leadership traits as male rather than female traits. I had to cut somewhere!

Re: 48.  This is about as major of a comment as one can receive on a proposal. It needs to be addressed fully and carefully.  Note that your clarifying sentence invokes the same terminology, "political interest," that Sylvia has pressed you about repeatedly throughout the proposal.  This gets back to my previous comment about what, precisely, you want to study.  If it is people's interest in national party politics, then say that specifically, instead of saying that this is what you mean by "political interest."  By 'limitation', she is saying you have conceptualized politics too narrowly.  If the literature review and importance of the study is justified in terms of different levels of political interest--broadly conceptualized--but the empirics are focused on "political interest" where 'politics" is narrowly interpreted as "partisan politics," then it raises precisely the issue that Sylvia points to here: "Where is a clear summary of the intellectual puzzle motivating the dissertation, at theoretical and/or empirical levels?" In other words, what is it that you want to explain? Is it differences in political interest or differences in national-level partisan political interest? On this point, if it turned out that men were more interested than women in national-level partisan politics, but not in other types or levels of politics, then wouldn't this suggest the presence of barriers to national-level party politics rather than broader trends in the socialization of men and women?  This is where an engagement with the comparative literature on gender and politics is especially needed, as Sylvia suggests above.

#49 This is again a major comment.  What Sylvia identifies here is the main thing a proposal must accomplish.  As I mentioned above, I do not think the revised paragraph addresses this comment. This comment is particularly important and needs to be addressed carefully and thoroughly with revisions to the proposal.

#51 But "on average" just muddies the waters here about mechanisms.  Sylvia is pushing for more precision, which is important if one wants to identify intervening factors behind some empirical observation.  By adding "on average," it raises the question of "why," which is what Syliva is pushing you to think about here. She also wants me to reduce the length of my text and doesn't want me to have more than 2 hypotheses.

#52 Sylvia makes a very good point here.  I'm also unsure this can be studied in the context of the current research.  But it would be worth explaining to Sylvia why it was removed.

Comments to Ruth:

#59 This doesn't address Ruth's comment, which like Sylvia's, is asking for you to be more precise with terminology and conceptualization.

#61 There's no need to reply here that you're relying on Sylvia's comment instead of Ruth's.  Mentioning the changes you've made is sufficient.

#62 Same point as above.  For my part, it is important to be careful about circular arguments, and cyclical arguments are circular only when time stands still, as it does in the present study.  It is perfectly conceivable that the absence of women as legislators could generate (in the future) a lower level of interest among women which in turn generates (in the future) less political representation among women.  But if you only have data at a snapshot of time, then this becomes a circular argument between your variables, as Ruth mentions. Maybe I should specify that I don't want to test whether or not increasing interest in one political topic or another should have an impact on women's level of political representation?

#63.  This is indeed a very good suggestion. It also gives you an opportunity to integrate more effectively Sylvia's comment about the need to look into the comparative literature on women and politics, which emphasizes structural barriers.

#77. This comment invites reflection, it seems to me, on where what's transmitted comes from initially, rather than on what other socially transmitted thing it is related to.  Ruth is asking you to think about the ultimate source of gender differences -- for example, is it genetic? Is it structural? Is it  a path-dependent phenomenon? Your answer here is that it comes partly from agentic/communal differences, which you then say are likely to come from socialization.  This gets back to Ruth's earlier point about circularity: can we answer a question about why gender differences in partisan political interest are socialized by pointing to some other trait that is acquired by socialization, without inviting the next question: "ok then, why is that other trait transmitted differently to boys and girls?" That's a good point. This is an implication of that theory which hasn't been tested thus far. Should I specify in the data analysis that I will see if the link between interest in a topic by the parent and their same-gender child holds even after controlling for degree of agency/communality? (And same for peers.) I will also ask parents what their income is, but they will be analyzed at the individual, not structural level. Does that make sense? And for genetic differences this goes beyond the scope of my study.

#78 You say above in response to Sylvia (#52) that this part was removed.

# 81 is a very important point as well and was also raised by Sylvia.  Why focus on Canada?  In some cases, the response can be "because I'm interested in Canada."  In this case, however, a stated goal of the proposal is to inform the general literature on why there are differences between men and women in national-level political interest.  That goal requires a different kind of case justification.  Why study Canada instead of five countries or a different country?  What do we gain from a focus on Canada?  On the substantive point of this reply, however, notice the use of the word "politics".  You write "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 in politics (Sevi 2021)."  Syliva has consistently pressed for more precision on what you mean by "politics."  Do you mean "national level party politics," which is what you are focusing on, or "politics" more generally?  On this point, the percentage of women elected to the House of Commons in 1997 was just over 20% and the percentage of female candidates in 1997 was 25%.  The percentage of women elected did not increase at all until 2011, when it rose to just less than 25%, and only in 2019 did it reach nearly 30%.  There was a larger proportion of female federal candidates in 1997 than in 2000, 2004, and 2006, and only slightly more in 2008 and 2011 (~28%).

Hi again Alex,

Please find attached our response to reviewers.  You do not need to be this detailed in your memo, because you are also providing a table as an Appendix that lists specific comments and changes.  This is more by way of the style of responding.

You’ve done excellent work building the response.  I have to be out of town tomorrow and over the weekend, but happy to look at the memo or additional revisions next week.

Kind Regards, Chris.

Structural differences: acknowledge that socialization is not the ONLY explanation

bring structural institutional socialization in the introduction

replace political ambition by something else (maybe "ambition to run for political office"?)