

Her Mother's Daughter? The Influence of Childhood Socialization  
on Women's Political Engagement

Elisabeth Gidengil  
McGill University  
[elisabeth.gidengil@mcgill.ca](mailto:elisabeth.gidengil@mcgill.ca)

Brenda O'Neill  
University of Calgary  
[bloneill@ucalgary.ca](mailto:bloneill@ucalgary.ca)

Lisa Young  
University of Calgary  
[lisa.young@ucalgary.ca](mailto:lisa.young@ucalgary.ca)

Paper prepared for presentation at the annual meeting of the *Canadian Political Science Association*, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, June 4-6, 2008

## **Abstract**

This paper draws on data from a survey of women in English-speaking Canada to examine whether early exposure to politics in the home can serve to counteract the effects of female socialization. We examine the effect of parents' political activity on their adult daughters' interest in politics, political knowledge, and participation in both electoral (e.g. party membership and voting) and non-electoral (e.g. demonstrations and political consumerism) forms of political action. We argue that a politically active mother can have a role-model effect (net of other factors, such as education and age that might affect a women's level of political engagement) and that her influence will outweigh that of a politically active father.

## **Introduction**

Women are typically less interested in politics than men are; they are more likely to think that politics is simply too complicated for them to understand; they pay less attention to news about politics; and they have smaller stocks of political knowledge than men (Bennett and Bennett 1989; Claibourn and Sapiro 2002; see also Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Verba, Burns and Scholzman 1997; Kenski and Jamieson 2000; Norris 2000; Frazer and Macdonald 2003; Gidengil et al. 2004; Mondak and Anderson 2004). These gender gaps cannot be explained by differences in women's educational attainment or material resources or by the greater demands that child care responsibilities continue to make on many women's time. They have persisted despite the massive movement of women into paid employment and dramatic gains in women's educational attainment. It seems that many women are still socialized to believe that politics is a man's world.

In this paper, we use data from a survey of women in English-speaking Canada to examine whether early exposure to politics in the home can serve to counteract the effects of female socialization. We examine the impact of parents' political activity on adult women's political interest, political knowledge, and propensity to be involved in both electoral (e.g. party membership and voting) and non-electoral (e.g. demonstrations and political consumerism) political activities. We pay particular attention to the influence of the mother's political involvement in order to determine whether there is a role-model effect (net of other factors, such as education and age that might affect a women's level of political engagement)

## **Female Political Socialization**

Political socialization is understood here as "the process by which people acquire relatively enduring political orientations toward politics in general and toward their own political systems" (Merelman 1986, 279). For many women, political socialization remains a process whereby they internalize the view that politics is a man's world. This is hardly surprising, given the extent to which traditional political arenas remain predominantly male preserves and media portrayals of politics rely on stereotypically masculine images of the battlefield and the boxing ring.

Socialization into gendered political roles begins in childhood. As Jennifer Mayer and Heather Schmidt (2004) observe, "The family environment is typically suffused with subtle and blatant messages about gender roles, many with long-term political ramifications" (p. 395). Their study of junior high school students found a significant gender gap in political interest in the USA: not only did boys have more interest in politics, but boys and girls alike overwhelmingly perceived politics as something that held greater interest for boys. Even in early adolescence, girls tended to see politics as a male domain. However, a study of anticipated political participation found that 14 year old girls in the USA actually mentioned more activities that they might take part in than did boys of the same age (Hooghe and Stolle 2004). This may reflect the fact, though, that the list of possible forms of involvement included a number of social movement-oriented activities such as volunteering, collecting money and collecting signatures that were more appealing to girls. The USA also seems to be an exception in this respect: across 20 established democracies, Finland was the only other country where adolescent girls envisioned

themselves as being more politically active as adults than did the boys (Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007). Diana Owen and Jack Dennis (1988) found that girls tended to be less interested in politics and typically paid less attention to presidential policy-making. Girls also scored lower on knowledge of political figures, political issues and political symbols. The gender disparities were especially evident among the 14 to 17 year olds. Finally, Cindy Rosenthal and her colleagues' (2001) study of Model United Nations underscored the extent to which gendered political roles are entrenched by early adulthood. The female participants took turns speaking much less frequently than their male counterparts and appeared reluctant to display their knowledge of politics.

However, early exposure to politics and political role models may serve to counteract the effects of female socialization. Kent Jennings and his colleagues (1999) have provided the most powerful evidence of parents' role in the political socialization of their children. They examined intergenerational transmission in the USA using four waves of panel data spanning three generations. Their conclusion was clear: "parents play an important role in the political education of their offspring" (p. 1). This conclusion held whether they looked at high school seniors and their parents in the 1960s or at their offspring in the 1990s. The structure and dynamics of family life may have changed profoundly, but parents remain important agents of political socialization. Moreover, their impact can be long lasting: where the parent-child similarity was initially high, the parental influence was still evident in the 50 year old adult three decades on (Jennings, Stoker and Bowers 1999). However, we should not overstate the degree of family influence: the overall congruence between the politicization of parents and their adult children is modest (Beck and Jennings 1991). Jennings and his colleagues report a relatively high degree of parent-child correspondence on measures of political knowledge, coupled with a surprising lack of congruence in terms of political interest (Jennings, Stoker and Bowers 1999) and a moderate parent-child correspondence on a measure of political participation (Jennings 2000).

There is also evidence that growing up in a politicized household encourages more elite-level forms of political activity. When Jennifer Lawless and Richard Fox (2005) surveyed men and women with the backgrounds in law, business, education and political activism that would qualify them to run for elected office, they found that the likelihood of considering a candidacy was nearly double for those with a politicized upbringing. This was true of women and men alike. Similarly, having parents who were interested in politics substantially reduces the gender gap in the likelihood of making a financial contribution to a U.S. presidential candidate (Powell, Brown and Hedges 1981). Powell and her colleagues suggest that the family environment may be especially important for women because they are likely to receive fewer cues from other sources that would encourage elite political participation. Finally, in the Canadian context, having a parent who has ever belonged to a political party is a powerful factor in encouraging young adults to join a political party (Cross and Young 2008). Typically, these young people are recruited by their parents to participate when there is leadership contest or a vote to select a local candidate.

Having a mother who was politically active may be particularly consequential because it conveys a powerful implicit message that politics is not just for men.

Underpinning this expectation regarding the impact of a politically active mother is what Robert Hess and Judith Torney (1968) termed the identification model of political socialization. This model emphasizes the child's learning-by-example as opposed to the parents' active teaching of political norms and attitudes. Psychologists have highlighted the importance of vicariousness in developing a sense of self-efficacy (Bandura 1977): people are more likely to believe that they can perform a difficult task successfully if they see others succeeding at that task. This is basically a role-model effect. The extent to which self-efficacy develops through modeling is a function of the source: "The more dependable the experiential sources, the greater are the changes in perceived self-efficacy" (Bandura 1977, 191). The mother may be a particularly influential source. After years of neglect, there has been a revival of interest in mother-daughter relationships (Shrier, Tompsett and Shrier 2004). Feminist psychoanalysts have come to recognize the extent to which the relationship between mother and daughter can be a source of empowerment that "contributes in profound ways to the creation and experience of self" (Chodorow 1999, preface; see also *Canadian Woman's Studies* special issue 1998). Accordingly, we can expect a mother who is active in politics to provide a young girl with a particularly potent role model.

Interestingly, Lawless and Fox (2005) found that women in their eligible candidate pool were twice as likely as their male counterparts to have mothers who had run for office. They caution that the numbers are very small, but the finding is nonetheless suggestive, they argue, of the role that a political mother can play in encouraging her daughter to enter a male-dominated sphere like business, law or politics. In a similar vein, Powell and her colleagues (1981) point to the mother's interest in politics as setting an example for her daughter to emulate when deciding to make a campaign contribution.

The mother's influence is not confined to the elite level. When Ronald Rapoport (1985) examined the intergenerational transmission of political attitude expression, he found that mothers have more influence than fathers on their daughters' propensity to respond "don't know". However, the mother-daughter correspondence was highest when the mother had a low level of opinionation, which undercuts the notion of a positive role model effect. A more recent study, using respondents' recall of parental interest in politics rather than parent-child pairs, provided more encouraging results: the higher the mother's reported political interest, the more likely a woman was to express an attitude and the more comments she made about the parties and the candidates (Atkeson and Rapoport 2003). However, women whose mothers were recalled as being very interested in politics were very much in the minority. Diana Owen and Jack Dennis (1988) found a similarly high mother/daughter correspondence when they surveyed 10 to 17 year olds and their parents. This was most apparent for older girls and for political knowledge questions, but mothers and their daughters were also much more similar than fathers and their daughters on most, but not all, indicators of political interest, as well as campaign activity and watching the televised candidate debates.

We do not know, though, whether the mother's influence endures across her daughter's life time. Atkeson and Rapoport's (2003) study suggests that it may, but they were only able to look at two indicators of political engagement (attitude expression and

commenting on candidates and parties). Moreover, they had to rely on their respondents' recall of parental political interest, which may be unreliable and/or biased.<sup>1</sup> Our data enable us to examine a wider array of forms of political engagement and to use a measure of parents' politicization—party membership or other political activity—that is concrete and therefore more likely to be recalled with reasonable accuracy by their adult daughters.

### **Data and Methods**

The data come from a survey of 1,264 women sampled from across English-speaking Canada.<sup>2</sup> The interviews began in mid-summer and ended in the early fall of 2007. The women were interviewed by telephone and the average interview lasted about 18 minutes. The survey contained a number of measures of women's political engagement. These serve as our dependent variables. Political engagement is construed broadly to encompass cognitive and affective dimensions, as well various forms of political action.

The first measure focuses on the most fundamental form of political participation in any electoral democracy. The women were asked whether they had voted in the most recent election at the federal, provincial and municipal levels. Responses to these three questions were combined to create an electoral participation scale (coefficient Alpha=0.82). Voting is a cornerstone of electoral democracy, but it requires only a modicum of time and effort, and elections occur only intermittently. Party membership, by contrast, is a more demanding political activity and one that may require more of an ongoing commitment. It may also be a precursor to running for a political office. Accordingly, the women were asked whether they had ever belonged to a political party.

The women were also canvassed about political activities that take place outside the traditional political arenas: signing a petition, taking part in a demonstration and engaging in political consumerism. Petitions and demonstrations may target public institutions or private corporations, but political consumerism is entirely market oriented. It is nonetheless a profoundly political act. It involves the use of purchasing power to pressure multinational corporations to respect human rights, engage in fair trade, and adopt environmentally friendly business practices (Micheletti, Follesdal, and Stolle 2003). Refusing to buy a product based on ethical or political considerations has a long history; product *buycotts* are a more recent manifestation of political consumerism that rewards socially responsible behaviour on the part of producers of goods and services. We combined the women's responses to these questions to create an extra-electoral political action scale (coefficient Alpha=0.61).<sup>3</sup> Since very few women (5 per cent) had engaged in all four types of activity, we collapsed the scale to run from none to three or more activities.

Whether they are casting a vote or joining in a protest, women need to have information in order for their participation to be meaningful. Michael Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter (1996) have aptly characterized political information as “the currency of citizenship” (p. 8). Our political knowledge questions asked the women to name the Prime Minister, the leader of the New Democratic Party, the premier of their province, the Governor-General<sup>4</sup>, and the woman who is running to become president of the United States. The knowledge scale is a simple count of the number of correct answers (coefficient Alpha=0.68). These questions implicitly treat politics as synonymous with the traditional

arenas of electoral and legislative politics. As such, feminist scholars argue, they have a gender bias (Smiley 1999). While they may understate women's political knowledge relative to men's, they are nonetheless useful in measuring variation in women's general political awareness. A woman who is paying so little attention to the news that she cannot name Canada's Prime Minister is unlikely to be aware of working conditions in a Cambodian sweatshop.

Finally, we asked the women to rate themselves as being very interested in politics, somewhat interested, not very interested or not at all interested. This is an indicator of women's affective engagement with politics. Being politically active presupposes a degree political interest. Interest can motivate people to devote the time and energy to keeping abreast of current affairs and to play an active part in politics.

We estimate regression models for each of these indicators of political engagement.<sup>5</sup> Our key independent variables were based on responses to the following question: "When you were growing up was your mother or father involved in a political party or other political activities?" We created two separate variables, one for the mother and one for the father.

Our models also include controls for a variety of social background characteristics. These serve a number of purposes. First, we need to allow for the fact that socialization does not necessarily end in early adulthood (Sigel and Hoskin 1977). Indeed, "adult politicization springs as much or more so from extrafamilial experiences and more contemporaneous forces" (Beck and Jennings 1991, 758). Various transitions associated with the adult life-cycle, such as marriage, parenthood, and entry into the paid workforce, have the potential to affect a person's propensity to be politically engaged. While these transitions are usually associated with a boost in political involvement, immigration can have politically disruptive effects. Newcomers face enormous challenges in settling into their new lives and adapting to an unfamiliar political system.

We also need to take account of the fact that political engagement is affected by an individual's resources. Nancy Burns and her colleagues (2001) have demonstrated the importance of education and occupational status in explaining variation in women's political activity. Education is an especially important control. Education is not simply "the single most potent predictor of an adult's political activity" (Verba, Schlozman and Burns 2005, 110); it is also "the engine for the transmission of political activity from generation to generation" (p. 98). Verba and his colleagues cite two mechanisms that may be at work here: educated parents are more likely to have educated children and they are more likely to provide a politically stimulating home environment. Controlling for the respondents' level of educational attainment is an imperfect way of controlling for their parents' education level, but it does enhance confidence in any finding that having a politically active mother enhances a woman's odds of being politically active herself, independent of her social background.

The work of Nancy Burns and her colleagues (2001) also highlights the importance of women's involvement in religious institutions. Women who are religiously active also

tend to be politically active. This is because religious involvement helps women to develop civic skills and exposes them to requests to get involved in political activities.<sup>6</sup> Racial background is another potentially important control. Belonging to a racial minority may be especially consequential for women because minority women are doubly marginalized in politics as both women and minorities. Finally, any study of political engagement has to take account of age. The life-cycle clearly affects political engagement: people tend to become more involved politically as they age, at least until old age begins to take its toll on health and mobility. However, in the case of women, we also have to be aware of possible generational effects: other things being equal, we might expect women who grew up since the advent of second-wave feminism to be less likely to consider politics a male domain.<sup>7</sup>

All of the control variables were entered as dummy variables, with the exception of attendance at religious services and number of children under 18 in the home (coded up to a maximum of three or more): education (three dummy variables, one coded 1 for less than high school, the second coded 1 for college graduates and the third coded 1 for university graduates), occupational status (two dummy variables, one coded 1 for managerial and professional occupations and the second coded 1 for other occupations), age cohort (two dummy variables, one coded 1 for those aged 18 to 34 and the second coded 1 for those aged 55 and over), marital status (coded 1 for legally married or living common law), immigrant (coded 1 for born outside Canada), visible minority (coded 1 for minority)<sup>8</sup>, urban core (coded 1 for those living in the urban core as defined by Statistics Canada), and finally region (two dummy variables, one coded 1 for Atlantic residents and the second coded 1 for Western residents).<sup>9</sup>

### Findings

We begin by examining the distributions on our dependent variables (see Figure 1). Over three-quarters of the women in our survey reported voting in the 2006 federal election. The numbers fell off for provincial and especially for municipal voting. Eighteen per cent of the women had not voted in any of the three elections; 56 per cent reported voting in all three. Our question about party membership asked respondents whether they had ever belonged to a political party: only 14 per cent said 'yes'.

[Figure 1 here]

More women had taken part in a demonstration at some time in their lives, but these activist women were very much a minority. Similarly, only a minority of the women had signed a petition or engaged in political consumerism in the previous twelve months. Interestingly, women were much more likely to report having bought a product for ethical, political or environmental reasons than having refused to buy a product on similar grounds. Forty-one per cent of the women had not engaged in any of the four forms of extra-electoral political action; 16 per cent had engaged in three or more.

Only 10 per cent of the women professed to have no interest at all in politics. The majority (58 per cent) were at least somewhat interested. Still, the fact that fully a third of the women could not come up with the Prime Minister's name speaks to a profound lack of awareness of current affairs on the part of some women. Surprisingly, though, Hillary



Clinton's bid for the American presidency had registered with almost three-quarters of the women, despite the fact that they were interviewed before the primary season had even begun in the USA. Simply being a female in a prominent political position, however, does not necessarily attract women's attention. This is evident from the relatively small number of women who were able to even approximate Michaelle Jean's name, despite the media attention that had surrounded her appointment. The median score on our political knowledge scale was three correct answers.

Women's political engagement is clearly influenced by their social background characteristics (see Table 1). The two most important characteristics are age and education. Younger women are significantly less likely to have voted in the most recent federal, provincial or municipal election, and they are significantly less likely to have belonged to a political party. They have less interest in politics than older women do and they are less likely to know the names of prominent politicians. Women aged 55 and over are the most likely to have voted in the most recent election or to have been a party member. They are also the most interested and the best informed about politics. The only indicator of political engagement that does not vary significantly by age is extra-electoral political activity. If younger women are less likely to vote, it is not because they are more likely than older women to be engaging in alternative forms of political action. This is the case whether we look at signing petitions, participating in demonstrations or engaging in political consumerism (results not shown).

[Table 1 about here]

Whichever indicator we look at, the impact of education is clear. University-educated women are more likely to vote, to belong to a political party *and* to engage in political activities outside the traditional political arenas. They are also much more interested in politics and, not surprisingly, they are significantly better informed. Women with less than a high school education rank lowest on every dimension of political engagement examined here, including non-electoral forms of political action.

Occupational status has surprisingly little effect, other things being equal. Professional and managerial occupations are associated with the development of the types of skills that foster political engagement (Burns, Schlozman and Verba 2001), but the professional women and managers in our sample were no more likely to be politically active, interested or aware. The only exception was extra-electoral political activity. There was nothing to suggest that women who work outside the home are any more politicized than those who stay at home.

Minority women and women who were born outside Canada are significantly less likely to have voted in the most recent election. Minority women are also less likely to have been party members. However, beyond the fact that women who came to Canada as immigrants have less interest in politics, neither racial background nor immigrant status consistently depresses political engagement. Marital status and religious involvement also have surprisingly little effect. Both are associated with a higher turnout to vote, but beyond that, it makes little difference whether a woman is living with a partner or not, or attends

religious services frequently or never. Meanwhile, the dampening effect of having children in the home is only evident when it comes to political knowledge.

Even controlling for an array of social background characteristics, we can see that having a politically active parent enhances political engagement in adulthood (see Table 2). What is critical from our perspective is the consistent—and significant—effect of having a mother who was involved in a political party or was otherwise politically active. Not surprisingly, the effect is most robust for party membership. However, the effect holds whether we look at behavioural, affective or cognitive indicators of political engagement. It also holds for political activities that take place largely or entirely outside the traditional political arenas.

[Table 2 about here]

The effects of having a politically active father are much more limited. Indeed, the father's political activity makes no difference whatsoever to his adult daughter's probability of voting. Having a politically active father does seem to encourage non-electoral activity and, not surprisingly, party membership. However, on four of the five indicators, the mother's impact clearly outweighs the father's. There is only one exception: both parents appear to have a similar independent effect on the probability of engaging in protest or market-oriented activities outside the traditional political arenas.

It must be said that only a minority of women recalled having a parent who was involved in a political party or politically active in other ways. Eight per cent of the women had a politically active mother and 13 per cent had a politically active father. In one sense, however, this makes the results more compelling: despite the small numbers (and an array of controls), the independent effect of having a politically active mother is statistically robust in every case.

We need to consider the possibility, though, that this effect is largely confined to younger women. As a woman moves into middle age, we might expect the impact of parental influence in the childhood home to have faded. In order to examine this possibility, we have added two multiplicative interaction terms to the models estimated in Table 2. The coefficients for these terms enable us to determine whether the effect of having a politically active mother (or father) is significantly stronger for women under the age of 35. If so, the coefficients will be positive.

[Table 3 about here]

There turns out to be only one significant interaction effect (see Table 3). The effect on electoral participation of having a politically active mother is almost wholly confined to younger women. Not only is the interaction term both positive and statistically robust, but the main effect (which indicates the effect for women aged 35 and over) is smaller than its standard error. We cannot tell from our data why the effect should only hold for younger women. It could be related to the fact that turnout has declined significantly in this age group since the late 1980s (see for example, Gidengil et al. 2004): the mother's example

may have served to counter the other influences that have driven turnout down among young adults.

For each of the other forms of political engagement, the coefficients indicate that the effects of having a politically active parent—and especially a politically active mother—hold regardless of age. This is clearest in the case of political interest: the coefficient for the interaction term is trivially small, indicating that the effect of having a politically active mother is no different for younger women than it is for their older counterparts. The negative signs on the interaction terms for the other three forms of political engagement suggest that the effects may actually be weaker, if anything, for younger women. This is especially evident for political knowledge. However, none of the three interaction terms even approaches conventional levels of statistical significance.

As we have seen, women who have less education are much less likely to be politically engaged. Accordingly, it is worth asking whether having a politically active mother (or father) also enhances the political engagement of those women who are least likely to be politically active, politically interested or politically aware. To pursue this question, we have again added multiplicative interaction terms to the models estimated in Table 2. This time, the goal is to see whether the positive effects are confined to women who have completed some post-secondary education.<sup>10</sup> If they are, the interaction terms will be negative and the main effects will remain both positive and robust.

[Table 4 about here]

Caution is warranted given the small number of cases. However, two results stand out. Whether a woman has some post-secondary education or not, having a politically active mother significantly increases the probability that she will join a political party and enhances her knowledge of politics (though the main effect for the latter does not quite achieve statistical significance). Having a politically active father also encourages party membership, regardless of the adult daughter's level of educational attainment. The main effects of politically active mothers remain statistically significant for electoral participation, extra-electoral activity and political interest, as well. The three interaction terms all have negative signs, though, so we cannot dismiss the possibility that a larger sample might indicate significantly weaker effects for women with less education.

### **Discussion**

We obviously need to exercise some caution in drawing inferences about parental influence from cross-sectional data. However, the results are clear: a politically active mother can encourage her daughter to follow in her footsteps and take an active interest in politics. This pattern holds whether we look at political interest, political knowledge or political activity and it holds whether those activities take place within the traditional political arenas or beyond. Moreover, for every form of engagement save extra-electoral activities, the mother's influence clearly outweighs the father's. And with the exception of electoral participation, the mother's influence appears to endure into middle age and beyond.

The effect is most robust for party membership. Indeed, even women who would otherwise be least likely to join a political party are more likely to be party members if their mother belonged to a political party or took part in other political activities. While this may be a case of daughters' emulating their mothers' example, it could also be the result of the mothers actively recruiting their daughters into joining the same party. Cross and Young (2008) have highlighted the role of parents in recruiting young partisans. A similar phenomenon has been reported for the intergenerational transmission of volunteering. Sarah Mustillo and her colleagues (2004) conclude that mothers who volunteer recruit their daughters to become volunteers as well.

We should not overstate the effects that we have observed. Nevertheless, given the relatively small number of women who had parents who were party members or otherwise politically active, the consistency and statistical robustness of the effects strongly suggest that having a politicized mother can help to counter the effects of female socialization. Indeed, the effects of having a politically active mother rival—and for some facets of political engagement—exceed those of having completed some post-secondary education.

The mother's effect is particularly telling for political knowledge. Women who have only a high school education or less are typically not very well informed about politics. However, if their mother belonged to a political party or was politically active, the knowledge deficit is cut in half.<sup>11</sup> It may seem to be of little import if a woman is able to come up with the correct names of various political figures. In and of itself such knowledge is not a prerequisite to meaningful participation. However, it matters because it serves as an indicator of her general level of political awareness (Zaller 1992). As such, it underpins a variety of different ways of giving voice politically, whether in the voting booth or in the supermarket.

Our research necessarily leaves some important questions unanswered. In particular, we need to know when the mother's (or father's) influence is greatest. Hooghe and Stolle (2004), for example, have urged researchers to discover why "adult women stop doing the things they intended to do when they were adolescent girls?" (19). This suggests that late adolescence and early adulthood may be the time when a politicized mother could make the difference. Virginia Sapiro (2004), on the other hand, has urged socialization researchers to revisit early childhood, which was the focus of the pioneers in the study of political socialization. It may be that the earliest experiences and impressions have the most enduring effects. What is clear is that a politically mother can enhance the odds of having a politically active daughter.

Table 1: The Impact of Social Background Characteristics on Women's Political Engagement

	Electoral participation	Party membership	Extra-electoral activity	Political interest	Political knowledge
Under 35	-0.71 (.11) <sup>***</sup>	-0.09 (.02) <sup>***</sup>	-0.07 (.10)	-0.33 (.08) <sup>***</sup>	-0.77 (.13) <sup>***</sup>
55 years and older	0.55 (.09) <sup>***</sup>	0.08 (.04) <sup>*</sup>	0.04 (.11)	0.14 (.07) <sup>*</sup>	0.41 (.14) <sup>**</sup>
Less than high school	-0.25 (.12) <sup>*</sup>	-0.06 (.03) <sup>a</sup>	-0.37 (.10) <sup>***</sup>	-0.37 (.11) <sup>***</sup>	-0.46 (.15) <sup>**</sup>
College	0.24 (.09) <sup>**</sup>	-0.01 (.03)	0.12 (.10)	0.12 (.07) <sup>a</sup>	0.27 (.13) <sup>*</sup>
University	0.32 (.10) <sup>***</sup>	0.10 (.04) <sup>**</sup>	0.51 (.11) <sup>***</sup>	0.30 (.08) <sup>***</sup>	0.91 (.15) <sup>***</sup>
Professional/managerial	0.05 (.12)	-0.00 (.04)	0.27 (.12) <sup>*</sup>	0.08 (.09)	0.17 (.17)
Other employment	0.07 (.08)	-0.03 (.03)	0.13 (.09)	-0.01 (.07)	0.12 (.12)
Immigrant	-0.42 (.11) <sup>***</sup>	-0.02 (.03)	-0.17 (.11)	-0.21 (.08) <sup>**</sup>	-0.12 (.14)
Visible minority	-0.55 (.13) <sup>***</sup>	-0.07 (.03) <sup>*</sup>	-0.04 (.13)	-0.14 (.11)	0.03 (.16)
Married/partner	0.23 (.08) <sup>**</sup>	-0.04 (.03)	0.13 (.08)	0.03 (.07)	0.06 (.12)
Children under 18	-0.04 (.04)	-0.00 (.01)	-0.01 (.04)	-0.05 (.03)	-0.11 (.06) <sup>a</sup>
Religious attendance	0.06 (.02) <sup>**</sup>	-0.00 (.01)	-0.01 (.02)	0.02 (.02)	-0.02 (.03)
Urban core	-0.03 (.08)	0.01 (.02)	0.01 (.08)	0.09 (.06)	0.29 (.10) <sup>**</sup>
Atlantic resident	-0.11 (.09)	-0.01 (.03)	-0.01 (.09)	-0.17 (.06) <sup>**</sup>	0.23 (.11) <sup>*</sup>
Westerner	-0.11 (.08)	0.03 (.02)	0.07 (.08)	0.03 (.06)	0.06 (.11)
Constant	1.89 (.14) <sup>***</sup>	0.16 (.05) <sup>***</sup>	0.78 (.13) <sup>***</sup>	1.75 (.11) <sup>***</sup>	2.09 (.19) <sup>***</sup>
R-square	0.29	0.07	0.09	0.12	0.17
Number of cases	1,101	1,196	1,160	1,192	1,195

Note: The column entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with robust standard errors shown in parentheses. Estimation was by ordinary least squares.

\*\*\* p<.001

\*\* p<.01

\* p<.05

<sup>a</sup> p<.10

Table 2: The Impact of Parental Political Activity on Women's Political Engagement

	Electoral participation	Party membership	Extra-electoral activity	Political interest	Political knowledge
Politically active mother	0.22 (.13) <sup>a</sup>	0.15 (.05) <sup>**</sup>	0.25 (.13) <sup>a</sup>	0.25 (.11) <sup>*</sup>	0.28 (.17) <sup>a</sup>
Politically active father	-0.00 (.11)	0.09 (.04) <sup>*</sup>	0.21 (.11) <sup>*</sup>	0.17 (.12)	0.15 (.18)
Under 35	-0.71 (.11) <sup>***</sup>	-0.09 (.02) <sup>***</sup>	-0.05 (.10)	-0.32 (.08) <sup>***</sup>	-0.75 (.13) <sup>***</sup>
55 years and older	0.55 (.09) <sup>***</sup>	0.08 (.04) <sup>*</sup>	0.02 (.11)	0.13 (.07) <sup>a</sup>	0.39 (.14) <sup>**</sup>
Less than high school	-0.25 (.12) <sup>*</sup>	-0.06 (.03) <sup>a</sup>	-0.37 (.10) <sup>***</sup>	-0.36 (.11) <sup>***</sup>	-0.47 (.15) <sup>**</sup>
College	0.25 (.09) <sup>**</sup>	-0.01 (.03)	0.11 (.10)	0.12 (.07)	0.25 (.13) <sup>*</sup>
University	0.32 (.10) <sup>**</sup>	0.09 (.04) <sup>*</sup>	0.49 (.11) <sup>***</sup>	0.29 (.08) <sup>***</sup>	0.88 (.15) <sup>***</sup>
Professional/managerial	0.04 (.12)	-0.02 (.04)	0.25 (.12) <sup>*</sup>	0.06 (.09)	0.15 (.17)
Other employment	0.07 (.08)	-0.04 (.03)	0.12 (.09)	-0.02 (.07)	0.12 (.12)
Immigrant	-0.42 (.11) <sup>***</sup>	-0.02 (.03)	-0.17 (.10) <sup>a</sup>	-0.21 (.08) <sup>**</sup>	-0.12 (.14)
Visible minority	-0.54 (.13) <sup>***</sup>	-0.06 (.03) <sup>*</sup>	-0.04 (.13)	-0.13 (.11)	0.03 (.16)
Married/partner	0.24 (.08) <sup>**</sup>	-0.04 (.03)	0.14 (.08)	0.04 (.07)	0.07 (.12)
Children under 18	-0.04 (.04)	-0.01 (.01)	-0.01 (.04)	-0.05 (.03)	-0.12 (.06) <sup>a</sup>
Religious attendance	0.06 (.02) <sup>**</sup>	-0.00 (.01)	-0.01 (.02)	0.02 (.02)	-0.02 (.03)
Urban core	-0.03 (.08)	0.01 (.02)	0.01 (.08)	0.09 (.06) <sup>**</sup>	0.29 (.10) <sup>**</sup>
Atlantic resident	-0.12 (.09)	-0.02 (.03)	-0.02 (.09)	-0.18 (.06) <sup>**</sup>	0.22 (.11) <sup>*</sup>
Westerner	-0.11 (.07)	0.02 (.02)	0.06 (.08)	0.02 (.06)	0.06 (.11)
Constant	1.87 (.14) <sup>***</sup>	0.16 (.05) <sup>***</sup>	0.75 (.14) <sup>***</sup>	1.73 (.11) <sup>***</sup>	2.09 (.19) <sup>***</sup>
R-square	0.29	0.11	0.10	0.14	0.17
Number of cases	1,101	1,195	1,159	1,191	1,195

Note: The column entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with robust standard errors shown in parentheses. Estimation was by ordinary least squares.

\*\*\* p<.001

\*\* p<.01

\* p<.05

<sup>a</sup> p<.10

Table 3: Young Adulthood and the Impact of Parental Political Activity on Women's Political Engagement

	Electoral participation	Party membership	Extra-electoral activity	Political interest	Political knowledge
Politically active mother	0.08 (.14)	0.17 (.07)**	0.30 (.16) <sup>a</sup>	0.24 (.12)*	0.42 (.18)*
Politically active father	0.06 (.11)	0.10 (.05) <sup>a</sup>	0.22 (.13) <sup>a</sup>	0.24 (.10)*	-0.04 (.16)
Under 35*active mother	0.54 (.33) <sup>a</sup>	-0.10 (.10)	-0.20 (.29)	-0.03 (.27)	-0.45 (.36)
Under 35*active father	-0.18 (.26)	-0.04 (.09)	-0.07 (.26)	-0.34 (.33)	0.79 (.49)
Under 35	-0.73 (.12)***	-0.08 (.02)***	-0.03 (.11)	-0.28 (.08)***	-0.80 (.14)***
55 years and older	0.55 (.09)***	0.07 (.04)*	0.02 (.11)	0.12 (.07) <sup>a</sup>	0.41 (.14)**
Less than high school	-0.26 (.12)*	-0.06 (.03) <sup>a</sup>	-0.37 (.10)***	-0.36 (.11)***	-0.47 (.15)**
College	0.24 (.09)**	-0.01 (.03)	0.11 (.10)	0.11 (.07)	0.26 (.13)*
University	0.32 (.10)**	0.09 (.04)*	0.49 (.11)***	0.29 (.08)***	0.88 (.15)***
Professional/managerial	0.04 (.12)	-0.02 (.04)	0.24 (.12)*	0.06 (.09)	0.16 (.16)
Other employment	0.07 (.08)	-0.04 (.03)	0.12 (.09)	-0.02 (.07)	0.14 (.12)
Immigrant	-0.41 (.11)***	-0.02 (.03)	-0.17 (.11) <sup>a</sup>	-0.21 (.08)**	-0.14 (.13)
Visible minority	-0.53 (.13)***	-0.06 (.03)*	-0.04 (.13)	-0.13 (.10)	0.01 (.16)
Married/partner	0.23 (.08)**	-0.04 (.03)	0.14 (.08)	0.04 (.07)	0.07 (.12)
Children under 18	-0.04 (.04)	-0.01 (.01)	-0.01 (.04)	-0.05 (.03)	-0.12 (.06)*
Religious attendance	0.06 (.02)**	-0.00 (.01)	-0.01 (.02)	0.02 (.02)	-0.02 (.03)
Urban core	-0.04 (.08)	0.01 (.02)	0.01 (.08)	0.09 (.06)	0.30 (.10)**
Atlantic resident	-0.11 (.09)	-0.02 (.03)	-0.02 (.09)	-0.18 (.06)**	0.20 (.11) <sup>a</sup>
Westerner	-0.12 (.07)	0.03 (.02)	0.06 (.08)	0.03 (.06)	0.05 (.11)
Constant	1.88 (.14)***	0.14 (.05)**	0.74 (.14)***	1.72 (.11)***	2.08 (.19)***
R-square	0.30	0.11	0.10	0.14	0.18
Number of cases	1,101	1,195	1,159	1,191	1,195

Note: The column entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with robust standard errors shown in parentheses. Estimation was by ordinary least squares.

\*\*\* p<.001

\*\* p<.01

\* p<.05

<sup>a</sup> p<.10

Table 4: Education and the Impact of Parental Political Activity on Women's Political Engagement

	Electoral participation	Party membership	Extra-electoral activity	Political interest	Political knowledge
Politically active mother	0.28 (.17) <sup>a</sup>	0.15 (.07) <sup>*</sup>	0.32 (.17) <sup>a</sup>	0.31 (.12) <sup>**</sup>	0.32 (.22)
Politically active father	0.00 (.13)	0.11 (.05) <sup>a</sup>	0.18 (.14)	0.10 (.14)	0.20 (.25)
High school or less*active mother	-0.18 (.27)	0.02 (.12)	-0.22 (.28)	-0.21 (.27)	-0.06 (.37)
High school or less*active father	0.01 (.22)	-0.04 (.09)	0.14 (.24)	0.24 (.22)	-0.08 (.36)
Under 35	-0.71 (.11) <sup>***</sup>	-0.09 (.02) <sup>***</sup>	-0.04 (.10)	-0.31 (.08) <sup>***</sup>	-0.73 (.13) <sup>***</sup>
55 years and older	0.53 (.09) <sup>***</sup>	0.07 (.04) <sup>*</sup>	-0.00 (.11)	0.10 (.07)	0.37 (.15) <sup>**</sup>
High school or less	-0.32 (.08) <sup>***</sup>	-0.04 (.03)	-0.36 (.09) <sup>***</sup>	-0.29 (.06) <sup>***</sup>	-0.60 (.12) <sup>***</sup>
Professional/managerial	0.07 (.11)	0.02 (.04)	0.36 (.12) <sup>**</sup>	0.12 (.09)	0.34 (.16) <sup>*</sup>
Other employment	0.09 (.08)	-0.04 (.03)	0.12 (.08)	-0.00 (.07)	0.12 (.12)
Immigrant	-0.41 (.11) <sup>***</sup>	-0.01 (.03)	-0.13 (.11)	-0.19 (.09) <sup>*</sup>	-0.06 (.14)
Visible minority	-0.55 (.13) <sup>***</sup>	-0.06 (.03) <sup>*</sup>	-0.04 (.13)	-0.14 (.11)	0.03 (.16)
Married/partner	0.24 (.08) <sup>**</sup>	-0.03 (.03)	0.17 (.09)	0.05 (.07)	0.11 (.12)
Children under 18	-0.04 (.04)	-0.01 (.01)	-0.02 (.04)	-0.05 (.03)	-0.12 (.06) <sup>*</sup>
Religious attendance	0.06 (.02) <sup>**</sup>	-0.00 (.01)	-0.02 (.02)	0.02 (.02)	-0.02 (.03)
Urban core	-0.02 (.08)	0.01 (.02)	0.03 (.08)	0.11 (.06) <sup>a</sup>	0.32 (.10) <sup>***</sup>
Atlantic resident	-0.13 (.09)	-0.02 (.03)	-0.04 (.09)	-0.19 (.06) <sup>**</sup>	0.20 (.12) <sup>a</sup>
Westerner	-0.12 (.08)	0.02 (.02)	0.05 (.08)	0.02 (.06)	0.04 (.11)
Constant	2.13 (.13) <sup>***</sup>	0.17 (.05) <sup>***</sup>	0.98 (.14) <sup>***</sup>	1.90 (.11) <sup>***</sup>	2.51 (.20) <sup>***</sup>
R-square	0.29	0.09	0.08	0.12	0.14
Number of cases	1,101	1,195	1,159	1,191	1,195

Note: The column entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with robust standard errors shown in parentheses. Estimation was by ordinary least squares.

\*\*\* p<.001

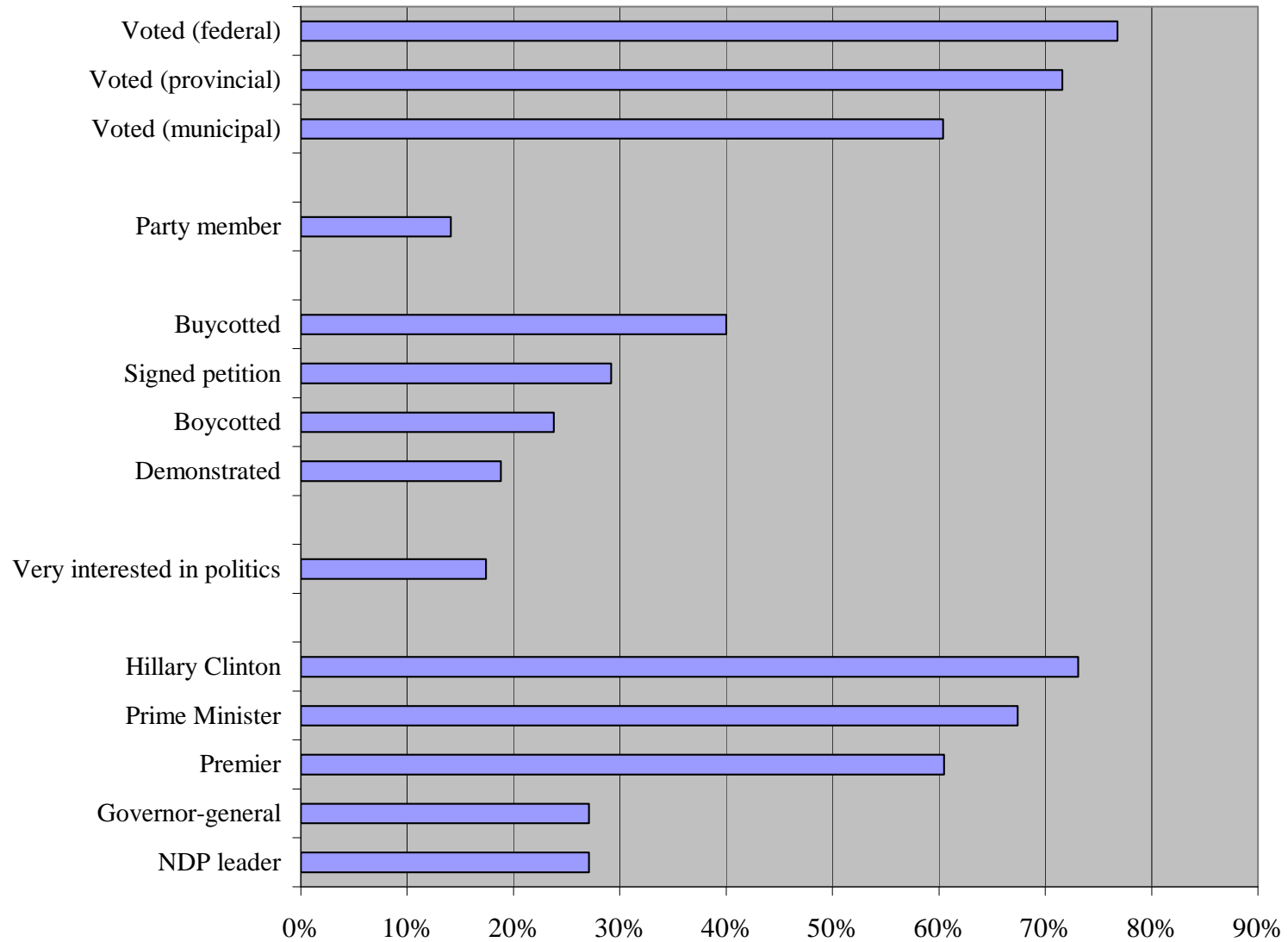
\*\* p<.01

\* p<.05

<sup>a</sup> p<.10



Figure 1: Women's Political Engagement



## Bibliography

Atkeson, Lonna Rae, and Ronald D. Rapoport. 2003. "The More Things Change the More they Stay the Same: Gender Differences in Political Attitude Expression, 1952-2000." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 67: 495-521

Bandura, Albert. 1977. "Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioural Change." *Psychological Review* 84(2): 191-215.

Beck, Paul Allen, and M. Kent Jennings. 1991. "Family Traditions, Political Periods, and the Development of Partisan Orientations." *The Journal of Politics* 53(3): 742-763

Bennett, Linda L. M., and Stephen Earl Bennett. 1989. "Enduring Gender Differences in Political Interest: The Impact of Socialisation and Political Dispositions." *American Politics Quarterly* 17: 105-122.

Burns, Nancy, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Sidney Verba. 2001. *The Private Roots of Public Action: Gender, Equality, and Political Participation*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.

*Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme Journal*.1998. "Looking Back, Looking Forward: Mothers, Daughters, and Feminism." 18(2 and 3).

Chodorow, Nancy J. 1999. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. University of California Press: Berkeley, CA.

Claibourn, Michele, and Virginia Sapiro. 2002. "Gender Differences in Citizen-Level Democratic Citizenship: Evidence from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems," paper presented to the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems meeting, Berlin, February.

Cross, William, and Lisa Young. 2008. "Factors Influencing the Decision of the Young Politically Engaged to Join a Political Party: An Investigation of the Canadian Case." *Party Politics* 14(3): 345-369

Delli Carpini, Michael X., and Scott Keeter. 1996. *What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Frazer, Elizabeth, and Kenneth Macdonald. 2003. "Sex Differences in Political Knowledge in Britain." *Political Studies* 51: 67-83.

Gidengil, Elisabeth, André Blais, Neil Nevitte, and Richard Nadeau. 2004. *Citizens*. Vancouver: UBC Press

Hess Robert, and Judith Torney. 1968. *The Development of Political Attitudes in Children*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Anchor Books.

Hooghe, Marc, and Dietlind Stolle. 2004. "Good Girls Go to the Polling Booth, Bad Boys Go Everywhere: Gender Differences in Anticipated Political Participation among American Fourteen-Year Olds." *Women & Politics* 26(3/4): 1-23.

Jennings, M. Kent, and Richard G. Niemi. 1974. *The Political Character of Adolescence: The Influence of Families and Schools*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Jennings, M. Kent, and Richard G. Niemi. 1981. *Generations and Politics: A Panel Study of Young Adults and their Parents*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Jennings, M. Kent, Laura Stoker and Jake Bowers. 1999. "Politics across Generations: Family Transmission Reexamined." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta, Georgia, September.

Kenski, Kate, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. 2000. "The Gender Gap in Political Knowledge: Are Women Less Knowledgeable Than men About Politics?" In Kathleen Hall Jamieson (ed.), *Everything You Think You Know about Politics...And Why You're Wrong*. New York: Basic Books, pp. 83-9.

Lawless, Jennifer L., and Richard L. Fox. 2005. *It Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Mayer, Jeremy D., and Heather M. Schmidt. 2004. "Gendered Political Socialization in Four Contexts: Political Interest and Values among Junior High School Students in China, Japan, Mexico, and the United States." *The Social Science Journal* 41: 393-407.

Merelman, Richard M. 1986. "Revitalizing Political Socialization." In Margaret G. Hermann (ed.), *Political Psychology: Contemporary Problems and Issues*, pp. 277-319. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Micheletti, Michele, Andreas Follesdal and Dietlind Stolle, eds. 2003. *Politics, Products, and Markets. Exploring Political Consumerism Past and Present*. New Brunswick: Transaction Press.

Mondak, Jeffrey J., and Mary R. Anderson. 2004. "The Knowledge Gap: A Reexamination of Gender-Based Differences in Political Knowledge." *Journal of Politics* 66: 492-512.

Mustillo, Sarah, John Wilson, and Scott M. Lynch. 2004. "Legacy Volunteering: A test of Two Theories of Intergenerational Transmission." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66: 530-541.

Owen, Diana, and Jack Dennis. 1988. "Gender Differences in the Politicization of American Children." *Women & Politics* 8(2): 23-43.

Powell, Lynda Watts, Clifford W. Brown, Roman B. Hedges. 1981. "Male and Female Differences in Elite Political Participation: An Examination of the Effects of Socioeconomic and Familial Variables." *The Western Political Quarterly* 34(1): 31-45

Rapoport, Ronald B. 1985. "Like Mother, Like Daughter: Intergenerational Transmission of DK Response Rates." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 49(2): 198-208.

Renshon, Stanley Allen. 1973. "The Role of Personality Development in Political Socialization." In David C. Schwartz and Sandra Kenyon Schwartz, eds., *New Directions in Political Socialization*. New York: Free Press.

Rosenthal, Cindy Simon, James A. Rosenthal, and Jocelyn Jones. 2001. "Preparing for Elite Political Participation: Simulations and the Political Socialisation of Adolescents." *Social Science Quarterly* 82(3): 633-646.

Sapiro, Virginia. 2004. "Not Your Parents' Political Socialization: Introduction for a New Generation." *Annual Review of Political Science* 7:1-23.

Shrier, Diane K., Margaret Tompsett and Lydia A. Shrier. 2004. "Adult Mother–Daughter Relationships: A Review of the Theoretical and Research Literature." *Journal of The American Academy of Psychoanalysis and Dynamic Psychiatry* 32(1): 91–115.

Sigel, Roberta S., and Marilyn B. Hoskin. 1977. "Perspectives on Adult Political Socialization—Areas of Research." In Stanley A. Renshon (ed.), *Handbook of Political Socialization: Theory and Research*, pp. 259–293. New York: Free Press.

Smiley, Marion. 1999. "Democratic Citizenship: A Question of Competence?" In Stephen L. Elkin and Karol Edward Soltan (eds.), *Citizen Competence and Democratic Institutions*, pp. 371-83. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Verba, Sidney, Nancy Burns, and Kay Lehman Schlozman. 1997. "Knowing and Caring about Politics: Gender and Political Engagement." *Journal of Politics* 59: 1051-72.

Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman and Nancy Burns. 2005. "Family Ties: Understanding the Intergenerational Transmission of Political Participation." In Alan S. Zuckerman (ed.), *The Social Logic of Politics: Personal Networks as Contexts for Political Behavior*, pp. 95-114. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Wolbrecht, Christina, and David E. Campbell. 2007. "Leading by Example: Female Members of Parliament as Political Role Models." *American Journal of Political Science*. 51(4): 921-939.

Wolbrecht, Christina, and David E. Campbell. 2006. "See Jane Run: Women Politicians as Role Models for Adolescents." *The Journal of Politics* 68(2): 233-247.

Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature of Mass Opinion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

### Endnotes

The authors gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the FQRSC.

---

<sup>1</sup> The authors note the problem of biased recall and control for respondents' political interest in an effort to mitigate its effects.

<sup>2</sup> The response rate was 59 per cent. The fieldwork was conducted by the Institute for Social Research at York University under our direction. The study was funded by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

<sup>3</sup> A case could be made for keeping political consumerism as a separate dimension of political engagement. However, boycotting has long been considered a form of protest politics and dropping the political consumerism items from the scale reduces the reliability.

<sup>4</sup> Michaëlle Jean's name created problems for some English-speaking respondents. Accordingly, interviewers were asked to record mentions that came very close. We counted these answers as correct.

<sup>5</sup> All of the models are estimated using ordinary least squares regression, even though one of the dependent variables is dichotomous. We have also run the model for party membership using binary logistic regression and obtained similar results.

<sup>6</sup> Union membership might be expected to have a similar effect, but it proved to be unrelated to all of our measures of political engagement and was therefore dropped from the models in the interests of parsimony.

<sup>7</sup> With cross-sectional data, it is, of course, impossible to disentangle life-cycle and generational effects.

<sup>8</sup> All respondents of non-European ancestry were coded as belong to a visible minority.

<sup>9</sup> Over a quarter of the sample either did not know their household income or refused to divulge it. In order to conserve sample size, we have not included income as a control variable. Education and occupational status both capture the impact of socio-economic status.

<sup>10</sup> We have combined the two lowest education categories in order to have a sufficient number of cases on which to base inferences about the effects for women with less formal education.

<sup>11</sup> The main effect (i.e. if the mother was not politically active) of a high school education or less in Table 4 is -0.60; for those with a politically active mother, that effect is reduced by 0.32.