Democratic Participation and Political Communication in Systems of Multi-level Governance

Gender and Context: Influences on Political Interest in Europe

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Work in Progress

12 December, 2002

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Abstract:

Differences between men’s and women’s levels of psychological political engagement have persisted across time and across countries. We contribute to the extant literature on this question in two ways. First, we use as indicators of psychological engagement, a set of survey questions designed to measure attention to different types of news. Second, because we are using comparative data, we take advantage of the hierarchical nature of the data to test cross-level interactions between the context and individual characteristics. This method allows us to examine how gender differentiation varies across countries. We find that women are more likely to pay attention to “feminine” issues such as environmental news and news about social issues, while men are more likely to pay attention to “masculine” issues such as political, economic and foreign policy news. These gaps tend to persist even when controlling for socio-economic differences. We find, however, that context, particularly the economic context and social resources context, shapes gender differences in news attention.

*This paper was originally prepared for presentation at the annual meetings of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, 25-27 April, 2002. The research presented in this paper is part of the project “Participation and Communication in Systems of Multi-level Governance” and funded by the European Union’s Fifth Framework Programme. E-mail for contact author: sbanducci@fmg.uva.nl.
Paying attention to communication messages is often seen as one of the first steps in any attitude change related to the media (McGuire 1989). There are many factors that can work against exposure and attention to issues covered in the news media and, therefore, limit the effect of news information on knowledge, interest and opinion change. Gender differences in exposures to news from different outlets, such as newspapers, have been documented. For example, in most European countries women are less likely than men to read newspapers (Lauf 2000) and this is also the case in the US (Strate, Ford and Jankowski 1994). Men also spend more time in the US listening to news on the radio (Radio Television News Directors Foundation 2001) and are more likely to listen to and participate in talk radio (Kohut and Parker 1997). Women also tend to differ from men in terms of how much attention they pay to different types of news. According the surveys conducted between 1989 and 1995 in the US, men pay greater attention to news about the U.S. military, international politics, the economy and sports while women pay relatively more attention to news about disasters, court rulings, crime and celebrity scandal (Pew Research Center 1995). A more recent analysis shows that of those who follow the news in general, women pay greater attention to local news and national news and less attention to international news but were only one percent less likely than men to say they were very interested in political news (Radio Television News Directors Foundation 2001), although little is said about why women are less likely to pay attention to news about international events and more likely to pay attention to local news.

In this paper, we take a closer look at news audiences in Western Europe and examine various explanations for gender differences in attention to different types of news. Based on gender stereotype research, different types of news can be described as “masculine” or “feminine.” The former concerns subjects in which men are
expected to have greater competence or interest, such as economics, and the latter concerns subjects in which women are expected to have greater competence, such as social policy. For example, there is a long list of studies demonstrating that male candidates are perceived as being better able to deal with the economy and defense while female candidates are better able to deal with issues such as education and health care (Rosenwasser et al. 1987, Sapiro 1981-2, Huddy and Terkildsen 1993, see also Kahn and Goldenberg 1991). To some extent, however, these issue competency areas may depend on how the issue is framed (Huddy 1994). The issue of health care, for example, may be framed in terms of social welfare (an area of perceived competence for women) and creating equal access to care for the uninsured. On the other hand, the issue of health care may be framed in terms of the private sector (an area of competence for men) and allowing greater competition in the private sector to reduce costs.

**News and Interests**

According to Graber (1988), the main reasons citizens pay attention to news stories are personal relevance, emotional appeal and whether or not it as an “interesting story.” In short, “people pay attention to information that is useful for them in their daily pursuits or that provides psychological gratification” (Graber 1988, 127). Regarding communication campaigns in general, Dervin (1989) suggests that irrespective of the content of the communication message, only those who are affected by the message will pay attention. In other words, only those who have a prior interest in the issue, interest being defined by benefit, risk or danger, are likely to attend to the communication message (see also Kennamer and Honnold 1995).

Most of the research on the gender difference in political behavior or attitudes, from either the situational or positional perspective, suggests gender may play a role
in clarifying the interests that will, in turn, determine attention to news stories. Women and men may develop different interests due to value differences or gendered socialization patterns. Situational factors, such as working primary in the home and having children may serve to define interests differently for women than for women. Women may see their interests defined in terms of the community or the family and this may be reflected in the issues to which they pay attention. A disparity in resources such as education and income may directly or indirectly affect interests. Women may either lack the cognitive motivation or the time to develop an interest in news and in politics. The lack of political interest, in turn, may decrease attention to news about political and other issues.

One of the standard questions used to measure political engagement is “How interested are you in politics?” Women tend to score lower on this question than men. However, when politics is modified with reference to national level or local level, the gender differences are diminished at the local level (Verba, Burns and Schlozman 1997). According to Verba, Burns and Schlozman (1997), differing levels of political engagement can explain the slight gender gap in political participation; however, the gender gap in psychological engagement persists even after controlling for factors such as education that influence political engagement (Verba, Burns and Schlozman 1997, see also Bennett and Bennett 1989). The finding that men have a greater store of political knowledge, are more interested in politics and feel more efficacious than women also has been found to persist in other democratic countries, and especially in countries with a strong Catholic tradition (Inglehart 1981).

Citing research from two decades, Randall (1987) concludes that “[o]f all the charges brought against women’s political behavior, apparently the most solidly founded is that they know less about politics, are less interested and less
psychologically involved in it than men. Evidence can be cited from the United States, Britain, Australia, Canada, France, West Germany, Italy and Denmark amongst Western Democracies.” Additionally, past research from a comparative perspective has found that situational and socio-demographic models do not apply across countries. According to early research in the US, having small children at home is negatively associated with participation while employment outside the home is positively associated with increasing women’s participation; however, it is unclear whether these same conclusions apply to other countries (Randall 1987).

The explanations for the gender gap in political engagement can be used to address the reasons for the gender gap in attention to news in general, the gender gap favoring men on attention to “masculine” types of news and why women may be more interested in “feminine” types of news. First, situational factors such as child-rearing and keeping a home mean women have less time to devote to following the news. In most of the literature, attention to politics is seen as a zero-sum game. Family responsibilities conflict with political participation and women largely bear family responsibilities. However, we also expect that women’s role as mother will be positively related to attention to news about social issues. Second, women’s lower socio-economic status means that the resources – such as money and civic skills -- necessary for interest in and engagement with the news are absent. Lower education levels are related to a lack of time to consume news as well as a lack of cognitive sophistication necessary for news consumption. Therefore, we expect women’s lower economic status and education levels will help to explain the gender gap in attention to all types of news.

We explicitly approach the question of gender differences in engagement with news from a comparative perspective. Claibourn and Sapiro (2002) rightly point out
that a substantial amount of research regarding gender differentiation in political behavior and attitudes is based on gender role socialization and that a cross-cultural and cross-temporal approach is necessary to examine the impact of variation in gender-based norms on political behavior and attitudes. However, Claibourn and Sapiro (2002) also caution against applying assumptions from past research that may not be appropriate in other countries or cultures: “One problem is that these discussion are often overly universalized and stereotypic, assuming that women everywhere tend to have the same domestic-centered roles, and that because women are regarded as especially in the ‘private’ the world of politics and the economy is unlikely to have specific and important gender-specific effects on women.” While we focus on news attention as an indicator of psychological engagement, we also seek to examine how the context conditions the relationship between gender and psychological engagement in politics. By taking into account the multi-level nature of cross-national comparative data, we present a way of examining how the context shapes this relationship.

Expectations about contextual effects are based on comparative studies of political participation and engagement. Christy (1987) suggests that economic development reduces gender differentiation in participation. In a systematic analysis of context and the socio-demographic model, Claibourn and Sapiro (2001) find that economic and political development condition the relationship between gender and engagement, participation and knowledge. For example, gender differences in engagement tend to be more prominent in emerging democracies. While our analysis follows on these past studies by taking a comparative approach, we are specifically examining psychological engagement in politics as measured by news attention, while these other studies focused on political participation as indicators of engagement.
In more traditional cultures in which gender roles are more traditionally defined and women are less visible in the workplace and in political professions, we may expect women to be even less likely to pay attention to the “masculine” types of news. At the aggregate level, there appears to be a relationship between the proportion of Catholics and opposition to gender equality (see Wilcox and Jelen 1993). Of course, this expectation is based on the assumption that in more egalitarian societies women will have interests that are more similar to men. Women in positions of political power, for example, may serve to cue women that politics is a gender-neutral area (Matland 1994) and, counter to the stereotype, an area of competency for women. Greater numbers of women in politics may also serve to mobilize general political interest among women. In countries with greater female representation in government or parliament, we expect that attention to politics or other “masculine” news areas will greater among women. Furthermore, attention to “masculine” types of news may be greater among women in less traditional cultures while the gap between men and women in attention to masculine types of news will be greater in traditional cultures.

**Measuring Attention to Different Types of News**

In order to examine these explanations for gender differences in attention to news, we draw on a set of questions that were designed to measure audiences for different types of news. These questions are constructed to measure attention to news about different subjects, including foreign affairs, economics, politics, sports and culture, the environment, and social issues such as health care and education. Respondents across the 15 European Union member countries were asked how often they pay attention to news about: the “European Union”, “foreign policy or international relations”, “economics”, “politics”, “social issues such as education,
health care and poverty”, the “environment”, “sports” and “culture”. Possible responses were “a lot of attention,” “a little attention,” and “no attention at all.” The questions were asked as part of Eurobarometer 52 (EB52) conducted in October-November 1999. The questions were specifically designed to measure attention to types of news that might be described as “feminine” or “masculine.” The latter includes issues in which men are seen as more competent: foreign policy, economics, and politics, whereas “feminine” news includes social issues and the environment.

We do not analyze here attention to news about sports and culture because such news is rarely connected to political events or actors. Because the number of respondents paying attention to the EU was less than 10 per cent in most countries, we also have excluded this question from our analysis.

Figure 1 shows the average attention to the “masculine” types of news by gender and by country while Figure 2 shows gender differences by country in attention to “feminine” types of news. Several patterns are evident. First, women on average pay less attention to political, economic and foreign policy news than men and these differences are all statistically significant. The largest gaps between the average attention of women and the average attention of men are on “economic” and “foreign policy” news. The gender differences are evident across all countries though the size of the gap varies. For example, Ireland has the smallest gender gap across the typical “masculine” news areas. This result is interesting given the dominance of the Catholic church in Ireland. Past research has shown that the proportion of Catholics in a country is linked to lower levels of political engagement among women (Inglehart 1981). The gender differentiation in Finland is also smaller than in the other countries. However, no clear pattern emerges among the countries; large gender gaps appear in countries with cultures that we would expect to support greater gender equality such
as Sweden and Denmark and in countries with more traditional cultures such as Italy and Greece. The northern European countries have higher rates of interest overall which might enhance gender differences.

[Figures 1 and 2 about here.]

“Feminine” news types display a different pattern. Women across all countries were more likely to pay attention to social issues though a gender gap favoring women on attention to social issues is not as large as the gender gap favoring men on attention to “masculine” news. The gender gap in attention to news about social issues is not significant in Italy, Spain, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom. Those countries that tend to reflect greater gender equality in women’s representation also have the largest gender gaps favoring women with respect to attention to news about social issues -- Sweden, Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands. This result suggests that where women may be socialized in cultures that have greater gender equality, women express a greater interest in attending to news but it is manifest in greater interest in the “social” rather than in the “economic” or “political”.

Looking at news about the environment, we see that a significant gender gap in attention occurs in only five countries; women are significantly more likely to pay attention to the environment in Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden and Austria. Four of these countries overlap with the countries that showed the largest gender gaps on attention on social issues. Again, this suggests that a less traditional culture or greater women’s representation may mobilize women’s interests in social issues. We next turn to an examination of the various explanations for variations in attention.
Multi-level Analysis

In order to account for the various explanations for the gender difference in news attention, we use different indicators of situational and structural factors related to psychological engagement in politics. We test a basic socio-demographic model at the individual level and then test for contextual effects. According to situational model outlined above, we expect that children in the household will be a constraint on attention to news while labor force participation and education will mobilize interest in news. However, the relationship of children to “feminine” types of news may be different. Having children may create a greater interest in education issues or a greater reliance welfare state; therefore, while a constraint on time, children may nevertheless increase attention to social issues.

In the multi-level analysis we account for the effect of women’s political context, access to social resources, political development and economic development on the role of gender in news engagement. ¹ First, we expect that in countries with greater political and economic development that gender differentiation will be minimized. There should be a similar effect when greater social resources are available; women will have greater access to the resources that can mobilize interest. Second, in societies in which women are more likely to engage in traditionally male activities, we expect that women will be more likely to be interested in what we have labeled “masculine” news. In other words, they would be more likely to see news in gender-neutral terms if politics and the workplace are also gender-neutral. Therefore, we also include the percent of women that make up the labor force and the percent of women who serve in sub-ministerial positions in the government.² Although it would have been of interest to have a measure of representation of women working in
newsrooms across Europe, this was not available for analysis. The question wording
and coding for all variables are given in the appendix.

The data we use to test hypotheses about the relationship between context, gender
and attention to news are necessarily hierarchical, consisting of multiple units of data that
are nested. Because the EB52 data are collected across the 15 EU member states,
individuals are nested within each country. Steenbergen and Jones (2002) suggest that
using a technique for modeling multi-level data of this type allows for a single model that
incorporates the different levels of data without assuming a single level of analysis,
facilitates the exploration of causal heterogeneity and provides a test for the
generalizability of findings across different contexts (219). Additionally, our data are
collected at the individual level but the individuals reside within a country and are more
likely to share common characteristics with citizens in the same country than citizens of
another country. Because the clustering of the data is a particular statistical problem, we
must use a method to estimate models with multilevel data that takes into account the
associated problems with standard errors.

In order to examine the effect of contextual factors on the relationship between
gender and attention to news, we use a two level hierarchical linear model (HLM) that
combines both individual-level measures from EB52 and country-level indicators. As
contextual measures are constant for individual cases residing within a given country
using standard modeling techniques such as logistic regression violates the assumption of
independent observations. The result is that estimates of standard errors are reduced
which increases the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis when accepting the null is
more appropriate. HLM avoids this by estimating distinct models at each level, and by
estimating unique level 1 models for each level 2 unit (Bryk and Raudenbush 1992). For
our purposes, we estimate distinct individual level models that test the influences of
gender and socio-demographic variables on news attention for each country, and then estimate second level model that uses the country level contextual measures to account for variation in the effects of the individual variables. In effect, this allows each country to have unique intercepts (average news interest), slopes (effects of individual characteristics on news interest), and error terms. At the second level, contextual effects are estimated by modeling the slopes for the influence gender on news interest (i.e. the level 1 slope estimates are treated as dependent variables).

The level 1 model is represented by equation 1, where \( Y \) is reported attention to news for each respondent (i) and country (j), \( \beta_{0j} \) is the unique intercept for each country, \( \beta_{1j} X_{1ij} \) is the unique slope of explanatory variable \( X_1 \) for country (j), and \( r_{ij} \) represents the error term of respondent (i) for country (j).

\[
(1) \ Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} X_{1ij} + \beta_{2j} X_{2ij} + \beta_{3j} X_{3ij} + \beta_{4j} X_{4ij} + \beta_{5j} X_{5ij} + r_{ij}
\]

where \( X_{0-5j} \) represent the independent variables for the level 1 socio-demographic model – gender, education, labor force participation, children at home and age. At this first level, we have 15731 cases.

For each level 2 case (in our analysis a country), a unique level 1 model is estimated. This produces intercept and slope estimates specific to each country. At the second level, each of the level 1 coefficients (and their intercepts) could become a potential dependent variable (for a more detailed discussion see Byrk and Raudenbush 1992). Because we are predicting the slopes as well as intercepts (means) at the individual level, we can model cross-level interactions whereby we can understand how the context shapes the relationship between the individual level variables and engagement in different types of news. We are mainly interested in how the context shapes gender differences in attention to news. Therefore the level 2 model examines the effect of country level variables on the slope of the gender variables. Equations (2) represents this
level 2 models, where $\beta_{1j}$ is the slope estimate for $\beta_{1X1i}$ (FEMALE) from the level 1 model for case (j) $W$ represents the various contextual explanatory variables at the second level, and $u$ is the error term for the second level models. Note that there can be as many variants of equation (2) as there are independent variables in the level 1 models but we are mainly interested in how the context affects gender differentiation.\(^3\)

\[
(2) \quad \beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11}W_j + \ldots u_{ij}.
\]

The indicators we use at the second level are whether or not the country has had an authoritarian regime since World War II (Newer Democracy). GDP is used to indicate economic development. Social resources are measured using the percentage of women with a tertiary degree and the percent of women who are active in the labor force. Women’s political representation is measured using the proportion of women in sub-ministerial positions in the government. Because data on some of these indicators are missing in Luxembourg, we have 14 cases at the second level.

For the first part of our multi-level analysis, we compare the variation in attention to the different types of news at the individual and country level using the EB52 data. We can examine whether there is significant variation in news attention at the individual and country level and whether there is more variations across individuals or across countries. The first column of Table 1 shows the variance components at the contextual and individual levels. Comparing the variance at each level, we see that the individual level contributes the most to the overall variance. In the case of political news, 89 percent ($\frac{40}{40+5}$) of the variance in attention is to be found at the individual level leaving 11 percent of the variation at the country. However, both of these variance components are significant indicating that there is significant variation at both levels and a multi-level approach to the data is appropriate. For economic news, a similar amount (90 percent) of the variance is at
the individual while for foreign policy news 92 percent of the variation is at the individual level. The largest amount of country-level variation is on political news while individual factors explain a higher level of variation in attention to foreign policy news.

Looking at the ‘feminine’ types of news, we see that for social news, 92 percent of the variance is at the individual level. For environmental news, 93 percent of the variance in attention is at the individual level. Across all indicators of attention to news, variation is most obvious at the individual level. Given the nature of the data, that it is collected at the individual level, it is not surprising that most of the variance is at the individual level. However, that significant variation does exist for all indicators of news attention at the country level does suggest that there is reason to consider contextual effects.

[Table 1 about here]

In the second set of columns in Table 1, we report the results from estimating the same model as in column 1 but with gender (FEMALE) added. By doing this we can examine how much gender contributes to the individual level variance. Looking at the change in log likelihood values, we see that there are significant improvements in the models by adding gender except in the case of environmental news. Looking at the estimated effects of gender on news attention shows that all effects are significant except for on environmental news. However, the effects of gender are not in the same direction across all types of news. As demonstrated in Figures 1 and 2, women are less likely than men to pay attention to political and economic news but are more likely than men to pay attention to news about social issues. For each type of news, adding gender to the model reduced the variance by 5 percent for political news, 4.6 percent for economic news, 2 percent for foreign policy news and 3 percent for social
issues news. This reduction is substantial given that we are only adding one variable to the equation.

We next examine how other individual socio-demographic characteristics influence the gender differentiation we see in Table 1. In order to do this, we extend the models in presented in Table 1 and estimate five separate models using the five different indicators of news attention as dependent variables and, in addition to gender, include whether the respondent has children at home, level of education, employment outside home and age. The results are shown in Table 2.

Because HLM estimates each equation separately in each country, Table 2 shows the minimum and maximum values for the estimated slopes for gender. For political and economic news, the slope in each country is negative indicating that women in all countries are less likely to pay attention than men. The slopes of FEMALE for political news range from an extreme of -.28 to -.11. All effects of gender on economic and international news are also negative indicating in all countries that women are less likely to pay attention to these types of news than men. The estimated effects of FEMALE on attention to news about social issues are all positive indicating that in all countries women are more likely to pay attention to social issues news. On the other hand, the direction of the gender effect depends on the country in the case of environmental news; the estimated slopes range from -.06 to .18.

[Table 2 about here.]

Looking at the overall model, once we have added the socio-demographic variables to the model, gender remains significant for political, economic and social news. However, where gender was not significant in the bivariate model in Table 1 for environmental news, once we control for these other factors, gender differences in
attention to environmental news become significant. Again, in the case of “feminine” news, women are more likely than men to say they pay attention to these types of news. All of the other estimates are significant and in the expected direction except for CHILDREN. Increasing levels of education, employment and age are all positively related to greater levels of attention to news. On the other hand, having children mobilizes attention only to social issues news. As suggested in the discussion above, we expected this to be the case. For all other types of news, there is no significant effect of having children at home on attention.

The results in Table 2 suggest both that gender still has a significant effect on attention even when controlling for other socio-demographic characteristics but that the effect of gender varies across contexts. We next examine which contextual factors influence this relationship between gender and attention to news (see equation 2). The models are estimated with all individual and contextual variables; however, Table 3 only reports the estimated effects of the contextual variables on the estimated slopes for gender. The estimated coefficients Table 3 show how the country-level variables influence the size of the estimated slope for gender. We hypothesized that economic and political development (measured by GDP and status as a newer democracy) would reduce gender inequalities in news. Social resources such as education and labor force participation are anticipated to have similar effects. Because we are estimating the effect on slopes, a negative sign on the second level coefficient indicates that the size of the slope decreases as the value of the second level variable increases.

The results in Table 3 indicate that the GDP has a significant effect on the impact of gender differentiation in attention to political, economic, international and social issues news. For example, in the cases of economic and international news, the
sign on the coefficient is positive indicating that gender differentiation decreases as GDP increases. Looking back at the minimum and maximum slopes for FEMALE in Table 2 for the equations predicting attention to economic and international news, we see that the level 1 slopes are negative across the 14 countries. The coefficients for GDP in Table 3 indicates that as GDP increases by a unit, the slope for FEMALE increases by .036 units. If we move from the minimum value for GDP (.10) to the maximum value (2.61), the slope will increase by almost .10 (i.e. become less negative). Therefore, the gender differences in attention to political news tend to decrease as economic resources increase. Additionally, the negative GDP coefficient for social news also indicates that gender differentiation in attention decreases as GDP increases. In this case, however, women were always higher on attention to social news. Therefore, the negative sign indicates that the positive slope for FEMALE is reduced making attention to social news more equitable among men and women there are greater economic resources. On the other hand, the sign on the coefficients for GDP in estimating attention to economic news and international news are negative indicating that the gender differentiation will increase as GDP grows. These results run counter to the expectation that gender differentiation is reduced in countries with greater economic resources.

Social resources, in the form of greater access for women to tertiary degrees, have the anticipated effect of reducing gender differences in attention to political and economic news. However, education does not influence the impact of gender on international, social or environmental news. Therefore, increases in social resources appear to make attention to “masculine” types of news less gender differentiated but do not similarly influence “feminine” news attention. Finally, increased labor force
participation by women tends to increase gender differentiation in attention to environmental news. All other tested contextual effects are not significant. Therefore, economic development and social resources, to some extent, are factors that contribute to a decrease in gender differentiation (except for the case of economic news).

Status as a newer democracy and the proportion of women in sub-ministerial positions serve to significantly increase gender differentiation in attention to international news. We expected that democratic development would be related to lower levels of gender differentiation and that newer democracies would show greater differences in men’s and women’s attention to news. However, we only find support for this on attention to international news. Contrary to expectations that women in positions of power would serve as a cue that traditional masculine areas were open to women, we see that instead, gender differentiation in attention to international news actually increases as the number of women increases. We also see that women’s activity in the labor force has little impact on gender differentiation, except in attention to environmental news where it increases the effect of gender on attention to news.

**Conclusion**

This research presented here leads to three conclusions. First, structural and socio-economic factors explain very little in terms of gender differences in attention to “masculine” types of news defined here as politics and economics. Gender gaps in attention to “masculine” news favoring men persist after controls for education and employment factors are added to the model. This result is consistent with research in the U.S. that finds the gap in political interest persists after controlling for differences
in resources (Verba, Burns and Schlozman 1997). But when we look at “feminine”
types of news, there are either no apparent gender gaps or there are gender gaps
favoring women.

Second, focusing on questions about attention to different types of news can
yield useful information about gender differences in issue interest. Interest in politics
is a standard question in surveys of political attitudes. We also know that political
interest is related to a number of other political attitudes and behaviors. However, a
number of issues can be considered political, indeed health care and education were of
major importance in the recent British general election campaign. Health care and
education regularly appear near the top of the list of most important problems in
Europe (for example, see de Vreese 2001), and are among the most important political
problems in many European countries. The series of questions we analyzed allow us
to measure interest in politics more broadly than is captured in most surveys that often
exclude this question entirely or tend to rely on only one question on attention to news
about politics. We were able to specifically examine interest in economic as well as
foreign policy news as distinct from political news, and we also measured interest in
news about “social” issues such as health care or education. The inclusion of the
question about attention to news on social issues led to important findings about
women’s interest and attention to news. If we expand the notion of “political news” to
include issues of poverty, health care and education, we are able to illustrate that
women’s interest can be equal to or exceed that of men. Surveys that only ask about
attention to “politics” or “political news” actually miss what are obviously not only
politically important topics for men and women but for politicians and governments
as well. We know that news stories often discuss social issues in terms of their
economic impact (Iyengar 1994) and this has potential ramifications in the political arena.

Third, there are many benefits to using a multi-level approach and the analysis presented in this paper can be expanded in several ways to increase our understanding of the relationship between context, gender and political behavior and attitudes. The framework outlined earlier in the paper suggests that the context can shape the interaction between gender and other individual level characteristics. We have as yet left those relationships unexplored in our analysis. It is plausible that the extent of educational opportunities open to women in a country influences how education mobilizes political interest among women. In countries where educational opportunities are closed off to women, we might expect women who have achieved high levels of education to be more politicized. The analysis also can be expanded to include more countries, newer democracies preferably, so that there is greater variation in the contextual factors. Because the sample of countries consists of developed European democracies, there is relatively minimal variation in indicators of economic and political development. Additionally, to better understand the impact of economic and political transitions on gender and citizenship, an overtime analysis is necessary. Adding time to the model means adding a third level to the multi-level analysis which may complicate interpretation but yield interesting results that help test theories about gender relationship and political and economic transitions.
References


Graber, Doris. 1988. Processing the News: How People Tame the Information Tide


Appendix

**Attention to News:** “In general, do you pay attention to news about each of the following: politics, social issues such as education, healthcare and poverty, the economy, the environment, foreign policy/international affairs?” A lot of attention (2), A little attention (1), No attention at all (0).

**Socio-demographic Indicators:**

*Children.* “How many children under 15 are currently living at home?” Have children under 15 (1), no children under 15 (0).

*Age* 15-24 Years (1), 25-39 years (2), 40-54 years (3), 55+ years (4).

*Education* Age of ending full time education recoded into three dummy variables: High education (ended formal education at 19 or more years), medium education (ended formal education between 15 and 19 years), and student (still studying).

*Employed* Listed part time or full time occupation.

**Contextual Variables:**


Endnotes

1 We also considered the effect of traditional cultures, measured by percent Catholic or Orthodox, on the relationship between gender and engagement. However, after examining the effect of this variable alone on gender, it produced no significant results. However, percent Catholic was highly correlated with other variables of interest – percent of women in the labor force and women’s political representation. Therefore, we have excluded it from the analysis presented here.

2 Women’s representation in parliament is traditionally used as an indicator of women’s political context. For two reasons, we use an alternative indicator of the visibility of women in politics -- percent of women in sub-ministerial positions. First, the percent of women in parliament is highly correlated with women’s participation in the labor force. Second, there is greater variation in the alternative measure.

3 A similar level 2 model could be used to predict the constant from the level 1 models.

4 We focus on the socio-demographic model in this analysis. However, behavioural factors are very important in predicting attention to news. In a separate analysis, we find that behavioral factors, such as political discussion and news media exposure, contributed the most to the model in terms of explanatory power for attention to the “masculine” types of news.
Figure 1. Gender Differences in Attention to News: "Masculine" News

Attention to News about Int'l Affairs

Note: Solid bars represent countries where statistically significant gender differences do not occur.

Attention to News about Politics

Attention to News about the Economy

Note: Solid bars represent countries where statistically significant gender differences do not occur.
Figure 2. Gender Differences in Attention to News: Feminine News

Attention to News about Social Issues

Attention to News about the Environment

Note: Solid bars represent countries where statistically significant gender differences do not occur, ie. p>.05.
### TABLE 1 Multi-level Data Variance Components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Political News</th>
<th>Economic News</th>
<th>Social News</th>
<th>Environmental News</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fixed Effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td><strong>0.03</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Variance Components</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country-Level</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Level</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2 x Log Likelihood</td>
<td>28891.56</td>
<td>28379.56</td>
<td>30043.14</td>
<td>29530.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>difference in -2LL</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>512.22</td>
<td>226.18</td>
<td>26.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28053.68</td>
<td>28027.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors are in parantheses. All estimates are significant at p < .05 except the estimate in bold.
TABLE 2   Attention to News: Socio-Demographic Model at Level 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Political News</th>
<th>Economic News</th>
<th>Social Issues</th>
<th>Environmental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.335 *</td>
<td>0.559 *</td>
<td>0.883 *</td>
<td>0.930 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.097)</td>
<td>(0.094)</td>
<td>(0.105)</td>
<td>(0.092)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.042 *</td>
<td>-0.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.022)</td>
<td>(0.022)</td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.185 *</td>
<td>0.136 *</td>
<td>0.119 *</td>
<td>0.098 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.012)</td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.207 *</td>
<td>-0.022 *</td>
<td>0.151 *</td>
<td>0.049 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.015)</td>
<td>(0.019)</td>
<td>(0.019)</td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>0.092 *</td>
<td>0.130 *</td>
<td>0.049 *</td>
<td>0.040 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.022)</td>
<td>(0.018)</td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
<td>(0.018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.159 *</td>
<td>0.117 *</td>
<td>0.087 *</td>
<td>0.043 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.015)</td>
<td>(0.012)</td>
<td>(0.015)</td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min Female Slope</td>
<td>-0.283</td>
<td>-0.320</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>-0.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Female Slope</td>
<td>-0.106</td>
<td>-0.089</td>
<td>0.287</td>
<td>0.177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 Variance</td>
<td>0.353</td>
<td>0.394</td>
<td>0.311</td>
<td>0.363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2 Log Likelihood</td>
<td>27385.48</td>
<td>29029.9</td>
<td>25433.58</td>
<td>27805.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors in parentheses. * p < .05
TABLE 3  Attention to News: Contextual Effects on Gender Differentiation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Political News</th>
<th>Economic News</th>
<th>Social Issues News</th>
<th>Environmental News</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effect on FEMALE Slope</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newer Democracy</td>
<td>-0.031</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>-0.031</td>
<td>-0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.035)</td>
<td>(0.034)</td>
<td>(0.038)</td>
<td>(0.037)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>0.036(^a)</td>
<td>-0.053(^*)</td>
<td>-0.053(^*)</td>
<td>-0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%Women Tertiary Degree</td>
<td>0.005(^a)</td>
<td>0.006(^*)</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%Women Active</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.004(^*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%Women in Sub-Ministerial</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(2 \times \text{Log Likelihood}\) 27433.32  29064.72  25475.76  27849.34

\(^*\) p < .05; \(^a\) p < .075