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Do Women and Men Know Different Things? Measuring Gender Differences in Political Knowledge

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That women exhibit lower levels of political knowledge than men is a common and consistent finding in political science research. Recently, scholars have begun examining whether the content and structure of political knowledge measures contribute to women's perceived knowledge deficit. In an attempt to enter the debate on the explanations for gender differences in knowledge, I create and test a number of measures of gender-relevant political knowledge to determine whether broadening our definitions of what constitutes "knowledge" may help us more clearly understand the apparent gender gap in political knowledge in the United States. The results indicate that expected gender differences disappear when respondents are asked about the levels of women's representation in the national government.

Political knowledge is considered to be a central concept for understanding the political attitudes and behaviors of Americans.[1] Appropriate levels of political knowledge are thought to be important to allowing individuals and groups to effectively participate in politics, represent their own needs before the system, and develop attitudes that are based on more than emotion (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). In recent years, the study of political knowledge has become important to scholars of gender politics, who seek to examine several important aspects of the intersection of these two concepts, focusing both on the knowledge resources of women and men and on the gender differences that result in women being seen as having a deficit in their knowledge levels. Some scholars who study political knowledge suggest that the male-dominated nature of the U.S. political system and traditional socialization patterns require women to navigate a system that puts a premium on certain kinds of political knowledge (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). In this paper, I argue that current understandings of the gender implications of political knowledge are limited by narrow definitions of what constitutes knowledge. In an attempt to enter the debate on the explanations for gender differences in knowledge, I create and test a number of measures of political knowledge to determine whether broadening our definitions of what constitutes "knowledge" may help us more clearly understand the apparent gender gap in political knowledge in the United States.

Gender and Political Knowledge

Scholars of both gender politics and political behavior more broadly have, in recent years, produced a wide-ranging body of work that examines the apparent gap in political knowledge between women and men. Numerous studies confirm the general pattern of men exhibiting higher levels of political knowledge than women (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Garand, Guynan, and Fournet 2005; Frazer and Macdonald 2003; Kenski and Jamieson 2000; Lizotte and Sidman 2009; Mondak and Anderson 2004). While these differences are not always large, they are consistent and relatively long-standing and are often identified along with the accompanying concern that women's lower levels of political knowledge will impair their ability to participate effectively in politics (Delli Carpini and Keeter

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2000). Since no recent work has suggested that these differences are due to innate biological differences between women and men, explanations have examined gendered political socialization and gender role differences among women and men. Scholars have posed several hypotheses for these gender differences and have produced support for various explanations, but have yet to provide a full or complete accounting of the reasons for the gap. This may be, of course, because there is no one explanation for the gender gap in knowledge, but instead a gap that is influenced by several aspects of political and social life. Indeed, the evidence to date would suggest that scholars need to consider the gender gap from multiple angles to understand its complexity.

One fruitful area of research on gender differences in political knowledge has focused on measurement issues, assessing whether characteristics of the survey instrument and the environment in which people take surveys can cause women and men to answer questions differently. Work on stereotype threat finds that women score lower on tests of political knowledge when they are told that gender differences in knowledge scores are common. In the absence of a "threat" cue, gender differences in knowledge scores disappeared (McGlone, Aronson, and Kobrynowicz 2006). Mondak and Anderson (2004) investigate gender differences in the "propensity to guess," demonstrating that women are much more likely than men to choose a "don't know" response to a knowledge question, while men are more likely than women to guess in offering an answer. Several other works, both in the United States and other countries, find the same pattern, demonstrating that these dynamics transcend individual political systems (Frazer and Macdonald 2003; Kenski and Jamieson 2000). In confirming this general pattern, Lizotte and Sidman (2009) suggest that it is women's higher levels of risk aversion, and the resulting fear of being wrong, that leads to them to rely more often than men on "don't know" responses. These results signal that there is a psychological element to answering questions that is separate and apart from the amount of information individuals might have.

A second set of explanations suggests that the gender gap exists because the determinants of political knowledge are themselves gendered: that is, they are experienced differently by women and men, which results in different knowledge levels for each. Researchers point to women's historically lower levels of education and occupation, their greater time commitment to childrearing and family life, and their lower levels of political interest and discussion as sources of the gap (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Kenski and Jamieson 2000). If women are not similarly situated with men in regard to the major demographic and attitudinal variables that shape political knowledge, then we should not be surprised to find that women's knowledge levels are lower than men's. At the same time, other work indicates that, even when women and men do have the same resources, the impact of these resources can differ. Dow (2009) demonstrates that while some piece of the gender gap in knowledge is explained by gender-based differences in these important variables, more is explained by the fact that women experience a lower return from key variables, particularly education, than do men.

Several scholars who attempt to explain why the standard resource model might work differently for women and men point to the male nature of the American political system. Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) suggest that women's historical exclusion from political life results in women's lower levels of political interest and psychological engagement in politics. Burns, Scholzman, and Verba (2001) identify traditional patterns of political socialization as a reason for women's perception that politics is a "man's game." Dow (2009) surmises that schools may be a continuing source of unequal socialization of boys and girls that may shape later learning. And each of these sets of scholars raises motivation as a key shaper of women's political knowledge. Drawing on Luskin's (1990) work, Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) hypothesize that the result of the forces of political socialization in our system may be to leave women with less motivation than men to seek out and learn information, particularly about national politics, which appears to be a "man's world" on its face. In support of this idea, they offer evidence of two areas in which women's levels of knowledge are not generally inferior to men's: local politics, and issues that are more directly relevant to women's lives, or what they call "gender-relevant" knowledge (1996, 146). In their own work, they find no gender difference in people's ability to name the head of their local school board and small or no gender differences on issues that are perceived as more directly relevant to the lives of women, such as health care, government action on abortion policy, and women's representation on the U.S. Supreme Court. From this, Delli Carpini and Keeter argue that there is political knowledge that is "domain-specific," information that is more directly relevant to certain groups, providing the members of those groups with heightened motivation to learn about these issues. They suggest that the most obvious of these in American politics are race and gender specific domains.

Gender Relevant Domains of Knowledge

Delli Carpini and Keeter's position that there are different domains of political knowledge that will be relevant to different groups receives widespread support in the gender and politics literature. At the same time, this line of research raises questions regarding the measurement of political knowledge that have only been implicitly addressed in subsequent works.

One set of findings demonstrates that there may be policy areas and practical political information that is more directly relevant to women than men. Stolle and Gidengil (2010) demonstrate that Canadian women know more about how to access various government benefits and services than do men. Kenski and Jamieson (2000) find that men were more likely than women to recall information about "male" issues areas such as defense spending, NAFTA, and shifting control of policies from the national government to the states. But respondents demonstrated no gender differences in recall on Medicare, family leave, school vouchers, or prayer in school, and women were more likely than men to recall information on late-term abortion and education. Hansen (1997) finds that women were more likely than men to follow the news on what she calls "issues affecting women" (abortion, sexual harassment, equality for women) during the 1992 campaign. Paolino (1995) also finds that women voters in 1992 were particularly attentive to issues of sexual harassment and women's representation in Congress. Hutchings (2001), in examining levels of information about the vote to confirm Supreme Court justice Clarence Thomas, finds that liberal women were more likely to know their Senator's vote on Thomas' confirmation. At the same time, he finds that these women were no more knowledgeable about general political issues than the average person, suggesting that the salience of the Thomas nomination and confirmation increased their attention to this issue, but not to politics in general.

Another area in which women are more knowledgeable and attentive to politics is in their heightened awareness of women candidates and women officeholders. A 1989 NES Pilot Study found that women lagged behind men in their ability to identify a list of world leaders with the exception of Margaret Thatcher, the only woman on the list. Similarly, an analysis of Canadian National Election Study data demonstrates that men were more likely than women to correctly identify Jean Chretien when he was Prime Minister of Canada and women were more likely than men to correctly identify Kim Campbell when she was PM (Verba, Burns, and Scholzman 1997). Koch (1997) finds that women were more likely to correctly recall the names of Senate candidates when one of the candidates is a woman. Finally, Burns, Schlozman, and Verba (2001) demonstrate that women who live in states with women incumbents in the House, Senate, or governor's office, or had women candidates for those positions, are more likely to correctly name those incumbents and candidates than are men. At the same time, they find that women's knowledge of women leaders is not related to an increase in general political knowledge.

Investigating Gender Relevant Measures of Political Knowledge

The findings from current studies suggest that gender differences in political knowledge are, at least in part, a function of what we define as "knowledge." On knowledge items that are more directly relevant to women's lives and interests, we see many fewer gender differences than we see in the more traditional measures of political knowledge. Despite these findings, there has been relatively little work examining alternative measures of political knowledge that more fully incorporate gender-relevant information. The project outlined here brings together findings from the literatures on the measurement and content of political knowledge to directly examine whether gender-relevant measures allow women to overcome the perceived deficit in their information levels. In doing so, this project relies on data from an original survey to investigate the presence or absence of expected gender differences on a number of measures that examine content that is more directly related to the lives of women, information about the level of women's representation in the national government in the United States.

This investigation makes a contribution to the ongoing debate over gender differences in political knowledge in two ways. First, it offers a broader array of potential measures of political knowledge and allows for the possibility that information on aspects of women's place in the political system can offer valid measures of this important concept. Most commonly used measures of political knowledge are constructed from standard items that ask people to identify (mostly male) national and international political leaders and to answer questions about functions of the branches of the national government. A significant body of literature identifies that women score less well on these types of measures than do men (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Delli Carpini and Keeter

1996; Lizotte and Sidman 2009; Mondak and Anderson 2004). This project argues for knowledge measures that include a more diverse mix of items that represent a broader range of political facts, issues, and leaders.

Second, this project can help begin to determine whether women's perceived disadvantage in political knowledge is a function of the content of the measures most often employed. Gender differences in traditional measures of knowledge may disappear when measures of information relevant to women are taken into account. Following work that suggests that motivation and salience can influence the type and amount of information people have and how easily they can recall it (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Hutchings 2001; Prior and Lupia 2008), I hypothesize that gender-relevant political knowledge items will close the typical gender gap and allow women to demonstrate levels of political knowledge equal to or greater than men.

Data and Methods

To test the hypothesis about gender-relevant measures of political knowledge, this project relies on data from an original survey carried out in 2007 to examine several aspects of the public's knowledge about, and attitudes toward, women's place in American politics. A random sample of 1,039 U.S. adults was stratified to represent respondents who lived in states with women governors and/or U.S. Senators at the time of the survey and respondents from states with only men in these positions. The survey was administered online in a WebTV environment by Knowledge Networks (KN) through their KnowledgePanel. Relying on a sampling frame that includes the entire U.S. telephone population, Knowledge Networks uses random digit dialing and probability sampling techniques to draw samples that are representative of the U.S. population. They provide, at no charge, WebTV hardware and free monthly Internet service to all sample respondents who don't already have these services, thereby overcoming the potential problem of samples biased against individuals without access to the Internet.[2] At the same time, the fact that the respondent takes the survey alone in his or her own home may help alleviate concerns about interviewer effects and may provide sufficient anonymity and time to increase the likelihood of accurate responses. Respondents come from all 50 states and mirror the general population on key variables. (Appendix A provides demographic information on the sample respondents.)

The survey incorporates a series of questions that measure attitudes and information about women's representation in American political life as well as central political variables such as political efficacy, interest, and participation. It contains four questions that seek to measure the amount of information that respondents have about how well women are represented in the national government. These questions are:

1) Do you happen to know the name of the current Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives?
2) Taking your best guess, what percentage of the U.S. Congress do you think are women?
3) Off the top of your head, can you name a woman member of the U.S. Congress, either the House of Representatives or the Senate?
4) Of the nine members currently serving on the U.S. Supreme Court, do you happen to know how many are women?

The survey includes two other relevant questions. One attempts to gauge gender differences in awareness of elected leaders by asking respondents whether they know the sex of their two U.S. Senators. This question builds off earlier research that finds women are more likely to identify women leaders than male leaders (Koch 1997; Verba, Burns, and Schlozman 1997; Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001).[3] The second is an item that taps a more traditional measure of political knowledge and asked respondents whether they knew which party held the majority in the U.S. House at the time of the survey. This item serves as the comparison with the gender-relevant knowledge questions.[4]

Each question was open-ended in format. Since the respondents were taking the survey in a web

[2]Knowledge Networks has quickly become a leading provider of survey research for government, academic, and commercial research. Increasingly, research based on survey data gathered by Knowledge Networks is being published in the major peer-reviewed political science journals (Ansolabehere 2007; Berinsky 2007; Hillygus and Jackman 2003; Jacoby 2006; Lawless 2004), which serves as an indication of the quality of their sampling and data collection methods.

[3]The survey also asked people to identify whether their governor was a woman or a man. There was so little variation on this variable (over 90% of respondents correctly identified the sex of their governor, with no gender difference), that it was not used in the analysis.

[4]Ideally, I would have more than one traditional measure of political knowledge for use as a comparison. However, budget and space limitations on the survey led to making more room to test the new measures highlighted here. As a result, I acknowledge that the comparisons must be made with this in mind.

environment, the survey form gave them a space to type in an answer to each question. If the respondent answered "yes" to knowing the Speaker and naming a woman member of Congress, they were then asked to write the name. For the questions on the percentage of women in Congress and the number of women on the Supreme Court, they were given an opportunity to type in a number. For the question asking about the sex of their Senators, people were offered a choice of responses: two men, two women, or one man and one woman. Also following Mondak (2001), the answers to the question asking respondents to identify the Speaker were coded to award credit for "partial" answers, such as "Nancy Something" or "I know it is a woman, but can't think of her name."

Levels of Gender-Relevant Knowledge

Table 1 reports the frequencies for each gender-relevant question and for the traditional measure of political knowledge for the full sample and for women and men respondents. Taking the results for the full sample first, we see respondents displaying relatively high levels of awareness of the situation of women in American politics. With regard to identifying the Speaker, 41.5% of respondents said they knew the Speaker and offered a name. Of those who offered a name, almost all of them were correct (95%), resulting in 39.2% of the sample being able to offer Nancy Pelosi's name as the current Speaker of the House.[5] Given that this is a recalled answer and not one stimulated by offering respondents a list of names, this is a fairly impressive finding. It is even more impressive when compared to the findings for the same question from the 2004 ANES sample when only 11% of respondents were able to identify Dennis Hastert as the Speaker of the House. That more people were able to identify the Speaker of the House when the Speaker was a woman comports with the belief that women officeholders, particularly in such high positions, stand out and garner more attention and notice than do similarly situated men. At the same time, we must acknowledge that Pelosi's historic status as the first woman Speaker may have made her more recognizable in the role than previous Speakers.

Respondents in this sample were even more successful in their ability to name a woman member of Congress. In response to the initial question, 58% of the survey said they could name someone. And, again, the overwhelming majority of respondents who offered a name (94%) were correct. As is not surprising, Hillary Clinton and Nancy Pelosi were identified by many respondents. Of those who named a woman member of Congress, 35% offered Clinton's name and 14% offered Pelosi's. From this we can draw two positive conclusions: first, people knew that Clinton and Pelosi were members of Congress, and second, 51% of the respondents correctly named a woman member other than Clinton or Pelosi.

Respondents demonstrated a fairly impressive ability to identify women's current levels of representation in the branches of the federal government. At the time the survey was implemented, women composed 16% of the members of the U.S. Congress. When answering this question, respondents were able to offer any answer ranging from 0 to 100%%. I coded any responses that identified women as between 15 and 20% of Congress as correct.[6] This resulted in 31% of the sample being considered to have answered the question correctly. This finding is similar to what Sanbonmatsu (2003) found in asking a similar question in her 2000 survey of Ohio residents. On the question of the representation of women on the Supreme Court, 45% of respondents knew that there was only one woman justice serving on the court in 2007.[7]

With regard to being able to correctly identify the sex of their U.S. Senators, respondents in the sample as a whole are better able to identify men Senators than women. While 59% of respondents in states with women Senators correctly identified them, 66%

[5]In coding the open-ended responses to naming the current Speaker, I coded as correct the twenty people who said that they knew the Speaker was a woman, but couldn't recall her name. Deleting these responses makes no difference in the analysis. The people I code as correct despite their not being able to offer "Nancy Pelosi" as the name of the Speaker made comments along the lines of "I know it is a woman, but can't think of her name." Two respondents offered "Nancy something."

[6]In coding the responses in this fashion, I follow Sanbonmatsu (2003) who asked a similar question in her telephone survey of Ohio residents in 2000. At that point, women were 12% of Congress and she initially coded responses between 10% and 15% as correct. Later in her analysis, she uses a more generous coding of responses between 5% and 20% as correct.

[7]Since survey respondents answered the survey on their own, without an interviewer present, some readers may wonder whether respondents "looked up" answers to the knowledge questions. I raise three responses to this as a way of mitigating these concerns: first, the large number of incorrect responses suggests that respondents did not routinely attempt to find information before answering; second, the mean time taken to complete the 24-item survey was 16 minutes and the median was nine minutes; third, a variable measuring the interview duration was weakly and negatively related to the general knowledge measure (−.062) and the gender-relevant measures (−.068), both at the .05 level of significance. These considerations offer assurance that respondents were answering the knowledge questions unaided.

Table 1 Frequencies for Gender-Relevant and Traditional Political Knowledge Items

	Sample	Women	Men
Majority in House			
Correct	62.2%	**57.6%**	**67.7%***
Incorrect	37.2	42.4	32.3
Speaker of House			
Correct	39.2%	39.2%	39.2%
Incorrect	60.8	60.8	60.8
Percent Women in Congress			
Correct	30.4%	**33.7%**	**27.8%***
Underestimate	28.5	**25.4**	**32.4***
Overestimate	39.6	40.7	39.7
Woman Member of Congress			
Correct	52.4%	51.2%	53.6%
Incorrect	47.6	48.8	46.4
Women on Supreme Court			
Correct	44.8%	43.0%	46.5%
Incorrect	55.2	57.0	53.5
Identify Woman Senator			
Correct	59.2%	**61.3%**	**56.8%***
Incorrect	40.7	38.7	43.2
Identify Man Senator			
Correct	66.1%	**61.5%**	**70.4%***
Incorrect	33.9	38.5	29.6

*indicated gender difference at the .05 level

of those in states with men Senators did the same, a difference that it statistically significant at the .05 level. Finally, 62% of respondents correctly identified the Democrats as having the majority in the House of Representatives, a finding generally consistent with recent trends in this question (ANES 2010).

Gender Differences in Gender-Relevant Political Knowledge

Since much of the work on political knowledge finds small but persistent gender differences, I analyze whether the same is true when we compare gender-relevant and traditional measures of political knowledge. Based on the assumption that the situation of women in American politics is more salient to women in the public, I hypothesize that women will be more likely to possess political knowledge relevant to issues of women's representation and will be more aware of their women leaders than will men. The frequencies for women and men in Table 1 support this hypothesis. For comparison, the first item shows responses to the question about the majority party in the U.S. House. This is a fairly standard item used to measure political knowledge and the results here are consistent with most past findings. Men in the sample are significantly more likely to know the majority party in the House than are women. However, the mean differences on the gender relevant items tell a different story. Women in this sample are significantly more likely than men to know the percentage of women in Congress than are men. This item is coded to reflect whether respondents were accurate in their understanding of women's representation in Congress or whether they over or underestimated that level. Besides being more accurate, women were also less likely than men to underestimate women's representation. There was no gender difference in overestimating the percentage of women in Congress. This finding would suggest that women are more aware of women members of Congress and men are less aware of these leaders.

On each of the other items, knowing the Speaker, naming a woman Member of Congress, and knowing the number of women on the Supreme Court, there are no gender differences at all. These findings support the conclusions of Delli Carpini and Keeter (among others) that women have more information about issues that directly related to their lives than do men. Particularly, as suggested by Burns, Schlozman, and Verba (2001), it appears that women pay more careful attention to the presence of women in elective office. This is in line with other recent work that found that women had less information than did men about congressional candidates overall, but that gender differences in information were wiped out when looking at information levels about women candidates (Dolan 2008). These findings also suggest that what the literature has assumed is a deficit in women's levels of political knowledge may in fact be, at least in part, a function of how we measure this concept.

The results for the question asking respondents to identify the sex of their U.S. Senators raise an intriguing angle on gender-relevant information. For respondents who live in states with at least one women Senator, women are significantly more likely to correct identify that situation than are men, 61% to 57%. And, as might be expected, men are significantly more likely than women to correctly identify the presence of men Senators, 70% to 62%. However, what this also reveals is that women respondents are no better at identifying women Senators than they are men Senators. Indeed, what women demonstrate is a consistent ability to correctly identify the sex of their Senators—61% correctly identify women and 62% correctly identify

men. The case is much different for men, whose ability to identify Senators correctly is dependent on the sex of those officeholders. Fully 70% of men in the sample identify men Senators correctly, while only 56% of them correctly identify women Senators, a gap of 14 percentage points. Combining this finding with the earlier one demonstrating that men are more likely to underestimate women's representation in Congress could suggest that men have lower levels of awareness of nonmale leaders. It also suggests that we should consider whether women's advantage in identifying women leaders is less driven by their gender identification with women leaders than by a comparative inability of men to be cognizant of women (or both at the same time), reminding us that we need to fully consider the attitudes and behaviors of women and men when we seek to explain political gender differences.

The Utility of Gender-Relevant Measures of Political Knowledge

The data in Table 1 demonstrate that expected gender differences in political knowledge are often absent when we consider topics that are more directly relevant to the political lives of women. Given that I suggest that these measures of gender-relevant political knowledge could be considered legitimate additional measures of political knowledge, I offer two analyses to demonstrate their utility. First, I conduct an analysis to see whether traditional determinants of traditional political knowledge also successfully explain the gender-relevant measures. Second, I employ the traditional and gender-relevant measures of political knowledge as independent variables in an analysis of important political attitudes and behaviors. If gender-relevant measures of knowledge tap the same sort of information holding as do the traditional measures, we would expect them to be related to central political variables like participation, interest, and efficacy in similar ways. An additional advantage of this analysis is that it allows for an examination of gender differences in political knowledge in a set of more complete multivariate models.

Table 2 presents the results of an analysis that estimates traditional political knowledge and gender-relevant political knowledge as a function of respondent education, sex, party identification, race, age, income, and political interest. For the purposes of analysis and presentation, I create a four-item index of gender-relevant political knowledge by combining the measures of knowing the Speaker, knowing a woman member of Congress, knowing the percentage of women in Congress, and knowing the number of women on the Supreme Court.[8] As an additional control, I include a variable that measures whether the respondent lives in a state with a woman governor or women U.S. Senators. This last variable flows from work on the symbolic representation of women and is included to test the assumption that cues from the political environment, such as living in the presence of women leaders, will make members of the public more attentive to political information about women (Atkeson 2003; Hutchings 2001; Lawless 2004). The results in Table 2 indicate that levels of traditional political knowledge are a function of three things—education, sex, and political interest. This analysis confirms a long line of research that demonstrates that people with higher levels of education and political interest know more about politics and that women generally have lower levels than men.

The determinants of political knowledge relevant to women are a bit different. Education and political interest are still positively related to possessing gender-relevant knowledge and are the strongest variables in the model. Interestingly, age and income are also significantly, if weakly, related to holding more gender-relevant knowledge, with older respondents and those with higher levels of income

TABLE 2 Determinants of Traditional and Gender-Relevant Political Knowledge

	Traditional Knowledge		Gender-Relevant Knowledge	
	b	**S.E.**	**b**	**S.E.**
Education	.261*	.078	.237*	.033
Sex	**−.375***	**.149**	**.006**	**.061**
Party Identification	−.003	.038	−.010	.015
White	.048	.172	.077	.072
Age	−.013	.046	.098*	.019
Income	.027	.019	.022*	.008
Political Interest	.502*	.087	.431*	.034
Wm Leader in State	.037	.037	.049	.062
Constant	−2.517*	.461	−1.098*	.186
N=	1026		N=956	
Chi Square=	245.236		R^2=.309	

*p.05
The model estimating traditional political knowledge employs logistic regression.The model estimating gender-relevant political knowledge employs OLS regression.

[8]Analysis conducted with each of the four individual items separately finds the same results.

TABLE 3 **Gender-Relevant and Traditional Political Knowledge as Predictors of Participation, Interest, and Efficacy (OLS Regression)**

	Participation		Interest		Efficacy	
	Women	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**
Education	.123*	.167*	.124*	.126*	.137*	.145*
Party Identification	.005	−.007	.016	.025	.025	.040*
White	−.261*	−.103	−.113	.010	−.024	.125
Age	.075*	.117*	.119*	.122*	.015	.010
Income	.030*	.006	.018	.006	−.001	−.009
Political Knowledge	**.439***	**.440***	**.508***	**.519***	**.362***	**.377***
Gender-Relevant Knowledge	**.100***	**.183***	**.200***	**.267***	**.150***	**.221***
Constant	.228	−.073	1.138*	1.169*	1.734*	1.700*
N=	476	465	480	472	478	472
R^2=	.154	.211	.300	.380	.169	.186

*$p < .05$

scoring higher on the index than younger and lower income respondents. With regard to the main variable of interest here, respondent sex, we see that the results of the multivariate analysis confirm the lack of gender difference seen in Table 1. This lends support to the notion that gender differences in levels of political knowledge may be more dependent on the content of knowledge items than had traditionally been thought. One final note to make is that the variable measuring the presence of a woman governor or U.S. Senator appears to have no impact on either measure of political knowledge.[9] This finding suggests that the mere presence of a woman in office may not be sufficient to increase general attentiveness to other gender-relevant political issues, despite the assumption of much of the work on women's symbolic importance in politics (Lawless 2004).

One final way to demonstrate that the gender-relevant items provide a valid path for measuring political knowledge is to examine whether this information is indeed related to other relevant political attitudes and behaviors. Table 3 presents an analysis that models three traditional political variables—political participation, interest, and efficacy—as a function of respondent education, party, race, age, income, and the two types of political knowledge. To determine whether the knowledge variables function differently for women and men, the analysis is conducted separately for each. If gender-relevant measures of knowledge tap the same sort of information that more traditional measures do, we would expect the gender-relevant measure to be positively and significantly related to each of the three dependent variables. If they function similarly for women and men, we would expect the models for each group to be the same. Indeed, this is what we see. In each of the models, for both women and men, we see the expected impact of traditional political knowledge—higher levels of knowledge is related to more participation, higher levels of interest in politics, and higher levels of political efficacy. At the same time, the gender-relevant index performs in the same fashion—these measures are also positively related to these variables for both women and men, even after controlling for traditional political knowledge. This suggests that scholars could draw on gender-relevant measures of political knowledge as reliably as they do standard measures without confounding the impact of respondent sex because of the content of the questions.

[9]Additional analysis (not shown) finds no difference in levels of gender-relevant knowledge between those who live in a state with women leaders and those who do not.

Conclusion

Past research suggests that there are several ways in which traditional measures of political knowledge may favor particular kinds of information and/or particular personality characteristics with regard to answering survey questions. Interestingly, women tend to be disadvantaged on both of these considerations, which leads to a general understanding that women possess lower levels of political knowledge than do men. However, more recent research paints a more complex picture, one that acknowledges that women and men may know different things and may approach answering questions differently. The new

measures of gender-relevant political knowledge advanced here contribute to expanding our understanding of that complexity. When we include political knowledge measures that ask for information on the present state of women in American politics, we see women's traditional gender disadvantage wiped out. Women in the survey reported here hold as much information about women's place in politics as do men. This offers support for the notion that knowledge levels are, in part, a reflection of the content of the items we employ. Recall also that the gender-relevant items did not allow for a "don't know" response, which may have also contributed to eliminating gender differences. These results take into account two adaptations that reveal higher levels of political knowledge among women than is usually the case. I argue that measures of political knowledge should begin to more explicitly acknowledge the ways in which question content, structure, and format can shape perceived gender differences and should reflect a broader definition of what constitutes relevant political knowledge in American life. The body of evidence pointing to limitations in our current understanding of gender differences in knowledge is large and varied enough to signal to researchers that we should start to examine new measures of this important concept.

At the same time, work on gender differences in political knowledge should acknowledge that examining gender also means looking at men's areas of knowledge. The finding here that men in the sample are much less likely to be able to identify when they are represented by women Senators than when they are represented by men suggests that men may pay attention to gender-relevant information in the same way we hypothesize that women do.

From this starting point, future research should engage ways to develop balanced measures of political knowledge that contain both traditional items and those that are more relevant to women. This could be accomplished through including measures of local political leaders, local political issues, a broader and more diverse set of policy areas, and measures of content about women's place in American politics. As a steady stream of research demonstrates that exclusive reliance on traditional measures of political knowledge can mask women's true political knowledge levels, scholars should take care not to automatically attribute a knowledge deficit to women—rather we should acknowledge that what women and men know about politics is sometimes different and can reflect different experiences. Instead, scholars should continue to push for the inclusion of a range of knowledge measures that result in more valid representations of what all people know.

Appendix A

Respondents in the survey come from a nationally representative stratified random sample of U.S. adults drawn from all 50 states and D.C. for the project by Knowledge Networks. The N is 1039. Key demographics for the respondents are below.

Sex	
Male	49%
Female	51%
Race	
White, Non-Hispanic	72%
Black, Non-Hispanic	11%
Hispanic	11%
Other, Non-Hispanic	3%
Biracial/Multiracial	2%
Education	
Less than high school	14%
High School graduate	30%
Some College	29%
BA or higher	28%
Political Party	
Republican (w/ leaners)	41%
Independent	4%
Democrat	55%
Women Leaders in State	
Female Governor	20%
Female U.S. Senator	21%
Female Gov and Sen	20%
Male Gov and Sen	39%
Region	
Northeast	18%
Midwest	25%
South	30%
West	28%
Marital Status	
Married	53%
Single (Never Married)	28%
Divorced	13%
Widowed	6%
Separated	1%
Age	
18–29	20%
30–44	26%
45–59	28%
60+	26%
Ideology	
Conservative	35%
Moderate	37%
Liberal	28%

Appendix B

Variable Measures

Traditional Political Knowledge —As of today, do you happen to know which party holds a majority of the seats in the U.S. House of Representatives?

Gender Relevant Political Knowledge —(1) Do you happen to know the name of the current Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives?'' (2) Taking your best guess, what percentage of the U.S. Congress do you think are women? (3) Off the top of your head, can you name a woman member of the U.S. Congress, either the House of Representatives or the Senate? (4) Of the nine members currently serving on the U.S. Supreme Court, do you happen to know how many are women?

Awareness of Sex of U.S. Senators —Thinking about the two U.S. Senators from your state, do you happen to know if they are both men, both women, or whether one is a man and the other is a woman? Two men/two women/one man and one woman

Political Participation —Some people participate in politics regularly, while others are often too busy to participate. How about you? Were you able to participate in any of the following activities in the past two years? (1) Voted in a presidential or congressional election, (2) Contacted a public official (by phone, letter, email, etc.), (3) Contributed money to a political party or a candidate's campaign, (4) Volunteered with a political party or candidate's campaign

Political Interest —Some people follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, while others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, or hardly at all?

Political Efficacy —Tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statements. (1) I consider myself well-qualified to participate in political activities like voting or discussing politics. (2) Public officials don't care much what people like me think. (Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree)

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