Not a Dichotomous Variable: Rethinking Gender in Election Studies

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Abstract
Research in political behaviour has for some time pointed to the existence of a ‘gender gap,’ between the political attitudes of men and women. Men and women diverge in their attitudes on many political issues, including foreign policy, social welfare spending, and crime and punishment. With this focus on the differences between women and men in political survey research, it is important to better understand the underlying assumption: that women and men form two distinct groups which can be isolated and analyzed. Furthermore, this research assumes that the biological difference of sex is synonymous with the socially constructed concept of gender. Especially in quantitative analysis, the two concepts are used interchangeably, and scholars do not carefully consider the important distinctions between sex and gender. Understanding gender as distinct from sex, and assessing attitudes and values accordingly may provide new insight into the ‘gender gap.’ How can this understanding of gender be integrated into survey research, which currently focuses on the dichotomous variable of male/female? This paper explores the concepts of sex and gender, as well as their presence in political behaviour research, to understand the methodological implications. Infusing survey research with measures that reflect conceptions of gender as differentiated from sex is the best way to ensure that more robust gendered research in political behaviour can be achieved, and this paper proposes a method for moving forward.

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INTRODUCTION

Research in political behaviour has for some time pointed to the ‘gender gap’ between the political attitudes of men and women. Heather MacIvor observes that “numerous American and Canadian studies have found that men and women tend to hold different attitudes on some political issues: war and peace, nuclear power, capital punishment, and social welfare spending” (1996: 233). In the past, women were thought to be “…more frequently apathetic, parochial, conservative, and sensitive to personality, emotional, and esthetic aspects of political life and electoral campaigns” (Almond and Verba 1963: 325). More recent research demonstrates that the gender gap still remains, though male/female attitudes have shifted: “women are no longer more conservative than men, and are often more left-leaning, in many established democracies” (Inglehart and Norris 2000: 446). That women tend to hold different attitudes than men in a wide variety of areas, including vote choice, political values, and public policies, has been demonstrated repeatedly in voting behaviour literature in Canada, the United States, and Europe (Conover 1994; Dolan 2001; Eagly and Diekman 2006; Erickson and O’Neill 2002; Everitt 2002; Gidengil 2007; Gidengil et al. 2003; Inglehart and Norris 2000; Iversen and Rosenbluth 2006; Kaufman 2006; Lovenduski and Norris 1993; MacIvor 1996; Tremblay and Trimble 2003).

The focus on the differences between men and women in political survey research assumes that on a basic level, women and men form two distinct groups that can be isolated and analyzed. However, “…some who use gender in their research have not carefully considered the important distinction between sex and gender, using the two interchangeably, especially in quantitative analysis” (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995: 1). Traditional reliance on a dichotomous concept of gender in political behaviour (one that is synonymous with sex) conflicts with the dominant tendency in sex and gender research, which differentiates between the two concepts, as “gender is different from sex, which is rooted exclusively in biology. Gender consists of a broader social construction, ultimately prescribing, and generally leading to, an entire way of being” (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995: 5). Fausto-Sterling notes, “the boundaries separating masculine and feminine seem harder than ever to define” (2000: 19), but equating gender with sex is not optimal, and may lead to misleading findings in survey research (Lovenduski 1998).

How can this broader understanding of gender be integrated into survey research in political behaviour? The literature highlights a need for greater precision in our definition of gender. James Doyle suggests “we must be as precise as possible in our terminology in order to disentangle some of the confusion that often exists in this field” (1985: 9). While the analysis of gender differences in political behaviour is laden with practical difficulties, and while there may not be a simple solution to the adequate representation of gender in survey research, it must be considered in all phases of research design. Incorporating an increasingly precise understanding of gender will result in more robust gendered research in political behaviour.

SEX AND GENDER

Duerst-Lahti and Kelly suggest that “gender is the social construction of biological sex, how we take biological differences and give them social meaning. In the process, we create a set of practices and norms for interpersonal behavior, roles for individuals to perform, ways of being, ways of knowing, standpoints and worldviews” (1995: 6). Gender, rather than sex, is important for political research, as it incorporates not only biological factors, but also societal norms and expectations that we internalize as individuals. As Lovenduski observes, “separating sex from gender exposes the different meanings of gender according to class, race, history, and so forth, unmasking difference among women and allowing new ways of dealing with questions about difference” (1998: 338).

Anne Constantinople, an early critic of dichotomous conceptions of gender, suggests that the terms masculinity and femininity “have a long history in psychological discourse, but both theoretically and empirically they seem to be among the muddiest concepts in the psychologist’s vocabulary” (1973: 387). The dichotomous conception of gender is likely an extension of the notion of sex differences—each
person is seen to be either a man or a woman. Gender differences have been considered by some to be the same, in that “…all persons must be, and can be, categorized as belonging to one or the other” (Nelson and Robinson 2002: 1). This is problematic for a number of reasons, particularly because not all individuals fit neatly into predetermined categories.

Gender polarization holds important implications for political science research: “in those two simple words, ‘opposite sexes,’ are contained beliefs and expectations that whatever females are, males are not, and whatever males are, females are not” (Nelson and Robinson 2002: 2). In reality, however, there is quite a bit of crossover between “female/feminine” values and “male/masculine” values, shared by members of either biological sex (Bem 1974, 1975; Fausto-Sterling 1993; Hird 2000; Levey and Silver 2006). Doyle and Paludi ask that we “be cautious if we wish to avoid having the word gender take on an either/or meaning as does the word sex. Rather, gender and its components (gender role stereotypes, gender norms, gender roles, and gender role identity…) also vary along a continuum of femininity and masculinity” (1991: 5).

Bem (1974, 1975, 1979) played a pioneering role in articulating the idea that gender is not merely a dichotomous entity, with her psychological classification system, the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). Her research pointed to the possible existence of four genders: androgynous individuals ranking high on both masculinity and femininity, feminine individuals ranking low on masculinity and high on femininity, masculine individuals ranking low on femininity and high on masculinity, and those individuals ranking low on both, labeled “undifferentiated.” Since Bem, a number of other scholars have generated, used, and assessed other psychological instruments to measure aspects of gender (Aidman and Carroll 2003; Ashmore et al. 1995; Bozio and Bozionelos 1999; Cohen-Kettenis et al. 2006; Constantinople 1973; Cramer and Westergren 1999; Egan 1999; Greenwald and Farnham 2000; Helmreich et al. 1979; Helmreich et al. 1981; Kroska 2000; McHugh and Frieze 1997; Neer and Hudson 1983; Pulerwitz and Barker 2008; Rusticus and Hubley 2006; Spence and Hahn 1997; Spence and Helmreich 1980; Willemsen and Fischer 1999). This research suggests that contemporary political science research into gendered political attitudes in relation to dichotomous conceptions of gender likely does not represent an adequate gendered analysis of political behaviour. I argue that we ought to build on research in psychology to integrate a non-dichotomous concept of gender into survey design, to facilitate deeper analysis of the effects of gender on political behaviour.

**Past Research in Gender and Political Behaviour**

Traditional approaches to gendered political research have focused extensively on the ‘gender gap’ in political behaviour and public opinion. Almond and Verba (1963) noted the differences in political attitudes between men and women, finding women to be generally more conservative than men. More recent research in this area suggests that this is no longer the case. Diekman et al. (2002) observe that men are more likely to support the use of force or aggressive action, while women are generally more supportive of social policy focusing on the disadvantaged, the interests of children, women in the workplace, equality rights for women and the equal division of household labour, and homosexuality. Politically, women generally support left-leaning parties and ideologies.

Some suggest that this shift in the gender gap is the result of a transformation of sex roles (Inglehart and Norris 2000), while others point to socio-demographic changes, including employment levels and reliance on the welfare state; changing patterns of socialization, including attitude change due to the women’s movement; as well as the development of gender consciousness, particularly that of a feminist identity (Everitt 2002; Iversen and Rosenbluth 2006; Conover 1994). Gidengil and her colleagues (2003) explored a variety of explanations for the gender gap, and their findings suggest that socio-psychological origins provide a more robust explanation of differences of opinion. Others suggest that empathy plays a significant role in the formation of the gender gap. The idea is that “women respond to political issues differently than men because they are more sensitively inclined toward the distresses of generalized others in society” (McCue and Gopoian 2000: 2).
However, a significant body of research maintains a certain level of skepticism of these discussions of the gender gap. Lynda Erickson and Brenda O’Neill, while acknowledging evidence of the difference in political attitudes between women and men, argue that “…the role of context, which may include election campaigns and party leaders, as well as partisan configuration, remains important. Different electoral and partisan contexts appear to cue gender-relevant values and considerations differently” (2002: 387). Based on this view, political attitudes shift depending on the situation, the particular election, and the political environment, and although a gender gap may emerge, it may not be attributed solely to inherent differences between polarized or dichotomous “genders.”

Carolyn Lewis addresses the problems inherent in gender gap research by “…dividing women into three groups according to their relative number of feminist and traditional values…,” based on the premise that:

Statistical comparisons between men and women also have the same effect of washing out important differences between women by focusing attention on the gender gap as opposed to detailing the nature of the conflicts and compatibilities between them. By treating women as a single group that is more or less unified in comparison with men, critical differences between women are often overlooked and we make the assumption that women are homogeneous in their political beliefs to the extent that they differ with those of men (1999: 3).

Her research is suggestive that similar differences may exist among men, and points to the need to empirically test the hypothesis that the gap between women and men does not provide an adequate account of gendered differences in political behaviour and attitudes.

**Gendered Methodology?**

Scholars have criticized traditional social science research methodologies for a number of reasons. Sandra Harding suggests that “feminist researchers have argued that traditional theories have been applied in ways that make it difficult to understand women’s participation in social life, or to understand men’s activities as gendered (vs. as representing ‘the human’)” (1994: 3). The idea that researchers have normalized men’s activities, while devaluing those that women traditionally participate in, is not new. In particular, the frame of reference in how results are reported can have an important impact on the way that we view difference. Discussing study results as though men are the “default” or reference category (which is common practice in gender gap research) reinforces the notion that “women are different” from constructed norms in society (Hegarty 2006; Hegarty and Pratto 2004). Further, this blurs the possibility that studying the actions, behaviours, and attitudes of men might actually shed light on trends in public opinion (Gidengil 2007; Wirls 1986).

The idea of gender as anything but polarized has not consistently been incorporated into survey research design, leading to only a partial understanding of the impact of gender on political attitudes. Harding observes that “…the questions that are asked – and, even more significantly, those that are not asked – are at least as determinative of the adequacy of our total picture as are any answers that we can discover” (1994: 7). Furthermore, the focus on the differences between two genders strengthens the continued conceptions of gender as a polarized entity. Thus, current research is inadequate not only because it may fail to achieve a full understanding of the effects of gender on political behaviour, but also because it may actually perpetuate this narrow understanding of the concept of gender.

Practical barriers may provide some explanation for the continued use of traditional “dichotomous” approaches to gendered political research. Perhaps one of the greatest challenges to the adequate representation of gender in survey research is questionnaire design. In large-scale telephone survey research, for example, the ‘gender’ variable is not usually even a question that is asked of the respondent. Generally it is one of the last items on a questionnaire, and it is up to the telephone interviewer to fill in the answer. The assumption is that after talking to a respondent for a given amount of time, the interviewer will know whether or not the respondent is male or female, based on his or her voice. This practice assumes that there are only two gender categories, and that the interviewer will
know which one the respondent fits into, regardless of how individual respondents may identify themselves. This may limit the level of understanding we can gain about the impact of gender in public opinion research.

**Building on Past Models in Psychology**

A number of scales and measures have been introduced, examined, and reexamined, largely in psychology research, which political scientists may be able to use as a starting point for research into the links between gender and political attitudes. Three main scales have provided the foundation for much of gendered psychology research. Sandra Bem’s Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), introduced in her path-breaking (1974) research, consists of sixty adjectives and/or descriptive phrases, divided into three subscales representing masculinity, femininity, and social desirability. Respondents use a seven-point scale to indicate the extent to which each is true of themselves. The second main scale assessed repeatedly in the psychology discipline is the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ), which was introduced by Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp (1974). This method consists of fifty-five sets of bipolar self-descriptive phrases with each phrase represented by one end of a five-point scale. Similar to Bem’s Sex Role Inventory, respondents are required to rate themselves on each phrase. A third scale is constituted by a subset of 400 questions from the Personality Research Form (PRF). Introduced by Berzins, Welling, & Wetter (1978), this test consists of a true/false measure with twenty-nine items on the masculine scale and twenty-seven on the feminine scale. Respondents indicate which statements reflect themselves, noting either true or false. These tests all seek to determine the extent to which individuals are masculine, feminine, or somewhere in-between, whether androgynous or something else. Related work by Kinsey et al. (1948 and 1953) also suggests that sexuality should not be thought of as a dichotomy, but as a continuum. They introduce a scale from 0 to 6, where 0 represents ’exclusively heterosexual,’ 3 represents ‘bisexual’ and 6 represents ’exclusively homosexual.’ This scale allows individuals to place themselves anywhere along the continuum, thus eliminating the dichotomous notion of sexuality. It is possible that the concept of a continuum may be extended beyond sexuality to describe gender as well.

These scales and measures all date back at least thirty years, but are still widely used today. Indeed, many scholars in psychology have built on this psychometric work to develop related measures and scales that are more nuanced and focus on slightly different dimensions. Examples of more contemporary scales include the Attitudes Towards Women Scale (ATWS or AWS) (McHugh and Frieze 1997; Spence and Hahn 1997); the Gender Equitable Men Scale (GEM) (Pulerwitz and Barker 2008); the Gender-Ideological Identity Scale (GII) (Kroska 2000); and the Gender Identity Questionnaire (GIQ) (Willemsen and Fischer 1999). These measures all provide a basis for exploration in seeking to develop similar scales that can be integrated into gender research in political science. The adaptation of these types of sex roles scales may facilitate a more precise categorization of the respondent’s gender and, when analyzed in relation to political attitudes, may lead to a fuller understanding of the implications of gender on political behaviour and public opinion.

**New Developments and Next Steps**

In Reesa Vaughter’s discussion of the impact of gender on behaviour, she suggests:

Sandra Bem and colleagues have demonstrated a functional, predictive relationship between gender identity and sex-typed behaviour. That is, a substantial number of studies have demonstrated a functional relationship between a person’s describing herself/himself as masculine and behaving in a manner typical of the male/masculine stereotype, or describing oneself as feminine and behaving in a manner typical of the female/feminine stereotype, and
describing oneself as androgynous and behaving ‘masculine’ in one situation and ‘feminine’ in another (Vaughter, 141).

Numerous studies have shown that gender not only affects everyday behaviour, but also informs political behaviour. If gender has such an impact, then surely it makes sense to better understand how exactly gender differences play a role. This understanding can only occur if social science research includes a conception of gender that accounts for its fluid nature, and avoids categorizing gender in terms of a dichotomy. Current political science survey research is based on a concept of gender as a dichotomous variable, which, while it makes for simple questionnaire design, is not conducive to a complete and accurate understanding of the effects of gender on political behaviour and public opinion.

While there are a significant number of practical barriers to the integration of a ‘new’ approach to gender in survey research, it is important to maintain a concerted effort not to rely solely on the dichotomous variable of sex as an indicator of gendered political attitudes. In Lovenduski’s (1993) discussion of feminist methodology, she makes an important observation that relates to the development of methodology for gendered political science research as well. She states:

Although a convincing feminist methodology has yet to be devised, a distinctive feminist approach to research exists and is used by many social scientists who have constructed a research agenda, and use techniques and approaches, that let women be heard (Lovenduski, 1993; 3).

A ‘convincing’ gendered methodology is perhaps necessary at this time, in order to ensure that voices are not blurred. Individuals that may consider themselves to be a 2 or a 3 on an adapted version of the above Kinsey scale may have different perspectives from those who think of themselves as a 1 or a 7. When only two categories exist, the nuances of opinion are obscured, and we are unable to gain an accurate understanding of the effects of gender on political attitudes. Gender is seen by many to play an important role in the political sphere, and as such it “…is a source of cleavage that must be taken seriously in any analysis of Canadian politics” (Gidengil et. al, 2003: 155). It is therefore important that we attempt to reflect the effect of gender on attitudes toward politics as accurately as possible. Lovenduski suggests that the operationalization of this effort is not easy, and that it may not even be wholly achievable. She suggests:

A crucial characteristic of such research must be that sex is used as a dichotomous variable only in a closely specified, gendered context. In good research gender is always relational and is most simply measured on a continuum. With that proviso, it is impossible to imagine how gendered research can do without the dichotomous variable of sex. The uses of sex and gender must be explicit if effective research is to be designed (Lovenduski, 1998: 340).

The most important observation that must be made about the role of gender in survey research is that, with the exception of Lovenduski’s (1998) discussion of gender in quantitative research, in which she briefly touches on the problems inherent in the use of the dichotomous variable, this issue has not really been explored in any great detail in political science research.

In response to the pioneering work of scholars like Lovenduski, there has been some thought given to the way in which we incorporate measures of “gender” into election studies. In the 2005 British Election Survey, the election study team incorporated a “gender battery” into its post-election mailback survey, in addition to the traditional sex variable.1 This “gender battery” consists of the following question format, as seen in Figure 1.

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1 In recent conversations with members of the BES team, they explained that these questions were incorporated because of suggestions made by senior British feminist scholars who thought it important to better differentiate between sex and gender.
There is no real indication, of course, that these questions represent individuals’ perceptions of their own “gender” per se. The questions get at attitudes towards women’s and men’s roles in the home and in formal politics, as well as issues of symbolic or “mirror” representation more broadly, whether related to sex or race. Answers may not provide insight into an individual’s gender in the way that existing psychological batteries might. What these questions are able to do, however, is come closer than the traditional dichotomous “sex” measure to socially constructed attitudes, which account for gender rather than sex. The inclusion of these questions in the British Election Study represents an important first step in seeking to better understand the impact of gender on political values, rather than the impact of the dichotomous variable of sex.

What do the New Variables Tell Us?
In order to examine the explanatory role of the new “gender battery,” some preliminary analyses were conducted. While the questions all appear together in the survey, the data suggest that the items do not fit together terribly well as a cohesive unit: the Cronbach’s Alpha for an index incorporating all five variables was only 0.52: the five questions are not all measuring different aspects of the same thing. In considering how this battery matches with the “traditional” dichotomous measure of gender, for all questions except for one, women were more likely to hold “progressive” attitudes than men. That is, women were more likely to believe that women MPs better represent women’s interests, that men are NOT better suited for politics than most women, that women DO need to get more involved in politics, and that a husband’s job is NOT to earn the money while the wife looks after home and family. The final question, regarding the representation of Black and Asian interests, more men than tended to agree that Black and Asian MPs could better represent them.²

Upon consideration, two of the five questions seem best fitted to form a measure that represents gender as socially-constructed: “most men are better suited for politics than are most women” and “

² This is particularly interesting in light of the sex division on the equivalent question regarding women’s representation. It would appear that on average, neither sex is considering the question in light of “mirror representation” as such, because we would expect them to answer the question in the same way if they were.
husband’s job is to earn the money, a wife’s job is to look after the home and family.” As such, I decided to examine the impact of these two variables on other variables that have been traditionally found to have a “gender gap.” I therefore created an index called “gender,” which combined the two questions and re-scaled them to fit a 0-1 scale, where 1 represents least agreement with these statements and 0 represents most agreement with the statements. Thus those who fit in the “1” category are non-conformists with traditional gender stereotypes, while those who fit in the 0 category are the most traditional. To look at the effects of “gender” as conceived by the new and old measures, I conducted a series of individual regression analyses, regressing the two gender variables on different dependent variables, variables for which there have been found “gender gaps” in the past. Table 1 shows the results of these analyses. All of the dependent variables are listed in the first column. All attitudinal variables were coded on a 0-1 scale, where 1 represents the most left-leaning position, and 0 represents the most right-leaning position. Three additional variables were examined, tapping into participation and interest levels. These variables were also coded on a 0 to 1 scale, where 1 represents highest levels of interest or participation in politics and the election. A separate regression analysis was performed for each of these variables, and only two independent variables were included in the analysis: “man” (a dummy variable coded 1 for man and 0 for woman) and “non-traditional” (the index created from the new gender battery, scaled from 0-1, where 0 represents traditional values and 1 represents non-traditional values).

According to past research, we might expect a gender gap on most of these variables: that is, we would expect negative coefficients for most of the attitudinal variables (men tending to be more right-leaning than women) and we would expect positive coefficients on the participation variables (men tending to be more interested and more likely to participate in politics). As for expectations of the “non-traditional” variable, I would expect positive coefficients, for two reasons. First, there tend to be more women than men who answered the gender questions in a non-traditional way, and second, those who are more non-traditional (regardless of their sex) are also intuitively more likely to be more left-leaning.

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3 I am loathe to consider either of the two ends of the 0-1 spectrum “male” or “female” at this early stage in the game, especially since both men and women might hold the attitudes represented by the two poles. More specific questions are required before we can attach “gendered” labels to the attitudes. I will therefore use the labels “traditional” and “non-traditional” to represent these two ends.

4 The Cronbach’s Alpha for the “gender” index was a score of 0.59, higher than combining all variables in the battery together, and higher than the combination of either of these two variables with any other variable in the battery.

5 By coding the “man” variable this way, it is my intention to have women represent the “reference” category, in opposition to the tradition of presenting women as “different” from the reference group.

6 These models are by no means fully-specified. These analyses were conducted simply for exploratory purposes, and I am not suggesting that either of these variables fully explains the dependent variables.
As Table 1 indicates, these expectations were borne out for many, but not all variables. Indeed, the data indicate that men were more right leaning than women on only three of the dependent variables (majority rights, private enterprise, and the death penalty), and further, they were less likely to talk to others about politics and less likely to vote in the local election than women (the participation results were in the opposite direction from what was expected). Most of the other coefficients for the "sex" variable did not reach traditional levels of statistical significance, but men were more inclined than women to agree that the majority has a responsibility to protect the rights of minorities.

On the impact of the new gender variable, as the coefficients presented in Table 1 suggest, those who were more likely to hold progressive or "non-traditional" values about the roles of women and men in the home and in politics were also more likely to hold left-leaning attitudes on many of the issues. Further, they were also less likely than those who held more traditional beliefs to talk politics with others and less likely to vote in the local election. The coefficients for "non-traditional" were substantially larger than the coefficients for "man" for the participation and interest variables, suggesting that gender role values are better able to explain participation and interest than is sex, in this

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>Explaining Attitudes: Traditional Sex Variable vs. Gender Battery</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HYPOTHESIS</th>
<th>&quot;MAN&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;NON-TRADITIONAL&quot;</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In a true democracy, the majority has a responsibility to protect the rights of all minorities</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>0.069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a democracy, the majority has a right to pass laws to protect its own language and culture</td>
<td>-0.048</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The government has the right to put people suspected of terrorism in prison without trial</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in Britain should be more tolerant of those who lead unconventional lifestyles</td>
<td>-0.008</td>
<td>0.178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private enterprise is the best way to solve Britain's economic problems</td>
<td>-0.038</td>
<td>0.185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary working people get their fair share of the nation's wealth</td>
<td>-0.0003</td>
<td>0.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convicted criminals need to be rehabilitated rather than be punished</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The death penalty, even for very serious crimes, is never justified</td>
<td>-0.059</td>
<td>0.091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you talk about politics with spouse/partner, other family members, friends, neighbours, co-workers?</td>
<td>-0.061</td>
<td>-0.138</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did you care which party won the general election on May 5?</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>-0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you vote in the local election held where you live on May 5th?</td>
<td>-0.089</td>
<td>-0.121</td>
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Coefficients from a series of individual OLS regression analyses: dependent variables listed in first column

*** p<0.001; ** p<0.01
minimalist model in which we do not control for any other factors. However, the results probably raise more questions than they answer, and they provide further indication that more research is necessary.

**Conclusions**

More research is needed. While there is a large body of research on sex and gender; the ‘gender gap’ in politics; survey and research design; as well as feminist challenges to quantitative methodologies, there seems to be a gap in the research: the integration of a conception of gender as something other than what at its root is really sex, into political survey research has not really been addressed.

My discussion thus far has largely taken form of a literature review, exploring the various related issues, in an effort to tie them together and gain an elementary understanding of the issue of sex versus gender in survey research. The data analysis provides some support for the idea that the two are separate concepts, and ought to be treated separately in studies of political behaviour. What is needed at this time is a study that integrates a new, more precise, understanding of gender, to determine whether in fact there are significant differences in the effects of gender on political behaviour. Without putting the theory into practice, it is difficult to draw any conclusions about the issues. The initial research could take place in the form of qualitative in-depth interviews, as the interview format might be conducive to more probing questions into issues of gender. It would also allow for researchers to explore the relationship between gender and political behaviour in greater detail. Once appropriate gender questions are developed and tested, it will be easier to integrate them into larger studies, in order to determine the implications of fluidic conceptions of gender and their impact on political attitudes in the larger population.
REFERENCES


