

**STEREOTYPE THREAT AND THE GENDER GAP IN POLITICAL
KNOWLEDGE**

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Abstract

A substantial amount of research has been done on political knowledge, particularly on knowledge differences between men and women. Recently, scholars have sought to explain the gender gap in political knowledge, with men typically having higher levels of knowledge than women. Scholars have tried to explain this knowledge gap by accounting for several factors, including levels of political interest, education, and income. None of these variables, however, adequately accounts for the gap in political knowledge between men and women. It would seem, therefore, that men and women differ on their levels of political knowledge solely because of their gender, which is a rather unsatisfying result. However, there is some evidence that this finding may not be conclusive, and the methods of the studies themselves might account for the gap. In this paper, I focus on the stereotype threat theory to account for the gender gap in political knowledge. According to stereotype threat theory, when a stereotype relating to a specific minority group is activated, the intellectual performance of that group will be hampered. Given that standard stereotypes depict women as being less politically knowledgeable than men, the activation of such a stereotype in the measurement of political knowledge could account for the gender gap. Conversely, the removal of such a stereotype threat could increase women's performance on political knowledge questions. Using data from the 2000 American National Election Study (ANES), I explore the effects of the gender of the interviewer and the gender of the respondent on political knowledge. By conducting an OLS regression that includes theoretically-related independent variables, I observe a strong and significant gender of interviewer effect that only retains significance for women. Such a finding supports the stereotype threat theory, which holds that the minority group which perceives the negative stereotype (i.e. women), will be the ones affected by the interviewer gender.

In recent years scholars have focused a great deal of attention on the study of political knowledge. Some scholars have focused on the average level of political knowledge possessed by all Americans (Bennett, 1989; Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996). Others have focused their research on the measurement of political knowledge, dealing mainly with questions of knowledge scales and the correct interpretation of incorrect answers and nonresponses (Luskin, 1987; Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1993; Nadeau and Niemi, 1995; Mondak, 1999, 2001; Mondak and Creel, 2001).

One of the most intriguing findings in this field of research is the existence of a considerable gender gap in political knowledge. According to researchers, men simply know more about politics than women (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Kenski and Jamieson, 2001; Verba, Burns, and Scholzman, 1997; Mondak 1999; Gidengil et al. 2003; Garand, Guynan, and Fournet, 2004). For example, Mondak finds a consistent pattern of significant, negative coefficients for gender in his multivariate model. Women answered more incorrect and “don’t know” responses than men, even controlling for a variety of variables whose effects are related to political knowledge.

The gender gap in political knowledge is not limited to the United States. One study of political knowledge across 19 nations found that the political knowledge gap between men and women continued to exist, controlling for basic demographic variables (Claibourn and Sapiro, 2002). Furthermore, the gender gap is not limited to the one particular generation. Researchers have discovered that the gender gap begins as early as adolescence (Hess and Torney, 1967; Jennings and Niemi, 1981; Niemi and Junn, 1999).

Recently, Garand et al. (2004) constructed a model to explain the gender gap in political knowledge that accounted for a variety of factors believed to be related to political knowledge. Garand et al. found that the effect of gender on performance on political knowledge questions persisted, even when controlling for such factors as political interest, income, education, media exposure, and occupation. Thus, scholars have accepted that the gender of the respondent accounts for the gender gap in political knowledge. According to research, women are simply less knowledgeable about politics than men.

Thus, according to previous research on the gender gap in political knowledge, women know less than men simply because they are women. This explanation remains unsatisfying, as it implies that a variety of factors related to political knowledge have weaker effects than gender. A plausible explanation is that the gender gap in political knowledge is more a function of the method of measurement than of the respondent’s gender. Recent research has explored a phenomenon known as stereotype threat (Aronson et al., 1998; Croizet and Claire, 1998; Davis and Silver, 2003; Marx et al. 1999). According to stereotype threat theory, when a minority group perceives that a stereotype related to their abilities is activated, their intellectual performance will be hampered. Given that standard stereotypes depict women as being less politically knowledgeable than men, the activation of such a stereotype could account for the gender gap in political knowledge.

In this paper, I build upon previous research on both the gender gap in political knowledge and on stereotype threat theory. I begin by describing general trends of political knowledge found in the 2000 American National Election Study (ANES). Next, I will test a stereotype threat model of gender differences in political knowledge, focusing on how the magnitude of gender effects decreases as one controls for the effects of the gender of the interviewer.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The study of stereotype threat has drawn specific attention in the scholarly literature. Studies on the effects of stereotype threat reveal that groups operating in this situation perform less well than those groups free of the threat of stereotyping. This negative effect on performance might explain the knowledge differences between men and women.

What is Stereotype Threat?

According to psychologist Claude M. Steele, stereotype threat is “a discomfiting or distracting concern about being viewed and treated stereotypically” (quoted by Marx et al. 1999). Psychologists David Marx and Joseph Brown joined Steele in studying this phenomenon. They approached the phenomenon from a psychological perspective, relying heavily upon the work of Gordon Allport. According to these men, stereotype threat functions as a situational press, an external pressure experienced by an individual in a given situation. An individual perceives a negative stereotype about some group with which they identify. Their desire *not* to conform to this stereotype makes them distracted and tense; this distraction negatively affects their performance, thereby seemingly fulfilling the stereotype.

Marx et al. emphasized one important aspect of their view of stereotype threat as a situational press. Because stereotype threat is a situational press, and not an internal motivator, the individual does not have to believe the stereotype itself to succumb to the negative effects of a stereotype threat. This view of stereotype threat as an external pressure on an individual’s performance has significant implications for the explanation of the knowledge differences between men and women.

Stereotype Threat and African-Americans

Much of the existing research regarding stereotype threat focuses on its effects on the intellectual performance of African-Americans (Aronson et al., 1999; Danso and Esses, 2000; Davis and Silver, 2003; Steele and Aronson, 1995). In 1995, Steele and Aronson examined a group of African-American and white college students and their performance on the verbal section of the GRE. Randomly selected African-Americans were given an experimental introduction to the exam, calling the test one of “intellectual ability.” Those African-Americans in the experimental group performed less well than whites in the same group. Likewise, those African-Americans in the control group performed equally as well as the white college students.

However, other studies have shown that an overt “activation” of a stereotype is not necessary to create a stereotype threat effect. For minority groups like African-Americans, simply answering questions about one’s race can activate the stereotype threat. Steele and Aronson studied the performance of African-American students on a test and discovered that simply filling out their race before the exam was sufficient to impair their performance.

In 2000, Danso and Esses conducted a similar experiment involving African-American and white students taking a test. According to their findings, no “activation” passage was necessary to cause the stereotype threat effect. Instead, Danso and Esses had some students take a test administered by an African-American while others were given the test by a white administrator. Those African-Americans given the test by the white administrator did less poorly than whites in the same room and other African-Americans who took the test with the African-American administrator.

Stereotype Threat and Gender

Research has also shown that women also respond to the stereotype threat effect (Walsh, Hickey, and Duffy, 1999; Spencer et al., 1997; Stangor et al. 1998; Quinn and Spencer 2001). Most of these studies focus on the area of mathematics, as women are stereotyped to perform less well than men in that area. Walsh, Hickey, and Duffy studied the relationship between stereotype threat and mathematical problem solving. They administered the mathematical section of the SAT to students. Some students were given an experimental introduction claiming that the “SAT has been found to show gender differences in math performance and that males score higher than females.” In line with the stereotype threat effect, the female students that had the experimental introduction performed less well than the males and also those females who had the control version of the exam. Studies done by Spencer et al., Stangor et al, and Quinn and Spencer showed that women consistently performed less well on mathematical examinations than men, even controlling for a variety of related factors such as education level, income, and previous academic performance.

Stereotype Threat and Political Knowledge

Darren Davis and Brian Silver (2003) studied the effect of stereotype threat on respondents’ performance on political knowledge questions. Respondents were asked seven questions pertaining to political knowledge. At the end of the seven questions, each respondent was also asked to identify the race of the interviewer. Davis and Silver found that the perceived race of the interviewer mattered little for white respondents, as the difference in questions answered correctly failed to achieve statistical significance. For African-Americans, on the other hand, the perceived race of interviewer mattered a great deal. On average, African-Americans who perceived their interviewer to also be African-American answered 3.42 questions correctly while those African-Americans who perceived their interviewers to be white only answered 2.80 questions correctly. Thus, the perceived race of the interviewer had a significant effect on the performance of African-Americans on political knowledge questions. Even when Davis and Silver

controlled for a variety of factors including education, income, and political attention, the effect of the perceived race of the interviewer was only slightly diminished.

In sum, the literature on stereotype threat and its relationship both to women and to political knowledge causes it to gain credence as an explanation for the gender gap in political knowledge. The situational press view of stereotype threat allows for it to be present even when the subject does not possess internal belief of the stereotype. The subversive activation of the stereotype means that the gender or race of the interviewer is sufficient to activate the stereotype threat. Furthermore, women have been shown to be a minority group affected by stereotype threat. Finally, research has shown that stereotype threat can affect an individual's performance on political knowledge questions.

THE EFFECT OF INTERVIEWER GENDER ON POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE

For this study I have relied on the 2000 American National Election Study survey to provide my data set for analysis. The ANES is a standard survey conducted before and after the 2000 national elections and includes a section of political knowledge questions.

A descriptive summary of the variables used in this study can be found in Appendix 1.

Dependent Variable: Political Knowledge

As it is the gender gap in political knowledge that I am trying to explain, it is important to discuss my measure for political knowledge. Scholars have paid great attention to the measurement of political knowledge (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Mondak, 1999, 2001). Scholars have identified multiple kinds of political knowledge, including knowledge of political institutions and processes, people and players, domestic politics, foreign affairs, national politics, and state and local politics (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Niemi and Junn, 1999).

Most surveys use the "people and players" domain, which involves the identification of specific political figures. The ANES regularly uses this feature in its surveys, and knowledge scales based on this domain have high reliability and validity. A typical wording of these types of questions follows:

Now we have a set of questions concerning various public figures. We want to see how much information about them gets out to the public from television, newspapers, and the like. To help us do that, I'd like to ask you some questions about your knowledge of politics. Most people will not know the answers to many of these; if you don't know, don't worry about it, just tell me and we'll move on to the next one. The first is Dick Cheney. Do you happen to know what job or political office he now holds?

Respondents then typically identify a set of political figures, with three coding options available: (1) correct answer; (2) incorrect answer; and (3) don't know response. To create general knowledge scales, I recoded the answers to dichotomous variables, with correct answers coded 1, and other responses coded 0. Thus, the knowledge scale constitutes a sum of these individual dichotomous variables as these scales generally have high levels of reliability and validity.

For the data from the 2000 ANES, my knowledge scales are based on six political knowledge questions. Each question involves asking whether the respondent can identify political figures or information about presidential candidates. (1) Trent Lott, U.S. Senate majority leader; (2) William Rehnquist, Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court; (3) Tony Blair, Prime Minister of Great Britain; (4) Janet Reno, Attorney General of the United States; (5) the home state for George W. Bush (Texas); and (6) the home state for Al Gore (Tennessee). I coded each correct response as 1 and 0 for all incorrect answers and nonresponses. These six items were summed together, creating a knowledge scale ranging from 0 (low knowledge) to 6 (high knowledge). The scale has a reasonable level of reliability ($\alpha = 0.76$).

Independent Variable: Gender

I measure as a dichotomous variable, coded 1 for women and 0 for men. If there is a gender difference in political knowledge, the coefficient for the gender variable should be negative, indicating that women have *lower* levels of political knowledge than men.

Since I am trying to account for the effect of another independent variable, namely the gender of the interviewer, on political knowledge, I focus on what happens to the gender coefficient as I include these independent variables. In a simple bivariate model, the coefficient for gender should be negative. The intercept in this model represents the mean level of political knowledge for men, while the coefficient for the gender variable represents the difference in mean levels of political knowledge for men and women. The mean level of political knowledge for women can be obtained by adding the intercept and the b coefficient. If the independent variables I include account for the gender gap in political knowledge, the coefficient for gender should be reduced to 0. If this occurs, it means that I have accounted for the explanations of gender differences in political knowledge scales.

Independent Variables: Interviewer Effects

According to stereotype threat theory, women confronted with political knowledge questions posed by male interviewers should have lower levels of knowledge than women answering political knowledge questions posed by female interviewers, since negative stereotypes are likely to be engaged for women with male interviewers. Male respondents should exhibit similar levels of political knowledge, regardless of the gender of the interviewer.

Fortunately, data on the gender of interviewer are available for the 2000 ANES. I created an interviewer gender variable, coded 1 for female interviewers and 0 for male interviewers. In order to estimate the effect of stereotype threat, I also created an interaction variable for respondent gender and interviewer gender, coded 1 for female respondents interviewed by female interviewers, and 0 otherwise. If the stereotype threat has an effect, the coefficient for the simple interviewer gender variable should equal 0, but the coefficient for the interaction variable should be positive. This would indicate that female respondents whose stereotype threat is diminished by having a female interviewer would have higher political knowledge scores than female respondents facing high stereotype threat implied by a male interviewer.

EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Patterns of Political Knowledge for Men and Women

I begin with a simple descriptive summary of the gender gap in political knowledge for respondents in the 2000 ANES. In Table 1 I present the distribution of responses to political knowledge items from the 2000 ANES, broken down by gender. Respondents are classified into three categories on each item: (1) answered correctly, meaning that the respondent's answer to the question matches the correct answer; (2) answered incorrectly, meaning that the respondent did attempt to offer an answer but that the answer was not correct; and (3) answered "don't know" (hereafter denoted DK), meaning that the respondent was unable to offer an answer.

Three things stand out for the results reported in Table 1. First, men clearly have a greater tendency than women to provide correct answers to the questions. In Table 1 men are more likely to be able to identify Trent Lott (14.0% to 4.7%, a difference of 9.3%), William Rehnquist (18.0% to 4.9%, 13.1%), Tony Blair (41.3% to 29.3%, 12.0%), Janet Reno (66.5% to 46.4%, 20.1%), George Bush's home state (94.2% to 86.0%, 8.2%), and Al Gore's home state (75.8% to 61.5%, 14.3%). The gender differences in correct answers range from 8.2% to 20.1% for 2000 ANES data. In no case are women more likely than men to answer a given knowledge question correctly. Given these distributions, it would appear that men have higher levels of political knowledge than women.

As noted, I also create political knowledge scales for the 2000 ANES. These scales are created by summing the number of correct answers across the component political knowledge items, and they serve as the dependent variables in much of my analysis. In Table 2 I report the means and distribution of these scales, broken down by gender. Here again, I find that men have consistently higher levels of political knowledge than women. For the general knowledge scale from the 2000 ANES, the knowledge scores for women are skewed toward the low end of the distribution; approximately 62% of women correctly answer two questions or less, compared to approximately 46% of men. Moreover, men correctly answer an average of 2.64 items, compared to 2.02 items for women; this difference in mean knowledge levels for men and women is highly significant ($t = -8.00$). In this national sample neither men nor women have

overwhelmingly high levels of political knowledge, but these data suggest that women have even lower levels of knowledge than men.

All in all, men exhibit higher levels of political knowledge than women. The knowledge levels for women tend toward the low end of the knowledge distribution, while the knowledge levels for men are typically balanced around the middle of the knowledge distribution. However, can such a gender gap be explained by the stereotype threat theory? In other words, can the gender of the interviewer effect reduce the gender coefficient to 0?

The Stereotype Threat Effect

In order to examine the effect of the gender of interviewer, I ran two types of analysis. First, I examined the differences in the means of knowledge scale scores for both male and female respondents. As seen in Table 2, on average men scored approximately half a point higher (0.625056) on the knowledge scale than women (2.641772 to 2.016716). This data only confirmed the current belief in the existence of the gender gap in political knowledge. In the next part of my analysis, I examined the effect of the interviewer's gender by comparing the average score of those women who had women interviewers with those who were interviewed by men. The data in Table 3 shows that women interviewed by women scored on average approximately half a point higher (0.40861) on the knowledge scale than those interviewed by men (2.06734 to 1.65873). This data would seem to support the stereotype threat theory; however, the data regarding the men seems to suggest a different explanation. Men interviewed by women also scored approximately half a point higher (0.49438) on the political knowledge scale than those interviewed by men (2.70438 to 2.21). Thus, the gender of the interviewer seems to affect both men and women roughly equally. Such a universal interviewer gender effect contradicts the stereotype threat theory.

Thus, for my second part of analysis, I created a model to explain the gender gap in political knowledge while accounting for the interviewer gender effect. I based my model heavily on the one used by Garand et al. I controlled for a variety of independent variables including economic and demographic variables (i.e. age, education, family income, race, home ownership), political attitudes and engagement (i.e. partisan identification, ideology, interest in politics, follows politics, opinionated, political efficacy, political trust, antigovernment attitudes, and polarized party placements), media exposure (national television news exposure, local television news exposure, newspaper news exposure), and personal life circumstances (i.e. married, children under 18, single mother, and employed). In addition to these variables, I also controlled for the effect of interviewer gender, using the dichotomous variable I had previously created.

According to the results shown in Table 4, by controlling for these factors and distinguishing the results between men and women, the interviewer gender effect becomes more apparent. However, the coefficient for women interviewed by women does diminish to about one quarter of a point on the political knowledge scale ($b = 0.331$, $t = 2.25$) due to the controlling effects of the other independent variables. Thus, women

interviewed by women are more likely to have a political knowledge score 0.279 higher than a woman interviewed by a man, even controlling for a variety of theoretically-related variables. This relationship is not only strong but also significant at the 0.05 level. When the results for the men are examined, the gender interviewer coefficient is also positive, but fails to achieve a level of statistical significance ($b = 0.173$, $t = 1.04$). Thus, the gender interviewer coefficient has a positive, statistically significant effect for women but not for men. Given that women are the only participants likely to be affected by stereotype threat in this study, these results support the use of the stereotype threat model to explain the gender gap in political knowledge.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have explored the use of stereotype threat theory to explain the gender gap in political knowledge. My analysis has shown that the interviewer gender effect is both strong and significant, indicating that the stereotype threat theory seems to apply to the measurement of political knowledge. Such a measurement effect could explain the gender gap in political knowledge, but further research is required to achieve that end. More research is needed to discover whether the gender gap in political knowledge can be *totally* explained by the stereotype threat theory; my paper simply suggests that the stereotype threat is present and does have *an* effect on the measurement of political knowledge. The development of a better model including more theoretically-related independent variables would go a long way to explaining the gender gap in political knowledge.

Why is this gender gap so important to understand? If the gender gap does exist, then over a half of the American population remains somewhat ignorant about American politics. Some scholars have postulated that a citizenry with low levels of political knowledge can actually be harmful to the functioning of that government (Bartels, 1996; Garand and Lichtl, 2000). According to this research, knowledge about politics is necessary to make informed political decisions (Holbrook and Garand, 1996). Thus, if a gender gap does exist in political knowledge, then it is a problem that should be studied and addressed. If, however, gender differences in political knowledge are merely artifacts of measurement, then the American population has achieved rough equality with regards to political knowledge between the sexes. This would shed more light on the role of women in politics as a whole.

Table 1. Distribution of correct, wrong, and don't know responses to political knowledge questions, by gender, 2000 American National Election Study

	Percentages of Responses		
	Correct	Wrong	Don't Know
Trent Lott			
Men (N = 674)	14.0% (94)	36.1% (243)	50.0% (337)
Women (N = 881)	4.7% (41)	20.9% (184)	74.5% (656)
William Rehnquist			
Men (N = 674)	18.0% (121)	34.9% (235)	47.2% (318)
Women (N = 881)	4.9% (43)	28.5% (251)	66.6% (587)
Tony Blair			
Men (N = 674)	41.3% (278)	8.9% (60)	49.9% (336)
Women (N = 881)	29.3% (258)	9.3% (82)	61.4% (541)
Janet Reno			
Men (N = 674)	66.5% (448)	15.9% (107)	17.7% (119)
Women (N = 881)	46.4% (409)	18.8% (166)	34.7% (306)
George Bush home state			
Men (N = 674)	94.2% (635)	3.7% (25)	3.1% (14)
Women (N = 881)	86.0% (758)	9.2% (81)	4.8% (42)
Al Gore home state			
Men (N = 674)	75.8% (511)	11.6% (78)	12.6% (85)
Women (N = 881)	61.5% (542)	22.0% (194)	16.5% (145)

Table 2: Distribution of political knowledge scales, by gender, using data from the 2000 ANES

	Women	Men	T-statistic for Mean Difference
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2000 ANES Scale			
General Knowledge:			
0	22.5%	18.6%	
1	16.3%	8.5%	
2	23.4%	18.7%	
3	18.6%	20.1%	
4	14.1%	18.9%	
5	4.1%	8.7%	
6	1.0%	6.5%	
Mean	2.017	2.642	-8.00***

Table 3. Differences in Means for Political Knowledge Scores according to Gender and Gender of Interviewer, using data from the 2000 ANES.

	Women	Men
Female Interviewer	2.06734	2.70438
Male Interviewer	1.65873	2.21

Table 4. OLS estimates for stereotype threat models of political knowledge, by gender, 2000 American National Election Study.

	Women		Men	
	b	t	b	t
Intercept	0.184	0.52	0.030	0.08
Interviewer gender	0.331	2.25**	0.173	1.04
Socioeconomic / Demographic Variables				
Age	0.005	1.14	-0.002	-0.33
Education	0.207	5.60***	0.264	6.34***
Family income	0.005	0.32	-0.004	-0.21
Black	-0.814	-4.42***	-0.407	-2.02**
Hispanic	-0.255	-1.08	-0.207	-0.75
Home ownership	0.083	0.70	0.121	0.91
Political Attitudes and Engagement				
Partisan identification	0.020	0.65	-0.050	-1.46
Folded partisanship	0.046	0.83	0.070	1.14
Ideology	-0.062	-1.79*	-0.052	-1.30
Folded ideology	0.000	0.00	0.076	1.06
Interest in politics	0.273	2.98***	0.257	2.54***
Follows politics	0.252	3.72***	0.355	4.54***
Opinionated	0.010	0.16	0.096	1.36*
Political efficacy	0.096	1.27	0.102	1.28*
Political trust	0.005	0.07	0.002	0.02
Antigovernment attitudes	0.157	2.21**	0.233	2.71***
Polarized party placement	0.086	2.40***	0.105	2.55***
Media Exposure				
National television news exposure	0.035	1.53*	0.033	1.32*
Local television news exposure	-0.015	-1.17	-0.009	-0.59
Newspaper news exposure	0.017	0.86	0.072	3.47***
Personal Life Circumstances				
Married	0.059	0.50	0.086	0.62
Child under 18	-0.108	-1.97**	-0.012	-0.22
Single parent	-0.408	-2.00**	0.289	1.23
Employed	0.026	-0.23	0.026	0.17
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N	509		473	
R ²	0.384		0.431	
F	12.05		13.55	
Prob (F)	0.000		0.000	

*** prob < .01

** prob < .05

* prob < .10

Appendix 1: Variable definitions

Variable	Description
Political knowledge	Six-point (additive) scale of political knowledge, based on respondents' ability to identify correctly the following six political knowledge items: (1) Trent Lott, Senate Majority Leader; (2) William Rehnquist, Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court; (3) Tony Blair, Prime Minister of England; (4) Janet Reno, Attorney-General of the United States; (5) Texas as the home state for George W. Bush; and (6) Tennessee as the home state for Al Gore. For each item, 1 = respondent exhibits knowledge of subject; 0 = all other respondents.
Gender	1 = female respondent; 0 = male respondent.
Age	Respondent's age (in years).
Education	Seven-point scale representing number of years of formal education completed, ranging from 0 (less than 9 th grade completed) to 6 (advanced degree).
Family income	24-point scale for yearly family income, ranging from 1 (\$2,999 per year or less) to 24 (\$105,000 per year or greater).
Race: black	1 = black respondent; 0 = all other respondents.
Race: Hispanic	1 = Hispanic respondent; 0 = all other respondents.
Partisan identification	Seven-point scale of partisan identification, ranging from 0 (strong Democrat) to 6 (strong Republican).
Folded partisanship	Four-point scale of strength of partisanship, ranging from 0 (pure independent) to 3 (strong partisan).

Appendix 1 (continued)

Variable	Description
Ideological orientation	Seven-point scale of ideological orientation, ranging from 0 (strong liberal) to 6 (strong conservative).
Folded ideological orientation	Four-point scale of strength of partisanship, ranging from 0 (pure independent) to 3 (strong partisan).
Interest in politics	Three-point scale of interest in “political campaigns,” ranging from 0 (not very much interested) to 2 (very much interested).
Follows politics	Four-point scale of the degree to which respondent follows “government and public affairs,” ranging from 0 (hardly at all) to 3 (most of the time).
Opinionated	Five-point scale of the degree to which the respondent considers him- or herself more opinionated than others, ranging from 0 (a lot fewer than average) to 4 (a lot more than average).
Political efficacy	Respondents' level of external political efficacy, based on factor scores obtained through principle components analysis of the following two items: (1) degree of agreement with statement that "I don't think public officials care much what people like me think;" and (2) degree of agreement with statement that “People like me don't have any say about what the government does. Eigenvalue = 1.41, variance explained = 70.5%.

Appendix 1 (continued)

Variable	Description
Political trust	<p>Respondents' level of political trust, based on factor scores obtained through principle components analysis of the following four items: (1) the degree to which respondents think that government wastes money paid in taxes; (2) whether respondents would say that government is run by a few big interests; (3) how much of the time respondents would say that they can trust the government in Washington to do what is right; and (4) the extent to which respondents think that the people running the government are crooked. Eigenvalue = 1.93, variance explained = 48.4%.</p>
Anti-government scale	<p>Scale based on a principle components analysis of the following forced-choice items: (1) One, the less government, the better; or two, there are more things that government should be doing; (2) One, we need a strong government to handle today's complex economic problems; or two, the free market can handle these problems without government being involved; and (3) One, the main reason government has become bigger over the years is because it has gotten involved in things that people should do for themselves; or two, government has become bigger because the problems we face have become bigger. Variable is rescaled so that a high value represents the anti-government position. (Eigenvalue = 1.98; variance explained = 66%).</p>
Polarized party placement	<p>Absolute value of the difference in respondent's placement of the Republican and Democratic parties on the seven-point liberal-conservative scale.</p>

Appendix 1 (continued)

Variable	Description
National television news exposure	Number of days in which respondent watches national television news, ranging from 0 to 7.
Local television news exposure	Sum of number of days in which respondent watches early evening local television news and number of days in which respondent watches late night local television news, ranging from 0 to 14.
Newspaper news exposure	Number of days in which respondent reads daily newspaper, ranging from 0 to 7.
Married	1 = respondent is married; 0 = otherwise.
Child under 18	1 = respondent has children under 18; 0 = otherwise.
Child over 18	1 = respondent has children 18 and over; 0 = otherwise.
Single mother	1 = respondent is female unmarried parent; 0 = otherwise.
Single father	1 = respondent is male unmarried parent; 0 = otherwise.
Employed	1 = respondent is employed full-time; 0 = otherwise.
Interviewer gender	1 = female interviewer; 0 = male interviewer.

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