

**The Efficacy Enigma: Explaining the Gender Gap in
Internal Political Efficacy in Canada and the United States**

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Paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science
Association, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, May 30 to June 1, 2007

Abstract

Despite the gains women have made since the advent of second-wave feminism women remain less confident of their personal political abilities than men. This gender gap in internal political efficacy has remained unchanged for decades, yet it has attracted surprisingly little scholarly attention in recent years. This paper uses data from the 2000 American (ANES) and 2004 Canadian (CES) election studies to test possible explanations of the enduring gender gap. We argue that the effects of changes in women's lives that might plausibly have enhanced their confidence in their political abilities are being offset by countervailing forces. We focus on two, in particular. First, many women have to contend with the double demands of working outside the home and caring for their children and thus have less time and energy to devote to following politics. Secondly, women typically tend to know less about politics than men and therefore have greater need of partisan cues to make sense of politics. The weakening of party attachments means that fewer women can use partisan cues to reduce the seeming complexity of politics. We also examine whether women derive less political benefit from resources like education and higher occupational status.

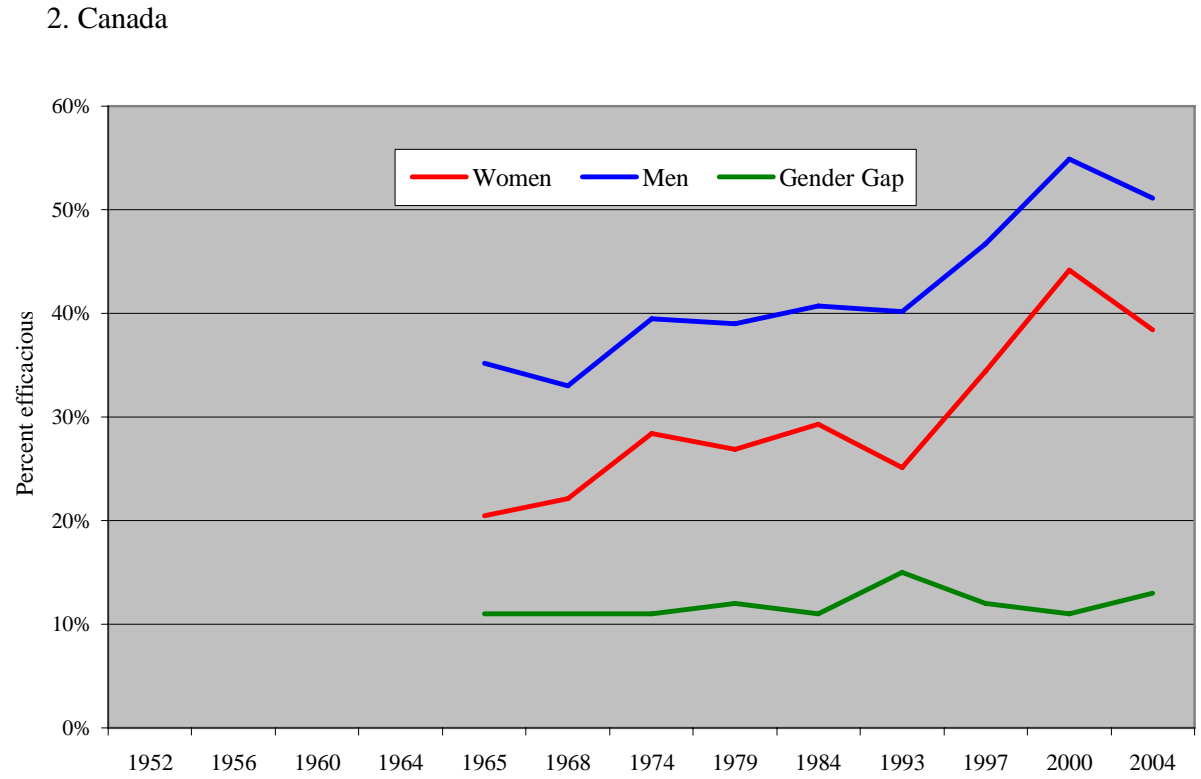
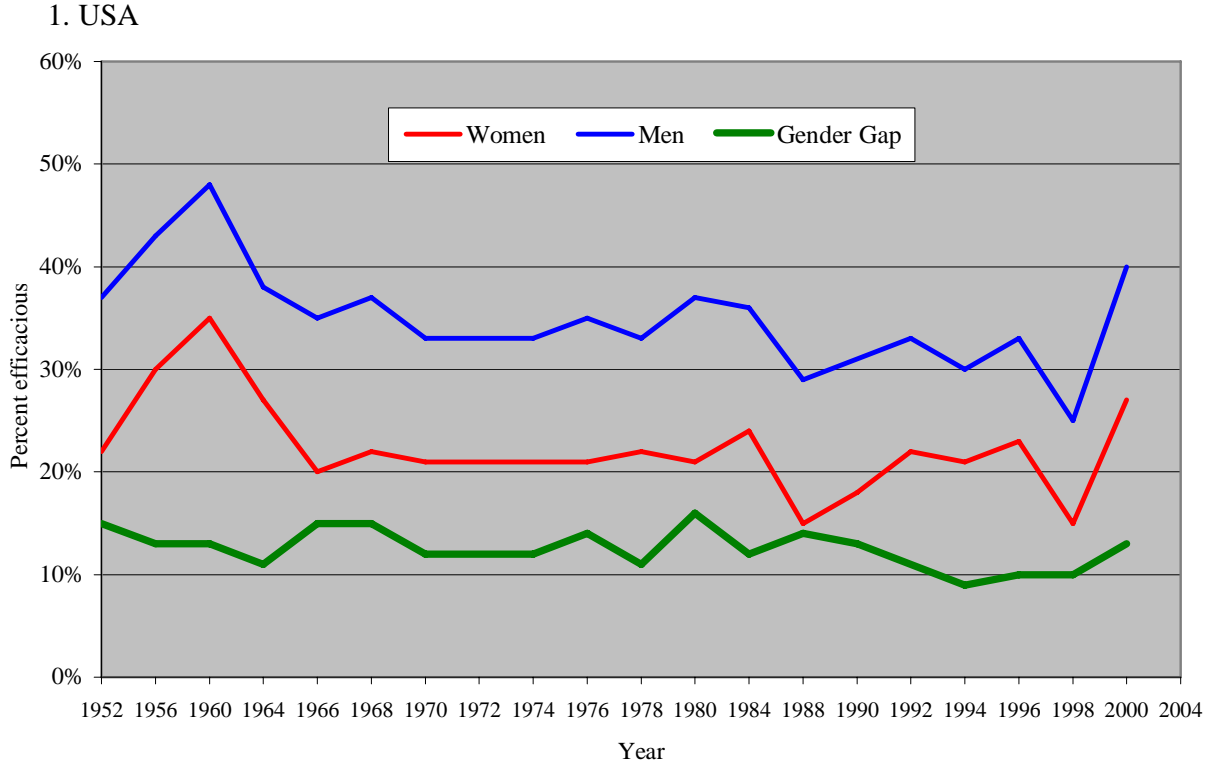
Introduction

The gender gap in internal political efficacy is an enduring enigma (Burns, Schlozman and Verba 2001, 269). First highlighted by Angus Campbell and his colleagues (1960) in *The American Voter*, it has remained more or less constant through the sweeping changes that have transformed many women's lives. Women's participation in the paid workforce has doubled and women's university enrolment now equals or exceeds men's. Yet women remain less confident of their personal political abilities than men. Counter-intuitive as it is, this gap has received surprisingly little attention from scholars in recent years. This paper sets out to redress this lack of attention by examining possible reasons why women's sense of internal political efficacy remains lower than men's in spite of all the gains that women have made in the public sphere since the advent of second-wave feminism.

We argue that the effects of factors that would normally enhance women's confidence in their ability to understand politics, such as rising levels of post-secondary education, increasing participation in the paid workforce and the socializing effects of the women's movement, are being offset by countervailing forces. We pay particular attention to two such forces. First, working outside the home means that many women have to contend with the demands of the "double day" and thus have less time and energy to devote to following politics. Being responsible for duties at home and at work may well mitigate any benefits women gain from working outside of the home. Second, women have greater need of information shortcuts because they typically know less about politics than do men. The weakening of party attachments in recent years may mean that fewer women can rely on partisan cues to reduce the seeming complexity of politics.

Research on internal political efficacy has typically focused on the USA. Comparative studies have been relatively rare (Finkel 1987; Hayes and Bean 1993) and comparative studies of the gender gap in internal political efficacy rarer still (Christy 1985). Indeed, it remains the case

Figure 1: The Gender Gap in Internal Political Efficacy



Source: American National Election Studies, 1952 to 2003 and Canadian Election Studies, 1965 to 2004. See Appendix for details of question wording and calculation of percent efficacious.

that most of the studies focusing on gender lack a comparative basis (O'Connor 1993). In this paper, we conduct parallel analyses of the gender gap in internal political efficacy in Canada and the USA. These two cases make an especially suitable comparison, given the striking similarity in both the size and the persistence of the gap (see Figure 1).¹ This similarity is all the more striking in that the overall trends in internal political efficacy diverge: Canadians appear to have gained greater confidence in their personal political abilities in recent years, whereas Americans show little net change.² At the same time, the two countries share some key contextual similarities that facilitate comparison. As Lisa Young (2000) notes, geographic proximity and extensive communication links have “fostered a degree of convergence in their politics” (p. 7). Both countries have constitutional guarantees of rights, single-member first-past-the-post electoral systems, and significant division of powers (between the executive and legislative branches in the USA and between the federal and provincial governments in Canada). Most importantly for our purposes, the women’s movement emerged in the mid-1960s and was a product of similar forces in both countries, such as increased access to higher education, radical student movements, and resistance to the constraining gender roles of the 1950s (Young 2000). Moreover, both movements have been dominated by liberal feminism.³

Accounting for the Gender Gap in Internal Political Efficacy

Internal political efficacy captures the individual’s perceived political competence. It is the “individual’s belief that the means of political influence are available to him or her” (Balch 1974, 24). As such, it is to be distinguished from the concept of external political efficacy, which refers to “the belief that the authorities or regime are responsive to [an individual’s] influence attempts” (p. 24). Where external political efficacy is the confidence that an individual has in the responsiveness of elected officials, internal political efficacy refers to the individual’s self-confidence in his or her own abilities to comprehend politics.

Gender gaps in external political efficacy are inconsistent or non-existent. The gender gap in internal political efficacy, by contrast, is both substantial and persistent. Its persistence is all the more surprising, given the profound structural and cultural changes that have affected women’s lives over the past half century. Carol Christy (1985) was one of the first to highlight this disjuncture. She tracked trends in internal political efficacy in the USA and the former West Germany and found that they did not coincide with changes in education, work force participation, or women’s political status. Neither economic development nor generational turnover made any difference, either.

Karen Beckwith (1986) noted a second, and equally surprising, disjuncture: the gender gap in internal political efficacy persists despite the fact that most gender gaps in political activity have disappeared (or even reversed, see Burns et al. 2001). She describes the gender gap in internal political efficacy as an “enduring conundrum...All women, regardless of education, class, race, or other variables, have lower levels of efficacy than do men. In addition, women’s political efficacy is remarkably similar even in the face of differences in participation among groups of women and despite similarities in male and female political activism” (p. 161).

It is particularly surprising that controlling for education did nothing to reduce the gender differences. Hailed as the great equaliser, access to education is credited with opening the doors of opportunity, wealth, and power for disadvantaged groups. Education has been identified as a key predictor of women’s political interest (Bennett and Bennett 1989; Koch 1997), political

knowledge and willingness to offer opinions on political questions (Atkeson and Rapoport 2003), as well as women's political participation (Bennett and Bennett 1989; Scholzman et al. 1994). Education fosters norms of civic duty and political engagement and it develops the cognitive and information-processing skills that are required to deal with the complexities of politics (Verba et al. 1995). It also enhances opportunities for learning about politics since people who have been to college are more likely to be part of social networks in which politics is a topic of conversation. Accordingly, the gender gap in internal political efficacy should have narrowed as women's enrolment in post-secondary education grew. Beckwith (1986) found that education did indeed enhance women's sense of internal political efficacy. However, college-educated women still expressed lower levels of perceived political competence than their male counterparts. This begs the question of why these women were failing to reap the same political benefits from their education that men did.

Similarly, women's increased participation in the labour force should have led to a narrowing of the gender gap in internal political efficacy. This assumes, though, that confinement to the domestic sphere isolates women and limits their opportunities to discuss politics (Kay et al. 1987). It turns out, though, that being a housewife does not necessarily make for a diminished sense of personal political competence. Jerome Black and Nancy McGlen (1979) found no difference in internal political efficacy between housewives and employed women in their Canadian sample, save for those in professional employment, while Beckwith (1986) found that housewives in the USA actually felt more efficacious than women who were working in blue-collar jobs. This suggests that gendered patterns of employment may be helping to perpetuate the gender gap in internal political efficacy. Gender continues to negotiate, to some degree, the experiences that women have in the paid workforce, confining them to pink-collar ghettos and limiting their opportunities to gain a better understanding of politics and government. However, Beckwith (1986) found that women felt less confident of their political abilities than men, regardless of their occupational status, and that men benefited more from a higher occupational status than women did.

Women's increased labour force participation has also been linked to a growing feminist consciousness and a questioning of traditional gender roles (Manza and Brooks 1998; Welch 1977). The assumption here is that participation in the paid work force exposes women to gender inequalities that they may not experience as full-time homemakers. There is little evidence, though, to suggest that feminist consciousness necessarily makes for a greater sense of perceived political competence. Black and McGlen (1970) attributed a small narrowing of the gender gap in internal political efficacy between 1965 and 1974 to the impact of the women's movement on Canadian women, but this decline did not continue. Similarly, Beckwith (1986) only observed a consistent effect for feminist group identity on college-educated women. Support for feminist issues did more to increase feelings of internal political efficacy, but it had as much effect on men as it did on women and did not qualify as "a crucial variable" (p. 110)

The surprisingly weak impact of the women's movement on women's feelings of personal political competence also showed up when Beckwith (1986) compared age cohorts. We might expect that the shared experience of growing up in a time of intense feminist mobilization would boost women's internal political efficacy. Where first wave feminism was concerned with ending officially mandated gender inequalities, second wave feminism saw the structure of women's personal lives as politicized and reflective of a male-dominated power structure. As a result, the

second wave women's movement can be identified by the slogan, "the personal is political." By the mid-1980s, third wave feminism had emerged as a result of the perceived failures of second wave feminism and the inclusion of a greater diversity of women in the movement.

However, Beckwith (1986) found that age cohort was unrelated to feelings of internal political efficacy. The only generation that differed was the one that came of age before women were granted the vote. Moreover, generation actually seemed to make more difference for men than it did for women. It is difficult, of course, to disentangle the effects of age and generation. It could be that life-cycle effects were offsetting the effects of generation. The changes that people experience as they age can affect their subjective political competence. Assuming new responsibilities, such as owning a home and raising children, results in more exposure to government and more interest in the politics of the day. As they age, people learn more about politics and have more opportunities to be recruited into political activities through work, church and other voluntary associations, resulting in increased confidence in their political abilities (Jennings and Niemi 1981). Indeed, one of the few consistent findings from Bernadette Hayes and Clive Bean's (1993) comparative study of political efficacy was that people tend to become more internally efficacious as they age, at least in Britain and the former West Germany.

It is, of course, quite possible that the impact of the feminist movement cuts across generations. This movement represents a counter-socialization process to traditional gender role socialization. Traditional conceptions of gender roles are shaped by the idea that politics is the domain of men and that men are better suited than women to grapple with the complexities of the political world (Sapiro 1983). Women who hold such beliefs will necessarily have a diminished sense of their own political competence. Sapiro found that these "privatized" women did, indeed, have less confidence in their own political abilities, an effect that was on a par with that of education when it came to predicting internal political efficacy. However, traditional gender roles do not play as large a role as they once did. Women are increasingly visible in non-traditional roles in both the public and private sectors and women's increased representation in elite-level politics sends cues to women that politics is not only for men (Atkeson 2003, 1056). To the extent that women have embraced modern conceptions of gender roles, the effect should be to increase their confidence in their own ability to understand politics.

This mirrors Susan Carroll's (1988) argument about women's autonomy. She links the emergence of the gender gap in voting for Ronald Reagan to the enhanced autonomy that many women enjoy as a result of rising levels of education, the increasing average age of first marriage, a growing divorce rate, and movement into the paid work force. The hallmark of political autonomy is the ability to make independent assessments of one's own political interests (p. 257). To do so, Carroll argues, women have to transcend traditional gender role socialization. However, the psychological independence that some women have attained by transcending traditional gender role socialization may be offset by their economic dependence on individual men. Carroll sees marriage as a constraint on women's political autonomy. Only unmarried women and married women who are college-educated and have professional or managerial jobs are able, in her view, to make political judgments "unconstrained and undominated by the political interests of individual men" (p. 257). The fact that women are disproportionately employed in lower-level service and clerical jobs may thus serve to dilute the positive impact of changing gender role conceptions on women's internal political efficacy. As Sapiro (1983)

observes, “even when women venture into the public sphere, the home and the private virtues of femininity may still dominate the way they think about themselves” (p. 182).

Indeed, the explanation for why the gender gap in internal political efficacy has failed to narrow may lie in the role of countervailing forces. While women have made substantial gains in obtaining resources that promote confidence in understanding politics, gender-specific experiences may be offsetting those gains.

Like education, income is considered to be a critical political resource. Subscribing to a daily newspaper or going online in search of political information are luxuries that the poor can ill afford. The affluent have more time and energy, as well as money, to devote to keeping up with politics. They do not have to contend with the daily struggle to put a meal on the table and find the money to pay the rent. Women make up a disproportionate number of those living in poverty and that number has been growing: since the 1970s, female-headed households have accounted for a growing proportion of those below the poverty line (Fukuda-Parr 1999). This suggests that the feminization of poverty could be offsetting any positive effects that women’s increased access to post-secondary education and higher status occupations may be having on the gender gap in internal political efficacy.

The responsibility of raising children is another gender-specific reality that may diminish women’s subjective political competence. Sapiro (1983) first pointed to the inhibiting effect of motherhood. Indeed, it rivalled education as a predictor of feelings of internal political efficacy among the young American women who made up her sample. According to Sapiro, motherhood is inextricably linked with gender roles that shape women’s perceptions of their ability to understand politics. She found that women who were more tied to the private sphere by the demands of motherhood were more likely to “underjudge their own competence especially in ‘male’ tasks and areas of expertise” such as politics (p. 92). Of course, being in their mid-twenties, the women in Sapiro’s sample were more likely to be caring for babies and very young children. This may be why Beckwith (1986) found no difference between women who had children and those who did not when she looked at a more representative cross-section of women. What did matter was the number of children: women who had four or more children typically felt the least confident of their own political abilities.

It is possible, though, that motherhood is more of a constraint now than it was 30 or 40 years ago. Today, many women are working a “double day”, juggling their domestic responsibilities with full-time employment outside the home. Zenaida Ravenera and her colleagues (2003, 167) found that young Canadian women spend more time than young men in the home engaged in domestic, unpaid labour while young men spend more time engaged in the paid labour force. These differences grow in magnitude as Canadians age. Meanwhile, in the USA, Nancy Burns and her colleagues (2001, 185) concluded on the basis of responses to the *Citizen Participation Survey*, that the division of household labour was not very different from the division of labour that obtained in the 1950s. The disproportionate amount of responsibility for caring for home and children that many working women continue to bear may well counteract the potential political self-confidence that they might otherwise gain from working outside the home.

Another offsetting factor could relate to the changing ethno-racial composition of the population. Deva Woodly (2006) argues that the diminished sense of self-efficacy of African American and Latino youth reflects their perceptions of institutional inequalities that limit their personal control over achieving desired outcomes: it “is not the result of perverse self-attitudes but instead a clear-headed evaluation of the political situation as it is generally perceived” by racial minorities (2006: 26). Race can also influence access to key political resources, like language, time, education, income, and occupation (Verba et al. 1993). Belonging to a racial minority may be more consequential, though, for women because minority women are doubly marginalized in politics as women and as minorities. Indeed, Beckwith (1986) found that African American women felt less politically efficacious than their male counterparts. If belonging to an ethno-racial minority does have a more negative effect on women’s sense of personal political competence, the fact that ethno-racial minorities now make up a larger proportion of the population could be another contributing factor to the persistence of the gender gap in internal political efficacy.

Increasing secularization is another possible reason why the gender gap in internal political efficacy has failed to narrow. As James Hougland and James Christenson (1983) note, “Some theorists contend that religion provides the social contacts, organizational skills, and sense of obligation... necessary to understand political action and to exert effective influence” (pp. 405-6). The sense of moral obligation may be particularly important for women because women are often motivated to participate in politics by a sense of civic duty (Blais et al. 2004). However, growing secularism means that fewer women may be experiencing this moral pressure. Moreover, declining church attendance means fewer opportunities to accumulate social capital (Putnam and Goss 2002, 7). As Robert Putnam and Kristin Goss argue, “dense networks of social interaction appear to foster sturdy norms of generalized reciprocity” and encourage people to “discuss, deliberate and resolve dilemmas of collective action” (p. 8). Embedded in social interaction is the opportunity to discuss politics and to share political information with others, both of which should make for a greater sense of political self-confidence.

Finally, loosening attachments to political parties may be contributing to the persistent gender gap in internal political efficacy. Women are typically less knowledgeable about politics than are men (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Kenski and Jamieson 2000; Mondak and Anderson 2004; Gidengil et al. 2004 and 2006). Accordingly, they have greater need of information shortcuts to compensate for their shortfalls in political information. These shortcuts provide efficient ways to organize and simplify choice because they process information in an easy and comprehensible way. Party identification has been identified as a key informational shortcut (Downs 1957; Campbell et al. 1960; Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock. 1991). To the extent that women who identify with a political party rely on partisan cues to help them make sense of politics, party identification can reduce the perceived complexity of politics. However, declining partisanship (Dalton and Wattenberg 2001) may be depriving many women of the cues that they need to figure out what is going politically. Men have less need of partisan cues because they are more likely to obtain political information from current affair shows, news broadcasts, and radio programs.

Data and Methods

We use data from the 2000 American National Election Study⁴ and the 2004 Canadian Election Study⁵ to assess these explanations of the gender gap in internal political efficacy. Two

sets of models are estimated. The first set includes both women and men. These models are estimated in three stages. At the first stage, the only variable included in the model is sex. Next, social background characteristics are added. If differences between women and men on factors like income, education, labour force participation and occupational status help to explain the gender gap in internal political efficacy, the sex coefficient should shrink when these variables are added to the model. Finally, gender role conceptions and party identification are added. Again, the sex coefficient should become smaller if differences on these two dimensions help to account for the gender gap. These variables are added after social background characteristics because some of the latter's effects may be mediated by gender role conceptions and partisanship. For example, university graduates and people socialized since the advent of second-wave feminism are more likely to adhere to a modern conception of gender roles. Estimating the full model would risk underestimating the impact of these social background characteristics (Miller and Shanks 1996).

The second set of models enable us to test whether the gender gap in internal political reflects gender differences in the factors that explain perceived political competence. For example, the role constraints argument implies that women who have children will have a diminished sense of personal political efficacy. If parenthood is less of a constraint for men, having children will have little or no effect on their feelings of internal political efficacy. Accordingly, we estimate separate models for women and for men to allow for gender differences in the effects of the various explanatory variables. A comparison of the coefficients will enable us to determine whether men pay the same political price for parenthood and whether women reap the same political benefits as men when it comes to such things as participating in the paid workforce, being highly educated, or having a high income. The models are estimated in two stages, beginning with social background characteristics and then adding gender role conceptions and party identification.

Estimating two sets of models mirrors the approach that has been taken in studies of gender gaps in political preference and vote choice (Gilens 1988; Gidengil 1995; Gidengil et al. 2005; Sapiro with Conover 1997; Chaney, Alvarez and Nagler 1998; Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999). These studies distinguish between *positional* and *salience* explanations. Positional explanations focus on differences in women's and men's social background characteristics and attitudes. Implicit in the positional approach is the assumption that these factors affect women and men similarly. However, this assumption is questionable on both theoretical and empirical grounds (Kauffman and Petrocik 1999, 873). Accordingly, salience explanations focus on differences in the weight that these factors carry in explaining the political preferences and vote choices of women and men.

The positional approach has worked well in explaining gender gaps in political activity at the mass level. Burns, Scholzman and Verba (2001), for example, conclude that "gender differences in political participation are the result of disparities in the stockpile of factors that facilitate participation, not of gender differences in the way participatory factors are converted into activity...Increments to the reserves of participatory factors...foster activity for women and men in essentially the same way. What counts is the size of those reserves" (p. 259). The fact that the gender gap in internal political efficacy has persisted despite women's growing reserves of education, income and occupational status suggests that part of the explanation may lie in the way that those resources get converted into a sense of personal political competence. Using the

salience and positional approaches in tandem thus allows a more encompassing assessment of the possible causes of the gender gap in internal political efficacy. It enables us to determine, for example, whether women feel less efficacious because they are less likely than men to be in paid employment (positional) or whether paid employment does less to enhance women's sense of personal political competence (salience).

There has been a good deal of debate about the validity and reliability of measures of internal political efficacy. As Michael Morrell (2003) notes, "the literature abounds with an assortment of measures, allowing scant comparison of effects...and little coherence in the field" (p. 589). Our measure is based on responses to the following agree/disagree items: "Sometimes politics is too complicated for a person like me to understand" (ANES) and "Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on" (CES). While this choice was dictated by the need to have parallel measures, it offers three key advantages for our purposes. First, there is a lengthy time series, which enabled us to track the gender gap across time in both countries (see Figure 1). Second, it is the measure that has yielded the most consistent differences between women and men. And, finally, as Virginia Sapiro (1983) notes, it "captures very precisely traditional notions of women's relationship to politics: politics is man's business, women are simply not capable of understanding it" (p. 99). The response categories were "strongly agree", "somewhat agree", "neither agree nor disagree", "somewhat disagree" and "strongly disagree" for the ANES and "strongly agree", "agree", "unsure", "disagree" and "strongly disagree" for the CES. Both items were recoded to run from 0 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree), with '1' indicating a strong sense of internal political efficacy.

With the exception of the number of children, the social background characteristics were all represented by dummy variables: sex (coded 1 for female), age cohort (two dummy variables, one coded 1 for those born between 1943 and 1957 and the second coded 1 for those born between 1958 and 1986)⁶, education (two dummy variables, one coded 1 for less than high school and the second coded 1 for university graduates), employment status (coded 1 for those who were working for pay), occupation (coded 1 for managerial and professional occupations), family income (two dummy variables, one coded 1 for low incomes and the second coded 1 for high incomes)⁷ marital status (coded 1 for legally married), religiosity (coded 1 for religious)⁸ and racial minority (coded 1 for minority).⁹ Finally, number of children under 18 years of age living at home was entered as a continuous variable, running from 0 to 1 with 1 representing four or more children.

In the US, gender role conceptions were measured using the question, "Do you feel strongly or not strongly that men and women should have equal roles?" Respondents who strongly agreed with this statement were considered to be adhering to a modern conception and were coded 1, while respondents who did not agree strongly with the statement, or who were not sure, were coded '0'. In Canada, respondents were considered to adhere to modern gender roles if they strongly disagreed with the statement that "society would be better off if more women stayed at home with their children." In both Canada and the US, party identification was represented by a dummy variable. It was coded 1 for those who identified with one of Canada's federal parties and 1 for those who identified with either the Democratic or the Republican Party in the US.

Since the dependent variable consisted of five ordered categories, all of the models were estimated using ordered logistic regression. The coefficients represent the predicted marginal impact of a given independent variable on the log-odds of being in a higher category on the dependent variable. Their meaning depends on the values of the other variables included in the model. As such, they lack a straightforward, intuitively obvious interpretation. To facilitate interpretation, we use the coefficients to estimate the independent impact of key variables on the probability of being in a given category of the dependent variable. These estimations take the form of a series of “what if?” simulations. Say we want to estimate the impact of university education on a woman’s probability of feeling a strong sense of personal political efficacy. On the basis of the estimations, we can compute the mean probability of feeling politically efficacious, first if every woman was a university graduate, and second if no woman was a university graduate, keeping the effects of the other social background characteristics unchanged. The difference in the mean probabilities gives us an estimate of the average impact of a university education on the probability of a woman having a sense of internal political efficacy, everything else being equal. We can do the same calculation for men and then compare the probabilities.

Findings

Positional Differences

Focusing on differences in women’s and men’s social background characteristics clearly does little, if anything, to explain the gender gap in internal political efficacy in either Canada or the USA (see Table 1). The coefficient for being female barely changes when social background characteristics are added to the US model. The result for Canada is even more striking: the coefficient is not affected at all by the addition of social background characteristics.

This is not to say that people’s social background has no bearing on their sense of personal political competence. Having less than a high school education diminishes the sense of internal political efficacy in both countries, while a university education clearly enhances it, especially in the USA. Income also has the expected effect. People who are more affluent feel more confident of their political abilities, especially in Canada, while a low income makes for lower confidence, at least in the USA. Having a managerial or professional job also enhances political self-confidence, especially for Canadians.

Yet, none of these factors explain the gender gap in internal political efficacy. If they did, the gap would have narrowed across time as more women obtained a university education and gained access to professional and managerial positions. If women feel less efficacious than men, it is not because they are poorer on average or because they have lower levels of educational attainment. This begs the question of whether women derive the same political benefits from political resources like education, income and high-status occupations as their male counterparts. It also begs the question of whether there are countervailing factors that have offset the effects of the advances that some women have made in higher education and the workplace. There are hints that this may be so in the negative effects of parenthood in the USA and the negative effects of employment in a non-professional or managerial position in Canada. In order to determine whether these effects are gender-specific, we need to compare the factors that affect internal political efficacy separately for women and for men.

Table 1: Model Effects on Internal Political Efficacy in Canada and the United States

WHOLE POPULATION	UNITED STATES				CANADA							
			1	1-2			1	1-2				
Female	-0.70	(0.10)****	-0.64	(0.11)****	-0.66	0.11****	-0.48	(0.10)****	-0.48	(0.10)****	-0.48	(0.10)****
2nd Wave Cohort			0.21	(0.16)	0.20	0.16			-0.20	(0.16)	-0.25	(0.16)
3rd Wave Cohort			0.43	(0.16)***	0.44	0.16***			-0.24	(0.17)	-0.28	(0.17)
Low Education			-0.83	(0.20)****	-0.84	0.201****			-0.69	(0.19)****	-0.68	(0.19)****
High Education			0.68	(0.12)****	0.67	0.12****			0.30	(0.12)**	0.27	(0.12)**
Employed			-0.06	(0.13)	-0.06	0.13			-0.30	(0.15)**	-0.32	(0.15)**
Occupational Position			0.23	(0.12)*	0.23	0.12*			0.47	(0.14)****	0.48	(0.14)****
Low Income			-0.32	(0.13)**	-0.31	0.13**			-0.19	(0.15)	-0.16	(0.15)
High Income			0.23	(0.14)*	0.22	0.14			0.56	(0.12)****	0.56	(0.12)****
Married			-0.11	(0.12)	-0.10	0.12			-0.12	(0.11)	-0.11	(0.11)
Number of Children			-0.43	(0.23)*	-0.42	0.23*			-0.09	(0.24)	0.03	(0.24)
Religiosity			-0.10	(0.12)	-0.09	0.12			-0.13	(0.11)	-0.12	(0.11)
Black			-0.18	(0.18)	-0.20	0.18						
Other Visible Minority			0.02	(0.18)	0.01	0.18			-0.25	(0.20)	-0.28	(0.20)
Gender Roles					0.11	0.11					0.38	(0.11)****
Party Identification					0.10	0.11					0.32	(0.11)****
Constant	-1.78	(0.09)	-1.65	(0.20)	-1.52	0.23	-2.53	(0.11)	-2.78	(0.22)	-2.48	(0.23)
Cut Point 2	-0.08	(0.08)	0.20	(0.20)	0.34	0.22	-0.12	(0.07)	-0.24	(0.20)	0.08	(0.21)
Cut Point 3	0.21	(0.08)	0.52	(0.20)	0.65	0.22	0.03	(0.07)	-0.08	(0.20)	0.24	(0.21)
Cut Point 4	1.52	(0.10)	1.92	(0.21)	2.05	0.23	2.13	(0.10)	2.12	(0.21)	2.47	(0.23)
Pseudo R2	0.01		0.05		0.06		0.01		0.04		0.05	
Log Likelihood	-1870.30		-1789.74		-1788.78		-1823.85		-1763.22		-1752.74	
N	1281		1281		1281		1429		1429		1429	

Note: Estimation is by ordered logistic regression. The column entries are coefficients. Standard errors are shown in parentheses.

**** p<.001 *** p<.01 ** p<.05 * p<.1

Salience Differences

In Canada, it seems that men may indeed derive more political gains from higher education than do women (see Table 2). The effect of being a university graduate fails to meet conventional levels of statistical significance for Canadian women, but is both positive and statistically robust for their male counterparts. The estimated probability of feeling politically efficacious is 12 points higher when a Canadian man has a university education. But for the gender-specific effects of university education, the gender gap would be 2.2 points smaller in Canada.¹⁰ In the USA, by contrast, women and men seem to reap the same political benefits from higher education. Where they differ is in the effects of low educational attainment. American women with less than a high school education are much less likely than their male counterparts to have confidence in their own political abilities. Indeed, the estimated probability of strongly agreeing that politics is sometimes too complicated for a person like themselves to understand is fully 30 points higher for these women. For their male counterparts, the estimated effect is a more modest (but still substantial) 14 points. However, the net effect on the gender gap in internal political efficacy is trivial, given that respondents with less than a high school education are very much in the minority. In Canada, meanwhile, the effects of low educational attainment are quite similar for women and men.

Salience differences are less evident for household income. Regardless of their sex, affluent Canadians have a stronger sense of internal political efficacy. The effect is only a little weaker for women. In the USA, it actually seems to be men who are more disadvantaged by a low household income. The coefficient for women is also negative, but it fails to attain conventional levels of statistical significance. The same is true of the coefficient for Canadian women.

The gender-specific effects of employment are more telling. First, in the USA, the effects of higher occupational status are confined to men. American women who occupy managerial or professional positions do not seem to get the same boost to their political self-confidence that men enjoy (c.f. Beckwith 1986). The female coefficient does not even approach statistical significance. If it were not for the gender-specific effect of professional and managerial employment, the US gender gap in internal political efficacy would shrink by 2.3 points. In Canada, on the other hand, women derive as much political benefit, if not more, from a professional or managerial position. The gender-differentiated effect in Canada appears instead for employment in a non-professional or managerial capacity. Canadian women who are employed in lower-status occupations have significantly lower levels of personal political efficacy than their counterparts who are not in the labour force. The effect is small: the difference in the estimated probability of feeling politically efficacious between these two groups of women is only about four points. Nonetheless, it provides one of the keys to understanding why the changes in women's lives have not had the effect of narrowing the gender gap in internal political efficacy. The large-scale entry of Canadian women into the paid workforce only results in an enhanced sense of political competence if women are able to access high-status positions. In the USA, even that is apparently not enough. Regardless of their occupational status, American women who are employed feel no more efficacious, on average, than women who remain in the home.

Table 2: Model Effects on Men's and Women's Internal Political Efficacy

UNITED STATES	MEN		WOMEN	
	1	1-2	1	1-2
2nd Wave Cohort	0.56 (0.24)** †	0.55 (0.25)**	-0.09 (0.22)	-0.05 (0.22)
3rd Wave Cohort	0.59 (0.24)***	0.58 (0.24)**	0.39 (0.22)*	0.43 (0.23)*
Low Education	-0.63 (0.29)**	-0.56 (0.29)*	-1.15 (0.29)****	-1.10 (0.29)****
High Education	0.68 (0.18)****	0.67 (0.18)****	0.71 (0.17)****	0.66 (0.17)****
Employed	-0.22 (0.21)	-0.28 (0.22)	0.08 (0.17)	0.09 (0.17)
Occupational Position	0.38 (0.18)**	0.36 (0.18)**	0.13 (0.17)	0.12 (0.17)
Low Income	-0.38 (0.19)**	-0.37 (0.20)*	-0.28 (0.18)	-0.26 (0.18)
High Income	0.10 (0.20)	0.14 (0.20)	0.27 (0.19)	0.28 (0.20)
Married	-0.13 (0.17)	-0.14 (0.17)	-0.02 (0.16)	-0.02 (0.16)
Number of Children	-0.20 (0.32)	-0.11 (0.33)	-0.82 (0.32)***	-0.81 (0.32)***
Religiosity	-0.29 (0.16)* †	-0.25 (0.17)	0.12 (0.18)	0.13 (0.18)
Black	-0.38 (0.27)	-0.41 (0.28)	0.05 (0.24)	-0.04 (0.24)
Other Visible Minority	0.17 (0.28)	0.14 (0.28)	0.00 (0.25)	-0.05 (0.25)
Gender Roles		0.07 (0.16)		0.21 (0.16)
Party Identification		-0.03 (0.16)		0.24 (0.15)*
Constant	-1.60 (0.28)	-1.58 (0.31)	-0.93 (0.28)	-0.62 (0.32)
Cut Point 2	0.21 (0.27)	0.22 (0.30)	0.97 (0.28)	1.29 (0.33)
Cut Point 3	0.46 (0.27)	0.47 (0.30)	1.37 (0.28)	1.68 (0.33)
Cut Point 4	1.78 (0.28)	1.80 (0.31)	2.90 (0.31)	3.22 (0.35)
Pseudo R2	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05
Log Likelihood	-840.64	-824.82	-965.34	-951.80
N	595	583	707	698
CANADA	MEN		WOMEN	
	1	1-2	1	1-2
2nd Wave Cohort	-0.10 (0.23)	-0.18 (0.24)	-0.39 (0.23)*	-0.38 (0.24)
3rd Wave Cohort	-0.04 (0.25)	-0.14 (0.26)	-0.52 (0.24)**	-0.49 (0.25)**
Low Education	-0.73 (0.27)***	-0.72 (0.27)***	-0.62 (0.27)**	-0.60 (0.27)**
High Education	0.38 (0.19)**	0.37 (0.19)**	0.25 (0.16)	0.22 (0.16)
Employed	-0.22 (0.22)	-0.21 (0.22)	-0.35 (0.20)*	-0.37 (0.20)*
Occupational Position	0.41 (0.20)**	0.46 (0.20)**	0.50 (0.20)***	0.48 (0.19)**
Low Income	-0.08 (0.23)	-0.09 (0.23)	-0.31 (0.20)	-0.26 (0.20)
High Income	0.61 (0.17)****	0.59 (0.18)****	0.53 (0.17)***	0.53 (0.17)***
Married	-0.07 (0.17)	-0.09 (0.17)	-0.13 (0.15)	-0.10 (0.16)
Number of Children	0.03 (0.38)	0.11 (0.39)	-0.09 (0.31)	0.02 (0.32)
Religiosity	-0.13 (0.16)	-0.09 (0.16)	-0.13 (0.15)	-0.14 (0.15)
Visible Minority	-0.78 (0.29)*** ‡	-0.75 (0.29)*** ‡	0.34 (0.29)	0.26 (0.29)
Gender Roles		0.40 (0.16)***		0.35 (0.15)**
Party Identification		0.15 (0.16)		0.44 (0.15)***
Constant	-2.71 (0.32)	-2.52 (0.33)	-2.48 (0.28)	-2.07 (0.31)
Cut Point 2	0.05 (0.28)	0.25 (0.30)	-0.05 (0.27)	0.38 (0.29)
Cut Point 3	0.15 (0.28)	0.35 (0.30)	0.16 (0.27)	0.59 (0.29)
Cut Point 4	2.38 (0.30)	2.60 (0.32)	2.37 (0.29)	2.83 (0.32)
Pseudo R2	0.05	0.05	0.03	0.04
Log Likelihood	-789.95	-786.27	-961.68	-954.81
N	669	669	760	760

Note: Estimation is by ordered logistic regression. The column entries are coefficients. Standard errors are shown in parentheses. **** p<.001 *** p<.01 ** p<.05 * p<.1

Another key to understanding the gender gap in internal political efficacy in the USA is motherhood. The more children an American mother has, the less confident she feels of her political abilities. Indeed, simply having one or more children makes for a diminished sense of internal political efficacy (results not shown). There is no comparable effect for men: the male coefficient is dwarfed by its standard error. For American women, motherhood is clearly an important countervailing factor that offsets gains in political confidence that may have been made as a result of increased access to higher education. The responsibility of taking care of children apparently takes away time and energy that might otherwise go to activities that facilitate political understanding. The estimated probability of strongly agreeing that politics is too complicated to understand is 15 points higher for women with four or more children. If the number of children did not have this effect on American women, the gender gap would be 1.9 points smaller.

Interestingly, motherhood apparently has no effect on Canadian women's internal political efficacy. Whether they are childless or have four children or more simply does not seem to matter. However, this result is deceiving. Barry Kay and his colleagues (1987) found that children appeared to represent a greater political constraint on higher status women, perhaps because they were more likely to be politically active to begin with. Their study did not include internal political efficacy among the dependent variables. It turns out, though, that the politically dislocating effects of motherhood apply to internal political efficacy as well. To test this possibility, we added an interaction term between being a university graduate and number of children to the models estimated in Table 2. The interaction term was both negative and robust ($p < .01$). Intriguingly, the main effect of number of children was both positive and statistically significant, albeit not as robust ($p = .05$). The implication is that child-raising enhances the political self-confidence of women who lack the advantages of a university education.¹¹ Parenthood also seems to have a negative effect on university-educated men, but the effect does not quite attain conventional levels of statistical significance and the main effect of fatherhood is not significant, either.

It turns out that motherhood has politically disruptive effects on higher-status American women as well, especially women in professional and managerial positions. The interaction is both negative and statistically significant ($p < .05$). There is also a negative and significant ($p < .10$) effect of motherhood on college-educated women. In neither case does the main effect of number of children even approach statistical significance. In other words, the constraining effects of motherhood in the USA are confined to women who have high-status jobs. There are no comparable effects for men. Working a double-day does not diminish the political self-confidence of women in lower-status occupations, again because they probably felt less politically efficacious to begin with. The same is true of their Canadian counterparts.

In neither Canada nor the USA does marriage appear to be a constraining factor when it comes to feeling politically efficacious. The effects for women—and men—are smaller than their standard errors in both countries.¹² This may help to explain why the decline in marriage rates in both countries has not worked to diminish the gender gap in internal political efficacy. One reason why marriage may not be having the predicted effect relates to the fact that in both Canada and the USA women are much more likely today to be marrying someone with the same level of education than they were in earlier years (Statistics Canada 2007).

The pattern for age cohorts is more surprising. In Canada, it is the very reverse of what we would expect if the shared experience of growing to adulthood since the advent of second- and third-wave feminism was enhancing women's feelings of internal political efficacy. Canadian women who belong to the two younger age cohorts have less confidence in their personal political abilities than do women who came of age before the emergence of second-wave feminism. With cross-sectional data, it is, of course, impossible to disentangle the effects of generation and life-cycle. However, the fact that younger women feel less efficacious strongly suggests that we may be looking at a life-cycle effect. Interestingly, though, there is no hint of a comparable effect for men. In the USA, women who have come of age since the rise of third-wave feminism do feel more politically efficacious than women who belong to older generations. However, the effects of age cohort are stronger for men and apply equally to men who belong to the "second-wave generation" (c.f. Beckwith 1986). What we may be seeing here are the effects of the shared experience of coming to adulthood during a particular period in America political life, unrelated to the evolution of the feminist movement.

We had anticipated that women who have rejected traditional conceptions of gender roles would feel more politically efficacious. There is a hint of an effect in the USA, but the coefficient does not even approach conventional levels of statistical significance. The Canadian pattern is more intriguing. Gender role conceptions have the expected effect on women and it is statistically robust. However, a very similar effect appears for men. This is counter-intuitive. It parallels Beckwith's (1986) findings for the impact of both feminist identity and support for feminist issues for American men. She suggests that this may reflect the fact that both orientations had become part and parcel of mainstream liberal ideology by 1976. A similar explanation seems plausible for the impact of gender role conceptions on Canadian men's feelings of personal political competence. Moreover, Canadian men are as likely as Canadian women to reject the notion that "society would be better off if more women stayed home with their children", which is why adding this variable to the model in Table 1 does nothing to diminish the impact of being female.

The notion that being ideologically liberal makes for a greater sense of internal political efficacy for men gains some credence when we look at the impact of religiosity in the USA. Men who say that religion is important to them seem to have a lower sense of personal political competence. According to James Hougland and James Christenson (1983), the impact of religiosity may depend on the denomination theology, with the positive effects being manifested only by those who subscribe to liberal religious beliefs.¹³ The fact that fundamentalist Christians comprise a larger share of the US population may account for the lack of a comparable effect in Canada. This still does not explain the lack of a comparable effect for women in either country. Clearly, growing secularism does not help us to understand the continuing gender gap in internal political efficacy.

The results for racial background present a similar puzzle. Given the double disadvantage that minority women face as both women and members of a racial minority, it was plausible that minority women would feel less confident of their political abilities than both men and majority women. This is clearly not the case. The effect is confined to men. In the US, it fails to meet conventional levels of statistical significance, but in Canada, the effect of belonging to a racial minority is both significant and substantial: the estimated probability of feeling politically

efficacious is 17 points lower for men who belong to a racial minority. The implication is that the gender gap in internal political efficacy would be wider still but for the fact that minority men make up a larger share of the population today than they did 30 or 40 years ago. Indeed, were race not a factor, the gender gap would narrow by 1.7 points in Canada.¹⁴

The effects of party identification are much more in line with expectations. In both Canada and the USA, women who identify with a political party express a greater sense of personal political efficacy. There is no comparable effect for men. This is consistent with the argument that women may have a greater need than men of partisan cues to help them make sense of the complexities of politics. This is because women typically know less about politics than do men. The probability of feeling politically efficacious is 10 points lower for Canadian women who do not identify with any of the federal political parties, while the effect in the USA is a more modest four points. If it were not for the gender-specific effect of party identification, the gender gap in internal political efficacy would be 3.9 points bigger in Canada and 3.1 points bigger in the USA. The implication is that the decline of party identification has contributed to the persistence of the gender gap in internal political efficacy, especially in the case of Canada.

Discussion and Conclusion

The objective of this study has been to solve the enigma of the gender gap in internal political efficacy. While we cannot claim to have explained away the gaps in Canada or the USA, our analyses do shed important new light on the reasons for their persistence. First, women do not necessarily derive the same political advantages as men from a university education (Canada and the USA) or a high-status occupation (USA). Second, the gains in political self-confidence that we might otherwise have anticipated from women's advances in the realms of education and employment have been offset by countervailing forces. This is especially evident in the impact of motherhood. The responsibility of raising children clearly has politically disruptive effects and these are most evident for the women who have made the greatest advances, namely university-educated women (Canada) and women in professional and managerial occupations (USA). Weakening attachments to political parties have also worked to perpetuate the gender gaps in internal political efficacy. Party identification had the hypothesized effect on women in both Canada and the USA. Moreover, this effect was gender-specific, lending weight to our assumption that women's lack of political awareness causes them to rely more heavily on partisan cues to make sense of politics. Finally, our findings underline the importance of extending the salience approach to the analysis of gender gaps in psychological orientations toward politics.

It is also worth highlighting some counter-intuitive results. The double disadvantage of being both a woman and a member of a racial minority did not serve to diminish minority women's confidence in their own political abilities. Conversely, religiosity did not have the predicted effect of enhancing women's political self-confidence. Most surprisingly, perhaps, there was nothing to suggest that generations of women who have come of age since the advent of second- or third-wave feminism feel any more politically efficacious than older generations of women (Canada) or their male counterparts (USA). As a more direct test of the impact of feminism, we added measures of feminist consciousness to the models estimated in Table 2.¹⁵ In neither Canada nor the USA did feminist consciousness have a significant effect on women's subjective political competence. This is not, of course, to overlook the role that the feminist

movement has played in women's advances over the past four decades, but the lack of a more direct effect is nonetheless striking.

While we have succeeded in shedding new light on the causes of the gender gap in internal political efficacy, the puzzle is not fully resolved. Accordingly, we need to consider some avenues for future research. One possibility is that women's political self-confidence is adversely affected by their perception that the system is unresponsive. After all, women's political reality has been one of historic and continuing under-representation in elected office, stereotyped media portrayal, and socialization into norms that assume politics to be the purview of men. A sense of powerlessness and low self-efficacy are strongly related (Gecas 1989); if women feel marginalized in the political sphere, their belief in their own political competence may be compromised. However, women do not have a lower sense of external efficacy than men, and when a measure of external efficacy is added to the models estimated in Table 2, the effect of external efficacy is actually stronger for men than it is for women in both Canada and the USA.¹⁶

Harold Clarke and Alan Acock (1989) have found that people's feelings of internal political efficacy are enhanced when their preferred candidate wins "because the election outcome has demonstrated that 'people like them', i.e., groups with which they identify, can influence the political process" (p. 553). Given that women in the US in 2000 were more likely than men to prefer the Democratic presidential candidate and women in Canada in 2004 were more likely than men to prefer the left-leaning New Democratic Party, they were less likely to see their preferred candidate win. We do find some preliminary support for the hypothesis that this might affect their self-perceived political competence, at least in the USA, where having one's preferred candidate win has a significant ($p < .05$) effect on women's internal political efficacy, but not on men's. However, the peculiar circumstances of the 2000 presidential election may have increased the salience of this consideration.

Another possibility is that we simply cannot take people's responses to questions about their political competence at face value. Beckwith (1986), for example, suggests that some women are giving what they perceive to be the gender-appropriate response, while Sapiro (1983) points out that women are often socialized to underestimate their own abilities. Certainly, educational research demonstrates that boys, in a self-regulated learning environment, are more likely to be self-congratulatory and express overconfidence in skills they do not possess, whereas girls tend to be modest (Pajares 2002). Similarly, Cindy Rosenthal and her colleagues (2001) find that girls seem to be reluctant to display their political knowledge. Moreover, there is evidence that men are more likely to guess the answers to questions that measure political knowledge rather than admit their ignorance (see, for example, Delli Carpini and Keeter 2000; Kenski and Jamieson 2000; Mondak and Anderson 2004). Interestingly, Sapiro (1983) found that the relationship between subjective political competence and objective political competence was weaker for privatized women. If women are underestimating their political competence, we would expect the relationship between political knowledge and internal political efficacy to be weaker for women. This is not the case in Canada, but in the USA the impact of political knowledge is significantly weaker for women.¹⁷

Another promising line of enquiry may be to look at the impact of childhood political socialization. Political socialization teaches the norms and behaviours that are acceptable in a

given political system (Mayer and Schmidt 2004; Sapiro 2004). What is taught earliest is retained the longest, indicating that the socialization that occurs in childhood contributes at least indirectly to how adults approach the political system (Easton and Dennis 1967). Jennifer Mayer and Heather Schmidt (2004) argue that gender is the largest influence on the political engagement of children in junior high school because political socialization teaches boys to be more interested in politics while teaching girls to be more passive. Boys feel politics belong to them, while girls are more likely to see politics as something that boys ought to be more interested in. However, early exposure to politics and political role models may serve to counteract the effects of female socialization.

The Canadian data allowed us to assess this possibility. The mail-back survey contained five questions measuring respondents' exposure to politics as children and adolescents. Responses to these items were combined into a simple additive index¹⁸ that was added to the models estimated in Table 2. While the relationship between early political socialization and internal political efficacy was strong for women and men alike, the effect was stronger for women. The estimated probability of feeling politically self-confident was 35 points higher for women who had high levels of exposure to politics when they were growing up, compared to those who had none. The corresponding effect for men was only 21 points. This suggests that early exposure to politics may indeed help to counter the perception that politics is too difficult for women to understand. Were it not for the gendered effect of early political socialization, the gender gap in internal political efficacy would have been 3.5 points wider. One obvious question to pursue, of course, is whether having a mother who was politically engaged matters more. Psychologists have emphasized the importance of vicariousness as a source of self-efficacy (Bandura 1977). Vicariousness can be seen as a role model effect: if an individual sees others performing difficult or challenging tasks successfully, that individual may be more inclined to believe he or she could perform the tasks successfully as well. A young girl's mother may be a particularly salient role model.

Lonna Rae Atkeson (2003) has highlighted the importance of role models in enabling women to overcome socialized gender stereotypes and feel more confident of their own political abilities. She argues that "[v]iable women candidates lead women to feel more connected to and a part of the political system in a way that they do not when they look around and see only men" (p. 1043). Similarly, Christina Wolbrecht and David Campbell find that increasing the number of women elected to national legislatures has a direct, positive effect on girls' political engagement. The key word may be "viable". In Canada, three women have served as leaders of national parties, and one of them became, albeit briefly, Canada's first female prime minister. However, two of the women suffered devastating defeats and the third could not lead her party out of the electoral wilderness. Not surprisingly, we do not see any narrowing of the gender gap during their tenure. Atkeson's findings held for Senate and gubernatorial candidates; it remains to be seen whether they can be generalized to Westminster-style parliamentary systems where individual candidates enjoy much less visibility in the media.

There is one final question that we must address. It is the bottom-line question: why should we care about the gender gap in internal political efficacy? After all, the gender gaps in political participation have narrowed, disappeared or even reversed. Beckwith's (1986, 162) answer was that it is at the elite level that women's lack of political confidence is really cause for

concern. However, we would argue that it matters at the mass level, too. A lack of internal political efficacy goes hand in hand with a lack of political interest and a lack of political knowledge. These shortfalls are consequential because they can affect the *quality* of women's participation. If women are deterred from following politics closely because they perceive it to be too complicated, they are going to find it harder to translate their needs and wants into the appropriate political choices and the system may be less responsive in consequence (see Gidengil et al. 2004). Accordingly, it is incumbent on scholars to take up the challenge of developing a more complete understanding of why the gender gap in internal political efficacy persists.

Appendix A

Question Wording: Internal Political Efficacy

United States – ANES

From 1952 to 2000, the ANES asked respondents, “Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.” However, the response categories were changed in 1988 from “agree,” “disagree,” and “don't know” to “agree strongly,” “agree somewhat,” “neither agree nor disagree,” “disagree somewhat,” and “disagree strongly”. Since adding the option of “neither agree nor disagree” category changed the distributions, Figure 1 is based on a dichotomous variable whereby those who disagreed strongly or disagreed somewhat were coded 1 while the other responses were coded 0. Note that the question was not asked in 2004.

Canada – CES

From 1965 to 1968, the CES asked, “Sometimes government and politics seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.” The response options were “agree,” “disagree,” and “don't know.” From 1974 to 2004, respondents could respond “strongly agree”, “agree”, “disagree”, “strongly disagree”, “don't know”. Again, a dichotomous variable was used to create Figure 1 to allow for the change in response options. Two small changes in question wording should also be noted. In 1984, the question wording was changed to “Sometimes, federal politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.” The 1993 CES reverted to the original wording. From 1997 onward, the wording was modified slightly to: “Sometimes politics and government can seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.”

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Endnotes

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities and Research Council of Canada and Fonds Québécois de la recherche sur la société et la culture.

¹ The figure shows the percentage of women and men who disagree with the statement that “Sometimes politics is too complicated for a person like me to understand” (ANES) and “Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what’s going on” (CES). The first CES was conducted after the 1965 federal election. There was no 1972 CES and neither the 1980 CES nor the 1988 CES included the internal efficacy question. Note that there have been variations in question wording and response categories across time (see Appendix).

² The enhanced sense of personal political competence in Canada may seem counter-intuitive, given that the traditional two-plus one party system fell apart in the 1993 federal election and was replaced by a one-plus-four system which lasted until the two parties of the right re-united just before the 2004 election. One possible explanation is that this period marked the end of constitutional wrangling.

³ However, there has been a strong strand of socialist feminism in Canada since the mid-1980s. There are also major organisational differences between the women’s movements in the two countries: the membership-based National Organization for Women in the USA versus the umbrella National Action Committee on the Status of Women in Canada, which is a coalition of member groups.

⁴ The study involved pre-election and post-election surveys. The total sample included 2,984 eligible persons and produced 1,807 pre-election interviews (61 per cent); 1,555 persons (86 per cent) provided post-election interviews. The National Election Studies can be found at www.electionstudies.org. The 2000 ANES was produced and distributed by the University of Michigan, Center for Political Studies. These materials are based on work supported by, in alphabetical order: the National Science Foundation under grant SES-9707741, the Russell Sage Foundation under grant 82-00-01, and the University of Michigan.

⁵ The study comprised a campaign survey, a post-election survey and a mail-back questionnaire. A representative sample of 4,323 eligible voters was surveyed during the campaign; 3,138 of these respondents (73 per cent) were re-interviewed after the election and 1,674 (53 per cent) of these respondents completed the mail-back questionnaire. The response rate for the campaign survey was 53 percent. York University’s Institute for Social Research conducted the field work. The study was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and Elections Canada. The data and questionnaires are available at: <http://www.ces-eec.umontreal.ca/>

⁶ These cohorts correspond to those who grew to adulthood under the (potential) influence of second- and third-wave feminism, respectively (see Baumgardner and Richard 2000; Faludi 1991; O’Neill 2003).

⁷ Family income is used in the models instead of individual income because it is the only available measure of income in the data sets. The response categories differ in the CES and ANES. In Canada, respondents whose annual household income was below \$30,000 were coded as low income while respondents whose household income was \$70,000 or more were considered high income. In the US, the corresponding cut-offs were less than \$35,000 and more than \$75,000.

⁸ In Canada, respondents were asked to indicate whether religion was very important, somewhat important, not very important or not important at all in their lives. In the US, respondents were asked only whether religion was “important” or “not important” to them. Accordingly, religiosity had to be treated as a dichotomous variable. In Canada, those who indicated that religion was at least somewhat important in their lives were considered to be religious.

⁹ In Canada, all respondents who indicated non-European ancestry were considered to belong to a racial minority. To capture the distinctive experience of Black Americans, two dummy variables were created for the US, one for Black respondents and the second for other non-White respondents.

¹⁰ This is estimated by setting the coefficient for university education to zero, leaving all the other coefficients unchanged, and then determining how much the average probability of feeling efficacious increases. The difference in the average probabilities for men and women can then be compared to the original gender gap. In the case of university education, the difference decreases from 12.6 points to 10.4 points when university education is assumed to have no effect. All other estimates of the impact on the gender gap in internal political efficacy cited in the text were obtained in an analogous manner.

¹¹ Being a single mother also seems to provide a modest boost to women’s subjective political competence, though the effect is not very robust ($p < .10$). There is no comparable effect for the USA.

¹² In Canada, a growing number of couples have common-law marriages. However, including people who report having a partner rather than a spouse does not change the (non)finding.

¹³ Hougland and Christenson did not, in fact, find any significant effect for denomination ideology when they looked at political efficacy (as opposed to political involvement). However, they were only looking at external efficacy.

¹⁴ This is estimated by setting the coefficient for racial minority zero, leaving all the other coefficients unchanged, and then determining how much the average probability of feeling efficacious increases. The difference in the average probabilities for men and women can then be compared to the original gender gap. In the case of racial background, the difference increases from 12.6 points to 14.3 points when racial background is assumed to have no effect. All other estimates of the impact on the gender gap in internal political efficacy cited in the text were obtained in an analogous manner.

¹⁵ The effects of feminism were tested in Canada by using an additive scale (Cronbach’s Alpha=0.57) based on responses to three questions: “How do you feel about feminists? Use any number from zero to 100. Zero means you really dislike the group and 100 means you really like the group” “The feminist movement just tries to get equal treatment for women, or puts men down” and “The feminist movement encourages women to be independent and speak up for themselves or to be selfish and think only of themselves.” Responses were coded into a series of dichotomous variables that reflected pro-feminist positions. The US feminism scale (Cronbach’s Alpha=0.66) comprised three questions: “How do you feel about feminists on a scale of 0 to 100? Zero means you really dislike the group and 100 means you really like the group,” “How do you feel about the women’s movement on a scale of 0 to 100?” and “Would you say they have too much influence, just about the right amount of influence, or too little influence?”

¹⁶ External efficacy was measured in Canada using three questions: “Those elected to Parliament soon lose touch with the people” “People like me don’t have any say about what the government does” and “I don’t think the government cares much what people like me think.” Responses were

coded into a series of dichotomous variables and summed (Cronbach's Alpha=0.51). The US scale (Cronbach's Alpha=0.84) used: "People like me don't have any say about what the government does" and "Public officials don't care much what people like me think."

¹⁷ The interaction between political knowledge and sex is statistically significant at the $p < .10$ level. We used five liberal-conservative placements to create the measure. Respondents received a 1 for each correct placement (i.e. placing Gore and the Democratic party in the centre or toward the liberal end of the scale, Bush and the Republican party in the centre or toward the conservative end, and Buchanan toward the conservative end). Cronbach's Alpha=.82. In Canada, the effect is similar for women and men, whether we use a general knowledge scale or a scale based on ability to name the leaders of the four federal parties.

¹⁸ The items were: "When you were growing up, did your family talk about politics: often, sometimes, hardly ever, or never?" "When you were growing up, was any member of your family involved in political parties?" "In other political activities?" "When you were growing up, was there a daily newspaper delivered to your home?" and "Did you take a Canadian government or politics class in high school or CEGEP?" Responses were recoded into a series of dichotomous variables, coded 1 for discussing politics often or sometimes, having a family member involved in a political party and/or other political activity, having a daily newspaper delivered, and taking a Canadian government course. The index had a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.64.