Women and (dis)interest in government: How the status quo affects attitudes toward female

politicians and intentions to participate in politics

by

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A thesis

presented to the University of Waterloo

in fulfilment of the

thesis requirement for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Psychology

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2009

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

When people are motivated to justify their socio-political systems they come to view the current status quo as the most desirable status quo--a process termed injunctification (Kay et al., 2009). Here, two studies suggest that injunctification processes can perpetuate gender inequalities in politics. In Study 1, I manipulated the system justification (SJ) motive of 64 female undergraduates and presented information suggesting there are many or few women in federal politics. Participants with their SJ motive heightened and who read there were many women more showed more egalitarian attitudes compared to other conditions. Study 2 (90 female undergraduates) again manipulated the SJ motive and manipulated the status quo about the number of women in politics. Participants with a heightened SJ motive who read there would soon be many women in politics reported more personal political interest, compared to other conditions. Implications for inequality and System Justification Theory are discussed.

Acknowledgements

Aaron Kay's guidance in study design and manuscript preparation has been exceptionally helpful throughout the process of writing this thesis. I am very thankful for his help over the past two years. Thank you also to my thesis readers, Gráinne Fitzsimons and Steven Spencer, for their time reviewing and commenting on this work. Finally, thank you to Danielle Gaucher, who has been, and continues to be, a close collaborator throughout this line of research.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Despite recent advances, women in North America continue to be underrepresented in many areas of employment, such as business, the natural sciences, and engineering. In the United States, women comprise only 2.4 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs (Catalyst, 2008a), 20 percent of full professors in the natural sciences (Catalyst, 2008b), and 11 percent of engineers (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007). Why do women continue to be underrepresented in these domains? Furthermore, how does the mere awareness of these inequalities perpetuate them?

Impediments to Women's Participation in Masculine Domains

There are many well-documented social psychological barriers to women's full inclusion in traditionally masculine occupations (Fassinger, 2008). The most basic barrier is outright sexism, such as when those making hiring decisions are simply more likely to respect and hire male candidates than female candidates (Jackson, Esses, & Burris, 2001; Olian, Schwab, & Haberfeld, 1988). Typical social dynamics can also present more subtle barriers. Women are more likely to be excluded from the informal social networks necessary for advancement and promotion. Because people tend to form same-sex friendships in the workplace (Elsesser & Peplau, 2006), male dominance of upper management is perpetuated when male managers hire and promote from their own (same-sex) social network (Ibarra, 1992). What initially begins as social segregation leads to later occupational streaming and segregation (Roth, 2004).

One cause of workplace sexism is negative stereotypes about women that bias judgments of female employees. While attitudes toward women in general are positive (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989; Eagly, Mladinic, & Otto, 1991), professional women are prone to being stereotyped as competent but cold or less communal, which can lead to being passed over for

promotion (Fiske, Bersoff, Borgida, Deaux, & Heilman, 1991; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Malcolmson & Sinclair, 2007). In the workplace, because of stereotypes, women must also consider whether to self-promote. Self-promotion is an impression management strategy related to appearing competent (Stevens & Kristof, 1995), but women who self-promote are prone to being seen as less warm and likable because assertiveness violates the stereotypes that women should be modest and polite (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2004; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 1999). Evaluators then use this perceived lack of warmth to justify not hiring a female candidate (Phelan, Moss-Racusin, & Rudman, 2008). In contrast, men are more likely to be seen as warm without losing perceived competence (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2004; Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004; Rudman, 1998).

Stereotypes not only create biased judgments of female employees directly, but also indirectly by influencing the standards by which they are judged (Biernat, 2003; Biernat & Manis, 1994; Biernat, Manis, & Nelson, 1991). Here, a negative stereotype about female professionals can result in lower expectations for female employees (Biernat & Fuegen, 2001; Biernat & Kobrynowicz, 1997). Admittedly, this can result in praise and positive evaluations in the short term, when the employee is being evaluated individually. Because this praise is driven by lower standards, however, in the long-term female employees or job candidates are at a greater disadvantage. Once they are inevitably compared to male candidates, the male candidates tend to be preferred (Kobrynowicz & Biernat, 1997). Female candidates may make a hiring short list, for example, but not be offered the position (Biernat & Fuegen, 2001). Or, they may receive verbal praise but not tangible rewards such as pay raises (Biernat & Vescio, 2002).

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Stereotypes and sexism can also impair the actual performance of women when they are in hostile work environments. One way in which this happens is via stereotype threat, where fear of conforming to a negative stereotype about one's group impairs performance in that domain (Steele & Aronson, 1995; for reviews see Steele, 1997, 1998). For example, women are stereotyped as being less skilled at math than men (Steele & Ambady, 2006). When women then perform math-related tasks, they generate thoughts of the negative stereotype and then attempt to suppress those thoughts; this reduces cognitive resources and impairs performance (Cadinu, Maass, Rosabianca, &Kiesner, 2005; Logel, Iserman, Davies, Spencer, & Quinn, 2009). Indeed, a substantial portion of the reported differences in men's and women's math performance are likely due stereotype threat--not intrinsic differences in ability (Davies & Spencer, 2005; Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999).

Impaired performance can also be introduced by interactions with sexist men, with evidence suggesting that subtle, benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996) can have more of a detrimental effect than overt sexism (Dardenne, Dumont, & Bollier, 2007; Nguyen & Ryan, 2008). Similarly, patronizing behaviour on the part of men in positions of power (e.g., by offering empty praise) also leads to worse performance in female subordinates (Vescio, Gervais, Snyder, & Hoover, 2005). Even a seemingly innocuous interaction with a sexist man can cause concerns about conforming gender stereotypes and undermine subsequent performance on cognitive tasks (Logel, Walton, Spencer, von Hippel, Bell, & Iserman, 2009). These particular barriers to equality are perhaps more insidious than more straightforward sexism because they have the potential to impair actual performance. Even an egalitarian evaluator might attribute this negative performance as characteristic of individual women, not realizing that it is actually due to a hostile environment resulting from stereotypes.

Taken together, this body of work suggests that there are substantial psychological factors perpetuating the underrepresentation of women in these domains. When people become aware of these existing social disparities, how do they react? That is, when people learn about inequality--for example, that only 20 percent of Canada's elected federal politicians are women--does it motivate them to reduce that inequality? Or do they try and justify it?

Motivation to Justify the Status Quo

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, many Americans--even some directly affected by the storm--defended the government's woefully inadequate response (Napier, Mandisodza, Andersen, & Jost, 2006). Additionally, some members of ethnic minority endorse negative stereotypes about themselves (Burkley & Blanton, 2008) and favour outgroups over their own (Dasgupta, 2004; Jost, Pelham, & Carvallo, 2002). Lastly, many working-class Americans support tax cuts for the wealthy and consistently vote Republican (Haidt, 2008). These actions appear to be at the expense of individual self-interest, but they may have psychological benefits.

System Justification Theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Jost & Hunyady, 2002) suggests that the above examples occur because people are motivated to hold positive attitudes about their social systems (e.g., government, religion, or economic system) because their outcomes are affected by those systems. In short, people want to believe that the systems that have power over them are legitimate, and systems with the greatest influence over people's lives are the ones defended most stridently (Kay et al., 2009). If the systems that control people were not legitimate then the world would be unfair or random--a psychologically threatening prospect (Jost, Nosek, & Gosling, 2008; van den Bos, Euwema, Poortvliet, & Maas, 2007; van den Bos, van Ameijde, & van Gorp, 2006). In the case of a

disaster like Hurricane Katrina, therefore, it may be problematic to consider that the government might have failed the people of New Orleans. Instead, one searches for rationalizations that preserve the system's legitimacy, such as blaming the victims (Hafer, 2000; Kay, Jost & Young, 2005; Napier, Mandisodza, Andersen, & Jost, 2006)

Stereotypes as system justifying. Observing inequality between groups can threaten a system's legitimacy. Why are powerful groups deserving of their high status? How can one rationalize the disadvantages that accompany lower-status positions? System-legitimizing stereotypes are a convenient means by which people can maintain the perceived fairness of a system that appears unjust on the surface (Jost & Banaji, 1994). For example, believing that disadvantaged people are "poor but happy" (Kay & Jost, 2003) or "poor and dishonest" (Kay, Czapliński, & Jost, 2009) rationalizes economic inequalities in two ways. In the first case, believing that poor people are happier than rich people, a deficit in one domain (money) is balanced by a surplus in another (happiness). In the second case, inequality is justified because poor people, being perceived as dishonest, deserve their fate (Kay, Czapliński, & Jost, 2009). In this way, stereotypes are able to legitimize the differences between many low- and high-status groups (Jost & Kay, 2005; Jost, Kivetz, Rubini, Mosso, & Guermandi, 2005; Oldmeadow & Fiske, 2007), including differences between women and men (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001a, 2001b; Hoffman & Hurst, 1990). In an unequal society, successfully marshalling these system-justifying strategies can even lead to greater individual happiness, though perhaps inuring one to the suffering of others (Napier & Jost, 2008).

Therefore, people in low-status positions must often make a choice. Am I being treated badly by an unfair system? Or am I deserving of low status, thus making the system fair despite its ill effects on me? For many, the sense of certainty and control associated with

believing that the system works outweighs many of the personal disadvantages imposed by that system (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003; Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Laurin, Kay, & Moscovitch, 2008). For example, even people affected by Hurricane Katrina might have found it more psychologically beneficial (i.e., less uncertain and threatening) to believe that the government's response was reasonable and that, overall, the country is still well under control (Napier, Mandisodza, Andersen, & Jost, 2006). Indeed, research suggests that disadvantaged people are more likely to engage in some forms of system justification (Jost, Kivetz, Rubini, Mosso, & Guermandi, 2005; Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003) and are willing to endure a surprising amount of hardship in order to perceive the system itself as legitimate (Haines & Jost, 2000; Olson & Hafer, 2001)[1].

Given how significantly they are underrepresented within Canadian politics, it is likely that women are often reminded of their minority status (e.g., by repeatedly seeing male politicians on television or in newspapers). One could attribute this gender disparity to a sexist system that unfairly excludes women. This response, however, requires people to acknowledge that their system is unjust--a threatening prospect. Consequently, it seems plausible then that women who are highly motivated to system-justify would instead be more willing to accept this unequal status quo in politics, perhaps even rationalizing that inequality as natural and ideal.

Factors that provoke system justification. Many ideologies are, in different ways, forms of system justification. For example, one component of political conservatism is endorsement

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[1] It should also be acknowledged that justification of the status quo is typically an unconscious process, not a conscious choice (Jost, Pelham, & Carvallo, 2002; Jost, Pietrzak, Liviatan, Mandisodza, & Napier, 2008). Especially among low-status groups, system justification motives often conflict with ego needs (e.g., to see oneself positively; Jost & Banaji, 1994). System-justifying ideologies that operate unconsciously, therefore, can be more powerful because one is less likely to consciously notice a conflict with one's own interests (Jost & Burgess, 2000) or with societal norms (e.g., Bem & Bem, 1970; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; McConahay, 1986).

of traditional gender roles and opposition to feminism (Jost, Nosek, & Gosling, 2008). If one believes that women are naturally unsuited for certain roles (e.g., as politicians) than their systematic underrepresentation in those areas is legitimate, not a cause for concern. In addition to conservatism (Napier & Jost, 2008), other ideologies such as the Protestant work ethic (Kay & Jost, 2003), just world beliefs (Jost & Burgess, 2000; Lerner & Simmons, 1966), and social dominance orientation (Oldmeadow & Fiske, 2007; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994) all contain elements that serve to justify current socioeconomic systems.

Threatening situations can also temporarily increase the system justification motive. For example, when the legitimacy of one's system is threatened it can rouse a motivated defence of that system (Jost & Hunyady, 2002, 2005). Situational threats used in previous research to provoke system defence have consisted of articles criticizing one's country (Kay et al., 2009, Study 1; Kay, Jost, & Young, 2005; Jost, Kivetz, Rubini, Mosso, & Guermandi, 2005) and reminders of previous terrorist attacks (Ullrich & Cohrs, 2007).

The system justification motive is strongest for those individuals who believe that their systems hold significant influence over their life outcomes, in contrast to individuals who believe their systems have little influence (Kay & Zanna, 2009). For example, somebody who believes a system's control over their life is inevitable because circumstances make it difficult to leave that system is more motivated to system-justify than somebody who believes that they can easily leave their system (Kay et al., 2009, Study 1). In short, people who are stuck with their system must make the best of it. Specifically, they have a tendency to justify the current status quo by construing it as the ideal status quo, viewing it as natural, desirable, and the way things should. This process by which people come to see the way things *are* as the way they *should be* has been termed *injunctification* (Kay et al., 2009).

For these people with a strong need to defend their systems, system justification theory makes different predictions about their attitudes and behaviour than theories based on group- or self-interest. Take a woman who believes the federal government's actions matter, and have the power to directly influence the lives of Canadians. This person then learns that her gender is underrepresented among elected federal representatives. A self-interest based theory might predict that this inequality would encourage her to get involved in politics to ensure that her group has influence over the government's decisions. Alternatively, learning that one's gender is already well-represented might discourage political involvement because she knows there are already many members of her gender in power; her group's interests are already well looked-after. In contrast, a system justification account suggests that someone who believes that the federal government's actions matter will be highly motivated to view that system as legitimate and just (Kay & Zanna, 2009). Under these circumstances, learning about an inequality should not spur indignation, but rather cause one to rationalize and justify that disparity--perhaps viewing it as ideal, desirable, and natural--in order to continue believing that the system is fair. Alternatively, one who learns that her gender is well-represented in federal government should also justify that gender distribution, coming to believe that many women in politics is the way things should be. The current research proposes a test of this system justification account.

Overview of Studies

Here I present two studies examining the effects of the system justification motive and information about the status quo on women's beliefs about female politicians (Study 1) and their intentions to participate in the political system (Study 2). I chose to investigate politics because it is one domain that continues to be dominated by men, even in developed nations

such as Canada. The percent of female members of the Canadian House of Commons has remained at approximately 20 percent since the 1993 federal election, with the proportion of women in cabinet-level positions lower still at 16 percent (Cool, 2008). At these levels of representation, Canada ranks 45th in the world and is below the United Nations' recommended "critical mass" of 30 percent (Cool, 2008; United Nations, 1995).

In both studies, using female participants exclusively, I manipulate perceived dependence on Canada's political system. When participants believe that they are highly dependent on the federal government system (i.e., by believing that it has substantial influence over their daily lives and socioeconomic outcomes) they should be more motivated to defend that system than when they believe the federal government has little influence over their personal outcomes. Next, in both studies, participants were given manipulated information about the status quo--the gender makeup of Canada's House of Commons. I then assessed the extent to which participants would defend and injunctify that status quo (i.e., view it as the way things should be). Study 1 asked participants to rate the extent to which women's participation in politics is ideal, natural, and desirable, while Study 2 asked participants about their intentions to participate in politics.

These studies provide a direct test of one of the central tenets of system justification theory: When people's system justification motive is heightened and they are given information about the status quo, people should injunctify that status quo--coming to see it as natural, appropriate, and the way things should be. Furthermore, I examine whether people modify their intentions to participate in a domain based on whether that behaviour is natural and appropriate for their gender. Should this occur, it will demonstrate that the system justification

motive can also affect women's own behavioural intentions, in addition to beliefs about their

gender in general.

CHAPTER 2

TWO STUDIES INVESTIGATING HOW THE STATUS QUO PERPETUATES

INEQUALITY

Study 1: Attitudes Toward Women in Politics

In this first study[2] I tested whether people with a heightened system justification motive will view unequal gender arrangements in politics as ideal. Because I used female participants exclusively, this defence of the status quo comes at the expense of the participants' self-interest. I first manipulated participants' system justification motivation by having them read a fake newspaper article that said federal government decisions have extensive or very few effects on citizens' daily lives. Those participants who believe they are highly dependent on the government should have a heightened need to defend it, compared to those participants who think their life outcomes do not depend on the government. Second, participants were given information about the status quo: a graph implying there are many or few female politicians in Canada. I then assessed participants' tendency to injunctify that status quo; that is, to see it as desirable, ideal, and the way things should be.

I expected that participants with a heightened system justification motive who read an article telling them they are dependent on the federal government would view the current status quo as more desirable, ideal, and the way things should be, regardless of what gender arrangement was actually specified by the status quo. That is, those who perceived there were few female politicians would think women were less desirable to have in politics. In contrast, participants who perceived there were many female politicians would think them more desirable to have in politics. Finally, I predicted those participants with a temporarily reduced system justification motive, who read the article implying low dependence on the federal

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[2] Data from Study 1 were previously published in Kay and colleagues (2009).

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government, would have less of a need to justify their socio-political system. They would therefore be unaffected by the status quo manipulation.

Method

Participants. Sixty-four Canadian-born female undergraduates (*M* age = 19.5, *SD* = 2.45; 55% European/White, 27% Asian, 5% East Indian, 3% African, and 10% other) participated in lab in exchange for course credit (*N* = 29) or in the university's student center in exchange for a chocolate bar (*N* = 25). Two participants suspicious of the cover story were excluded, leaving 62.

Procedure and materials. Participants volunteered for a study titled "Beliefs about Canadian Politics." First, participants completed demographics information, including one item assessing political orientation (ranging from *very liberal* to *very conservative*) and a three-item measure of personal interest in politics (α = .90). Participants then completed the system dependency manipulation, which was designed to heighten the system justification motive and the need to defend the federal government. In the *high system dependency* condition participants read a bogus newspaper article, ostensibly from the *Toronto Star*, suggesting that recent sociological studies have found that the federal government's policies substantially influence citizens' personal and career outcomes, and that recent surveys show many Canadians believe the government's actions directly affect their quality of life (adapted from Kay et al., 2009, Study 2). The manipulation stated:

> GOVERNMENT PERCEIVED AS HIGHLY RELEVANT
> Do political decisions actually matter? Yes, suggests a recent study showing that the government's decisions play a major role in determining the average Canadian's quality of life.
>
> Dr. Michael Johnson, a University of Toronto politics professor, says, "Trends over the last fifty years show that federal government policies have enormously broad effects on the life and well-being of Canadians. In terms of financial well-being, for instance, the

taxes you pay, the job and investment opportunities made available to you, the general state of the economy--to a large extent, these things are under the control of the federal government."

Over the past several decades, Canada has seen many different governments. Though they often appear similar, many governments' decisions are drastically different from one another. Because of this, one's social and personal well-being are fairly dependent on which political party is in power. For example, the quality of social services (e.g., health and education) is dependent on government decisions.

"In their approach to many issues, political parties vary widely, so which party is in power can make a dramatic difference in one's everyday life," says Dr. Johnson. Finally, a 2006 Pew survey suggests that many older Canadians now see how their lives were affected by changes in government. "Looking back, I see how my quality of life depended on which government was in power," said one survey respondent.

In short, these studies suggest that decisions in Ottawa greatly affect one's quality of life, and have considerable influence on your day-to-day activities.

Participants in the *low system dependency* condition read an article with the wording reversed to suggest that government decisions have little or no effect on one's life. For example:

...Over the past several decades, Canada has seen many different governments. Though they often appear different, many governments' decisions are fairly similar to one another. Because of this, one's social and personal well-being are often unaffected by which political party is in power. For example, the leisure activities you have access to and time to pursue are independent of government decisions.

"In their approach to many issues, political parties differ only on minor points, so which party is in power often makes little difference in one's everyday life," says Dr. Johnson. Finally, a 2006 Pew survey suggests that many older Canadians now see how their lives were unaffected by changes in government. "Looking back, I see how my quality of life didn't depend on which government was in power," said one survey respondent...

Next participants were exposed to the status quo manipulation. Some previous studies have manipulated the status quo through deception, such as by telling people outright that very few (5%) or relatively few (45%) of Chief Executive Officers in Canada are women (Kay et al., 2009, Study 4) or by manipulating the reported percentage of peers who perform some behaviour (Smith & Louis, 2008). While deception was used in Study 2, in Study 1 I wanted to

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use a more subtle manipulation of the status quo, where objectively the status quo was actually the same in both conditions, but its presentation was manipulated to subjectively *appear* different in each condition (inspired by Huff, 1954).

To do this, participants read a passage ostensibly from a Canadian government website that described the role of Canadian Members of Parliament (MPs). Embedded in the passage was a graph showing the number of female MPs from 1921 to 2006, with the most recent parliament containing approximately 20 percent women (see Figure 1). In both conditions, the number of female MPs indicated by the graph was the same (20%) though the y-axis of the graph was manipulated to affect participants' perceptions of that number so that they believed there were *few female MPs* or *many female MPs*. Because the actual value displayed on both graphs was the same, 20 percent, the labels *few* and *many female MPs* refer to differences in subjective perceptions between conditions, not as a description of the percentage's actual value.

Following the status-quo manipulation, participants completed an 8-item measure of *injunctive norms* about women in politics, assessing their beliefs about whether women's participation in politics is natural, desirable, and the way things should be ($\alpha = .92$, Appendix A). Items included: "To what extent do you believe that women should be in politics?" "To what extent do you believe that it is desirable to have women as members of Parliament?" and, "To what extent do you believe that it is ideal to have women MPs?"

Results

Manipulation checks. Both manipulations were pretested on separate samples of Canadian-born undergraduates. For the status quo manipulation, the pretest ensured that the altered graph actually affected subjective perceptions of the number of female politicians in Canada. Participants ($N = 40$) were randomly assigned to read one of the two status quo
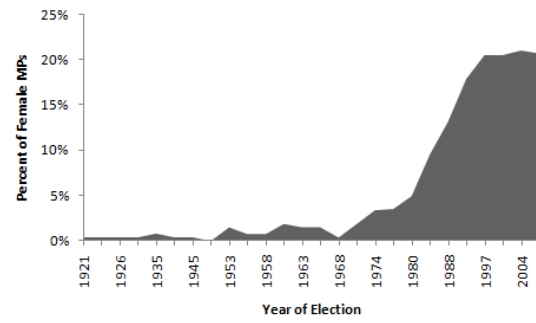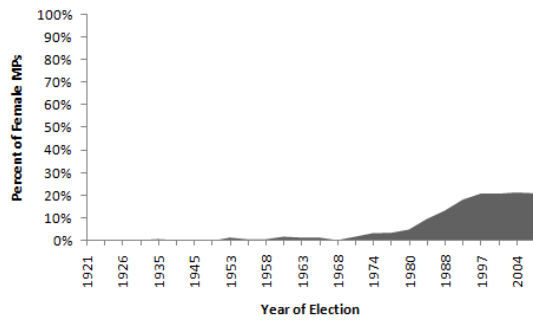
Figure 1: Study 1 status quo manipulation, with graph suggesting few female MPs (left) and many female MPs (right).

manipulations and then were asked the extent to which they agreed with the statement "There are many female Members of Parliament in Canada" on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale. A significant effect of the manipulation emerged such that participants who read the graph designed to convey that there are few female politicians disagreed with the statement ($M = 2.90$, SD = 0.97) while those who read the graph conveying many female politicians showed mild agreement with the statement ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 1.32$), $t(38) = 3.12$, $p = .003$.

For the system dependency manipulation, the manipulation check was included to ensure that the passage did in fact affect perceptions of system dependency but not other variables that might drive similar effects, such as self-esteem or group identification. Twenty-one Canadian-born, English-fluent participants were randomly assigned to read one of the two passages. They then rated their agreement with two items assessing system dependence on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale: "The decisions and actions of the federal government affect me personally," and, "To some extent, my life outcomes depend on the government making good decisions." They also completed the Rosenberg (1965) self-esteem scale (10 items, $\alpha = .80$, Appendix B) and two versions of collective self-esteem (CSE; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) adapted to use the University of Waterloo (16 items, $\alpha = .82$, Appendix C) and Canada (16 items, $\alpha = .87$, Appendix D) as reference groups. Items in the CSE scales included: "In general, I'm glad to be a Canadian [University of Waterloo student]," and, "Being a Canadian [University of Waterloo student] is an important reflection of who I am." I expected participants in the high system dependency condition to show higher scores on the system dependency items, compared to the low system dependency condition, but that the other measures would be unaffected.

For the mean of the two system dependency items, there was the predicted difference by condition, with high system dependence participants reporting marginally more agreement with the two key items ($M = 5.40$, $SD = 1.02$) than low system dependence participants ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.25$), $t(19) = 1.88$, $p = .08$. Importantly, none of the other three measures differed by condition, all ts < 1. This suggests that the manipulation had the desired effect on feelings of system dependency while leaving other constructs unaffected.

Primary results. To analyze the injunctive norms about women in politics, I conducted a 2 (System Dependency: High vs. Low) X 2 (Status quo: Few vs. Many Women in Politics) between-subjects ANOVA. A marginal main effect of status quo emerged, $F(1, 58) = 3.69$, $p = .06$, $\eta^2 = .05$. Participants in the more women condition rated women's participation in the political domain as more ideal, desirable, and representative of how things should be ($M = 7.35$, $SD = 1.11$) than those in the few women condition ($M = 6.85$, $SD = 1.05$).

This main effect, however, was qualified by the predicted two-way interaction, $F(1, 58) = 7.12$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .10$ (see Figure 2), so that the status quo manipulation only had an effect within the high system-dependency condition. Here, when participants were led to believe that there were many women in politics, women's participation in politics was seen as more ideal, desirable, and representative of how things should be ($M = 7.56$, $SD = 1.03$) than when participants were led to believe there were few women in politics ($M = 6.36$, $SD = .82$), $F(1, 58) = 10.50$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .15$. In contrast, in the low system-dependency condition there were no differences between the many women ($M = 7.12$, $SD = 1.19$) and few women conditions ($M = 7.31$, $SD = 1.05$), $F < 1$. Controlling for political orientation and personal interest in politics increased the strength of these effects.
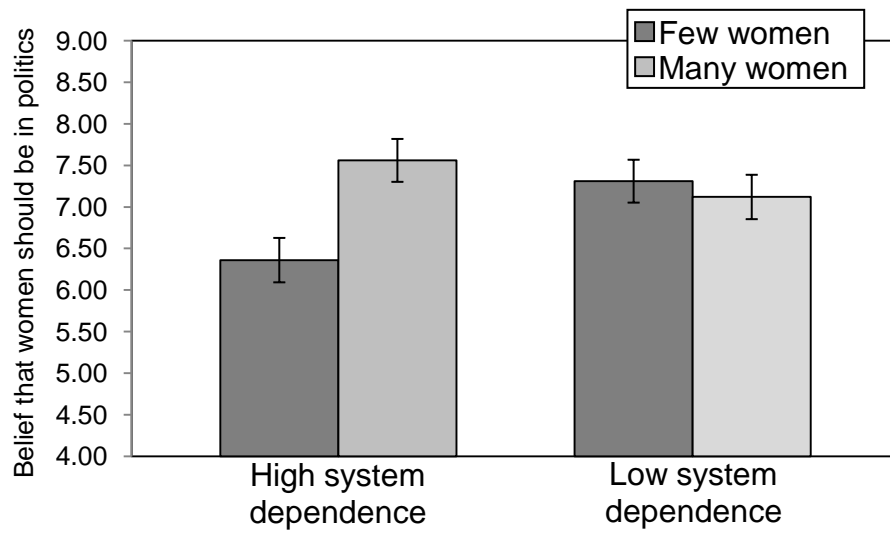
Figure 2: Results from Study 1. Effects of system dependence and perceived number of female

Members of Parliament on injunctive attitudes about women in politics.

Discussion

Study 1 found that participants who read an article stating that people are highly dependent on the federal government came to view whatever gender arrangement they were exposed to as the most ideal and desirable state of affairs. That is, highly system-dependent participants who perceived there were (comparatively) many female Members of Parliament were more likely to believe that having women in politics is ideal, desirable, and natural. In contrast, highly system-dependent participants who perceived there were (comparatively) few female parliamentarians were less likely to construe women in politics as the way things should be. Finally, participants who read an article stating that people's outcomes are not dependent on the federal government were unaffected by the status quo manipulation.

Manipulating the system justification motive, when combined with information about the status quo, influenced people's beliefs about what the ideal system should look like. Might there also be behavioural consequences of learning about--and idealizing--the status quo? That is, more than just affecting attitudes about female politicians in general, might the status quo also influence female participants' personal interest in politics?

Study 2: Intentions to Participate in Politics

Given that the status quo affected beliefs about the ideal gender distribution in the political system, it seems plausible that it might also affect people's intentions to participate in that system. In other words, female participants who see a status quo suggesting there are many female politicians, and come to believe that this situation is desirable and the way things should be, may become more interested in participating in politics themselves. In contrast, female participants who see a status quo suggesting a paucity of women in politics may limit their behaviour in that domain. The purpose of Study 2, therefore, was to investigate the

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consequences of the status quo on behavioural intentions. Again using exclusively female participants, I manipulated the system justification motive and the status quo regarding the number of female politicians. Afterward, I asked participants to assess their own intentions to participate in the political domain.

Though Study 2 used the same system relevance manipulation as Study 1, it used a different manipulation of the status quo. Instead of manipulating the *current* makeup of Canada's parliament, I instead manipulated the *future* status quo: an imminent increase or decrease in the number of women elected to the House of Commons. Past research has demonstrated that events seen as more likely to occur start to be seen as more desirable than events less likely to occur (Kay, Jimenez, & Jost, 2002). These anticipatory rationalizations were strongest for those participants who reported they would be most affected by the imminent change (i.e., when motivational involvement was high). I expected, therefore, that when the system justification motive is heightened participants would be affected by an imminent future status quo, just as they were affected by the current status quo in Study 1.

Method

Participants. Ninety-nine Canadian-born female undergraduates participated online (*N* = 29) or in-lab (*N* = 15) for course credit or in the University of Waterloo student life centre for a chocolate bar (*N* = 55). One suspicious participant and four participants who did not follow experimental instructions (e.g., did not complete questionnaire) were excluded. Because the cover story concerned an upcoming Canadian federal election, I also excluded four participants who reported not being aware that an election campaign was ongoing. This left 90 participants. Demographic information was not collected for this sample.

Procedure and materials. Participants volunteered for a study titled, "Political Attitudes and the 2008 Election," which took place in the two weeks leading up to the October 14, 2008, Canadian Federal Election. First, participants completed one item assessing political orientation (ranging from *very liberal* to *very conservative*) and a three-item measure of personal interest in politics ($\alpha = .91$). Participants then completed the same system dependency manipulation used in Study 1, intended to induce *high system dependency* or *low system dependency*.

Next, participants read the manipulation of the future status quo, a fake public opinion poll about the gender makeup of the House of Commons following the upcoming election (Figure 3). In the *more female MPs* condition, participants saw a graph stating that the number of women in the House of Commons would increase. Participants in the *fewer female MPs* condition saw a graph stating that numbers would decrease. The poll also included the text (differences between conditions in square brackets):

> With the Conservative, NDP, and Bloq Québécois parties [agreeing to include Green Party leader Elizabeth May in the leaders' debates / initially arguing that Green Party leader Elizabeth May should not be included in the leaders' debates], we asked Canadians about the issue of women in politics.

> Using current polling data, we analyzed each of Canada's 308 ridings and determined likely winners.

> Our results suggest, come October 14, we'll see many [more/fewer] women in Ottawa, compared to 2006.

Following the status quo manipulation, participants completed 3 manipulation check items and 6 items assessing intentions to participate in politics ($\alpha = .69$, Appendix E). The behavioural intentions items were arranged roughly in order of commitment and included: "In this election, I will definitely vote," and, " In this or a future election, I would consider volunteering for a cause or party that I found important." Lastly, participants completed a
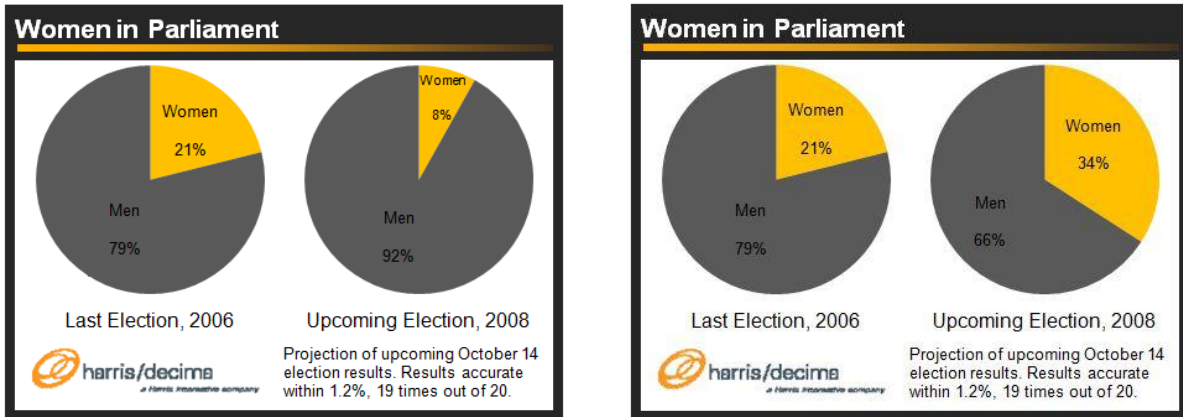
21

Figure 3: Study 2 status quo manipulation, with graph suggesting a decrease (left) and or

increase (right) in the number of women that will be elected in the upcoming election.

shortened measure of injunctive norms about women in politics that used 4 of the 8 items from Study 1 ($\alpha = .78$, Appendix A). The behavioural intentions and injunctive norms items used a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*).

Results

      Manipulation checks. As a check on the system relevance manipulation, participants rated their agreement with two items on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale: "The decisions and actions of the federal government affect me personally," and, "The outcome of the upcoming election is personally important to me." These two items were moderately but significantly correlated, $r(89) = .45$, $p < .001$, and therefore their mean was analyzed for differences between the two system relevance conditions. As expected, participants in the high system relevance condition were more likely to believe that the government's actions affect them personally ($M = 4.99$, $SD = 1.06$) than participants in the low system relevance condition ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 1.19$), $t(88) = 2.79$, $p = .006$.

      As a check on the future status quo manipulation, participants answered one item, "After the next election, how many women do you think will be in parliament, compared to the last election?" on a -3 (*many fewer women*) to +3 (*many more women*) scale. As expected, participants in the *more women in politics* condition expected *a bit more* ($M = 1.15$, $SD = .68$) while participants in the *fewer women in politics* condition expected *a bit fewer* ($M = -0.98$, $SD = 1.24$), $t(88) = 10.22$, $p < .001$, women to be elected to parliament.

      Primary analyses. To analyze behavioural intentions to participate in politics, I used a 2 (System Dependency: High vs. Low) X 2 (Status quo: Fewer vs. More Women in Politics) between-subjects ANOVA. Both main effects were nonsignificant, Fs < 2.56, ps $> .10$, but the predicted interaction occurred, $F(1, 86) = 4.57$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 = .05$ (see Figure 4). In the high
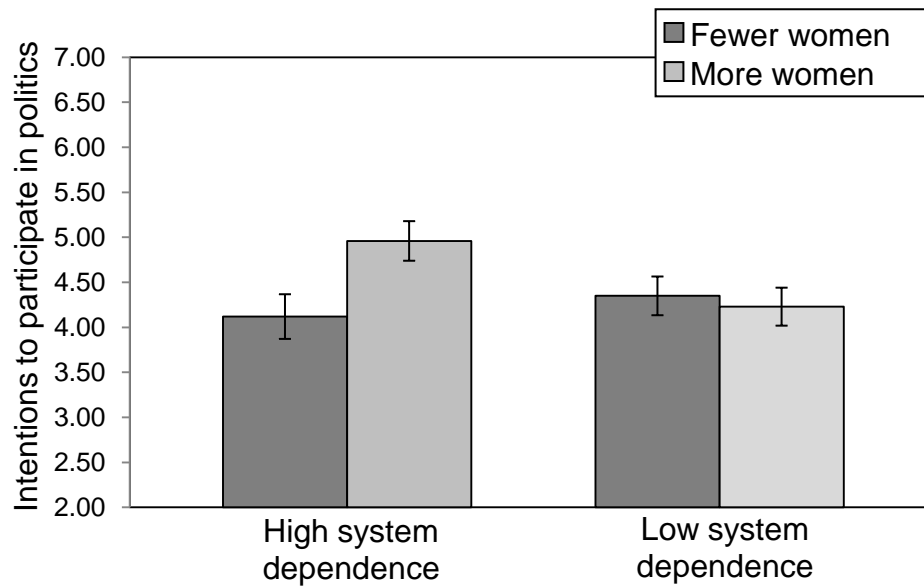
Figure 4: Results from Study 2. Effects of system dependence and perceived number of female Members of Parliament to be elected on behavioural intentions to participate in politics.

system-dependency condition, when participants believed that an increase in the number of women was imminent, participants showed more interest in political behaviour ($M = 4.96$, $SD = 1.09$) than when they believed a decrease in the number of women was imminent ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 1.24$), $F(1, 86) = 6.30$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .07$. In contrast, in the low system-dependency condition there was no difference between the more women ($M = 4.23$, $SD = .99$) and fewer women ($M = 4.35$, $SD = .92$) conditions, $F < 1$. These effects remained significant when controlling for political orientation and personal interest in politics.

Finally, to analyse the injunctive norms about women in politics, I used the same 2 (System Dependency: High vs. Low) X 2 (Status quo: Fewer vs. More Women in Politics) between-subjects ANOVA as above. Unexpectedly, there were no effects of either manipulation, Fs < 1. In all cells, participants averaged slight agreement (Ms = $5.0 \pm .2$) with the items asking whether women's participation in politics is natural, desirable, and the way things should be.

Discussion

Participants who read that the government holds substantial power and influence over their personal outcomes adjusted their behavioural intentions in line with whichever status quo they were shown. That is, participants in the high system-dependence condition who read about an imminent increase in the number of female parliamentarians expressed stronger intentions to participate in politics (e.g., vote, follow the campaign, volunteer for a political cause, seek a government job, and possibly run for office). Highly system-dependent participants who read about an imminent decrease in the number of elected women, however, expressed weaker intentions to participate in politics.

There were no differences found on the measure of injunctive norms and it unclear why Study 2 did not replicate the effect previously found in Study 1. Within Study 2's questionnaire, the behavioural intentions scale was completed before the injunctive norms scale; perhaps giving one's own behavioural intentions was enough to satiate participants' system justification motivation, eliminating its effect on subsequent measures.

CHAPTER 3

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The above studies suggest that the system justification motive, while often complicit in maintaining inequality, may be able to promote social change if one can frame the status quo in a more positive way. In Study 1, for participants who system justification motive was heightened by reading an article emphasizing their dependence on the federal government, presenting the status quo in a way that made people perceive there were many female politicians resulted in more positive attitudes about women's participation in politics, a domain traditionally dominated by men. This occurred even though the actual number on the graph was the same across conditions.

Put bluntly, it is difficult to attract female candidates to run for office. As outlined in a Canadian government report (Cool, 2008), there are substantial barriers preventing women from deciding to enter politics. Some of these barriers are structural (e.g., a disproportionate share of household duties) and others are psychological (e.g., women tend to underestimate their political qualifications; Lawless & Fox, 2005). Over the past fifteen years, the number of female parliamentarians has barely increased, consistently remaining around twenty percent. Under these adverse conditions, it is noteworthy that in Study 2, when an increase in the number of female parliamentarians appeared imminent, participants expressed more interest in voting, following politics, volunteering for political causes, and seeking jobs related to politics. It is significant that an equitable status quo, when combined with the system justification motive, can have such an influence on women's behavioural intentions, given how strongly politics has been traditionally associated with the male gender.

More pessimistically, these studies also provide evidence of the negative effects that can occur as a result of people's motivation to justify their socio-political systems. When their system justification motive was heightened by reading an article emphasizing their dependence on the federal government, female participants who saw that there were few women in politics came to believe that it was less natural and desirable for women to be in politics (Study 1), and showed less interest in participating in politics themselves (Study 2). This suggests that merely becoming aware of an inequality can perpetuate it, if that inequality is encountered under one of the many circumstances that increase people's propensity to system-justify (Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Kay et al., 2009). The above studies highlight the "palliative function" (Jost & Hunyady, 2002) of system-justifying beliefs. If one observes that few women are currently in politics and then injunctifies this norm, coming to believe that politics is not a domain that women should be in, it makes resistance to inequality less likely to occur.

Alternative Theoretical Accounts

Given that all participants were women, one could perhaps argue that self-interest is driving this effect. That is, when participants' believed that the government's decisions mattered, they were more likely to believe that their ingroup (i.e., women) should be the ones making those important decisions. The results from the few women condition, however, contradict this account. Here, high system-relevance participants who were led to believe there were few female politicians were less likely to believe it is ideal, desirable, and natural to have women in politics. This is consistent with a system justification explanation but not with self-interest. A self-interest account would suggest that women would express more interest in politics when dependent on their political system, regardless of whether the status quo suggested few or many women in politics.

A social identity explanation (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) also cannot account for the obtained pattern of results. It is perhaps plausible that other common manipulations of the system justification motive might affect collective identity because they are directly critical of one's nationality (e.g., Kay, Jost, & Young, 2005). It is unclear, however, how the system dependence manipulation used in the current studies might plausibly affect collective identity. If anything, the low system-dependence article might be more threatening to one's national identity--because it suggested that the government has little influence--than the high-system dependence article, which suggested that the government operates efficaciously. Furthermore, a manipulation check on the system dependence manipulation suggested that it indeed influenced feelings of system dependency without having an effect on feelings of collective identity or personal self-esteem.

Support for System Justification Theory and its Motivational Nature

The above studies, especially Study 1, provide direct support for one of the central tenets of System Justification Theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994), that people are motivated to construe the current social arrangement as the ideal social arrangement. Since it was first proposed, System Justification Theory has garnered substantial evidence of its validity (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Kay et al., 2009; Kay & Zanna, 2009). Much of this evidence, however, has focused on the indirect consequences of the system justification motive, such as its effects on the on endorsement of system-legitimizing stereotypes (Jost & Kay, 2005; Kay, Czapliński, & Jost, 2009; Kay, Jost & Young, 2005; Kay & Jost, 2003; Lau, Kay, & Spencer, 2008) or implicit preferences for outgroups (Jost, Pelham, & Carvallo, 2002). Here, when given information about the gender makeup of Canada's parliament, participants came to explicitly report that status quo as natural, desirable, and the way things should be.

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Furthermore, these studies address the motivational aspects of system justification. Participants did not view just any status quo as the most desirable and ideal. Rather, it was only when they felt most dependent on the system that effects of the status quo were observed. Furthermore, participants were sensitive to the direction of the provided status quo; they became more or less supportive of the women in politics based on whether there were already (relatively) more or fewer women elected.

Implications for Inequality

These findings suggest that a fruitful way or reducing inequality, especially within systems that are highly influential, may be to present the status quo in some way that implies a norm of equality rather than a norm of equality. For example, it may be most prudent to highlight the progress that women have made to date and note their substantial contributions to politics rather than focusing on their current underrepresentation. In this way equality, rather than minority status, is seen as normative. Furthermore, as suggested by Study 2, presenting information that portrays imminent increases in the number of women participating in a particular domain may encourage even more women to approach in that domain, even if it is one that has been traditionally dominated by men, such as politics. If people tend to construe the current status quo as the most natural and desirable status quo, those who wish to promote equality should endeavour to present the most equitable status quo possible; perhaps people will then see equality as the way things should be.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Injunctive Norms about Women in Politics

Please rate to what extent you agree/disagree with each of the following statements.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not at all								Extremely

1. To what extent do you believe that women are desirable to have as Members of Parliament? *
2. To what extent do you think it is ideal to have women MPs? *
3. To what extent do you think women *should be* MPs?
4. To what extent do you think it is ideal to have women in politics?
5. To what extent do you think women *should be* in politics? *
6. To what extent are women most ideal to have in political positions?
7. To what extent are women most naturally suited to political careers? *
8. To what extent do you believe that women are desirable to have in politics?

* Items used in Study 2.

Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale

This page involves questions about you. Think about each statement that follows and rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with it on the following scale.

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. [ ] I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

2. [ ] I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

3. [ ] All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

4. [ ] I am able to do things as well as most other people.

5. [ ] I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

6. [ ] I take a positive attitude toward myself.

7. [ ] On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

8. [ ] I wish I could have more respect for myself.

9. [ ] I certainly feel useless at times.

10. [ ] At times I think I am no good at all.

APPENDIX C

Collective Self-Esteem (University of Waterloo)

We are all members of different social groups or social categories. Social groups or categories include gender, race, religion, nationality, and ethnicity, among others. We vary, however, in the degree to which we are similar to the typical or average group member of a social category and how much we value that membership.

Please write into the blank beside each statement below the number that best represents your personal opinion. Please use the following scale:

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1.   I often regret that I am a University of Waterloo (UW) student.

2.   Overall, UW students are considered good by other people.

3.   Overall, being a UW student has very little to do with how I feel about myself.

4.   In general, I'm glad to be a UW student.

5.   Most people consider UW students, on the average, to be more ineffective than other people.

6.   Being a UW student is an important reflection of who I am.

7.   Overall, I often feel that being a UW student is not worthwhile.

8.   In general, other people respect UW students.

9.   Being a UW student is unimportant to my sense of what kind of a person I am.

10.   I feel good about being from UW.

11.   In general, other people think that UW is unworthy.

12.   In general, being from UW is an important part of my self image.

13.   I often think about being a UW student.

14.   I feel strong ties to other UW students.

15.   I find it difficult to form a bond with other UW students.

16.   I have a lot in common with other UW students.

APPENDIX D

Collective Self-Esteem (Canada)

We are all members of different social groups or social categories. Social groups or categories include gender, race, religion, nationality, and ethnicity, among others. We vary, however, in the degree to which we are similar to the typical or average group member of a social category and how much we value that membership.

Please write into the blank beside each statement below the number that best represents your personal opinion. Please use the following scale:

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. ____ I often regret that I am a Canadian.

2. ____ Overall, Canadians are considered good by people from other countries.

3. ____ Overall, being Canadian has very little to do with how I feel about myself.

4. ____ In general, I'm glad to be a Canadian.

5. ____ Most people consider Canadians, on the average, to be more ineffective than citizens of other countries.

6. ____ Being a Canadian is an important reflection of who I am.

7. ____ Overall, I often feel that being a Canadian is not worthwhile.

8. ____ In general, people from other countries respect Canadians.

9. ____ Being a Canadian is unimportant to my sense of what kind of a person I am.

10. ____ I feel good about being from Canada.

11. ____ In general, people from other countries think that Canada is unworthy.

12. ____ In general, being from Canada is an important part of my self image.

13. ____ I often think about being Canadian.

14. ____ I feel strong ties to other Canadians.

15. ____ I find it difficult to form a bond with other Canadians.

16. ____ I have a lot in common with other Canadians.

Intentions to Participate in Politics Scale

Please rate to what extent you agree/disagree with each of the following statements.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

1. In this election, I will definitely vote.
2. I am following, or plan to follow, the campaign more closely than in previous years.
3. In this or a future election, I would consider volunteering for a cause or party that I found important.
4. I expect that I'll learn more about politics as time goes on and I get older.
5. I might be interested in a career in the public service or working for the government.
6. I would consider running for office sometime in my life, if the circumstances were right.