Female Autocrats As Role Models? The Effect of Female Leaders on Political Knowledge and Engagement in Vietnam

Paul Schuler
Assistant Professor
University of Arizona

Research shows that the presence of more female politicians can reduce gender gaps in political knowledge. Despite these findings, no study examines whether the role model effect applies to autocracies. This is an important oversight given the role political knowledge plays in increasing the use of non-electoral forms of accountability. To test whether female political role models increase knowledge in autocracies, this study uses unique survey data from Vietnam occurring before and after a leadership change. In the transition, all the top leaders changed from males to male except for legislative speaker, which transitioned from male to female. Results show that her selection increased name recognition for her position at a higher rate compared to men and that women were more likely to pay attention to legislative proceedings after her selection. These findings suggest that efforts to push gender equity in autocratic leadership positions may be useful.

Does descriptive representation decrease the gender gap in political knowledge in authoritarian regimes? Studies consistently find gender disparities in political knowledge in Western democracies (Burns, Schlozman and Verba 2001, Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, Frazer and Macdonald 2003), Latin America (Fraile and Gomez 2015), and other developing contexts (Bleck and Michelitsch 2018, Dassonneville and McAllister 2018). Such disparities are important because political knowledge can lead to electoral participation (Verba and Nie 1972) and non-electoral political influence (Bleck and Michelitsch 2018, De Vries and Giger 2014). In explaining the disparity, recent work emphasizes the impact of descriptive representation in reducing the knowledge gap in democracies.[1] Depending on the measure of descriptive representation and knowledge used, most studies find that increased descriptive representation leads to increased female political knowledge.[2]

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[1] Other work examines factors other than descriptive representation, such as question design (Dolan 2011, Mondak and Anderson 2004), political interest (Verba, Burns and Schlozman 1997), and political resources (Verba, Burns and Schlozman 1997). This paper does not test these mechanisms, but does hold these factors constant.

[2] Most studies find a positive relationship when knowledge is the dependent variable (Dassonneville and McAllister 2018, Fridkin and Kenney 2014, Fraile and Gomez 2015), but also see Fortin-Rittberger (2016). Results are more mixed when the dependent variable is engagement. See Desposato and Norrander (2009), Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007), and Barnes and Burchard (2013), but also see Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer (2010) and Karp and Banducci (2008)

Despite the wealth of research from democracies, no study examines whether this relationship holds in *authoritarian* contexts with highly constrained electoral participation. This is an important oversight. Although authoritarian regimes do not have competitive elections, political knowledge is important for citizens in autocracies in terms of equal access to public services and political influence. Studies show that authoritarian regimes are responsive to non-electoral pressures such as protests, petitions or social networks (Chen, Pan and Xu 2016, Tsai 2007), and that there are clear disparities in access to government officials, whereby "regime insiders" that have greater political knowledge are more likely to use these mechanisms (Tsai and Xu 2017). If women are less politically knowledgeable, they may be less likely to avail themselves of these non-electoral accountability mechanisms.

The issue is not merely of theoretical interest. Foreign donors promote gender quotas and gender equality in single-party contexts such as Vietnam and China under the assumption that increases in descriptive representation will have similar effects in authoritarian regimes (Schuler 2014). For example, media outlets have expressed concern that China's Communist Party does not have enough women in its highest ranks. As one publication put it: "Women are less represented the higher up the political tree you climb."[3] Similarly, in Vietnam, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has explicitly recommended that the country promote more women to higher ranks in the ruling Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), with one of its key recommendations being:

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[3] See *BBC News*. "Reality Check: Does China's Communist Party Have a Woman Problem?" October 25. 2017. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41652487. Last accessed June 15, 2018.

"accept and nominate more women into the Communist Party."[4] Although the UNDP

cites a number of additional reasons for increasing female representation, such as justice

and improved policy making, an additional reason consistent with literature from

democracies is to provide more female role models. Despite the emphasis on increased

female representation in autocracies, we still do not know if political role models reduce

the gender political knowledge gap in autocracies.

One possible reason for the lack of research on the role model effect in

autocracies may be the paucity of survey data that asks potentially sensitive questions

such as the identity of political leaders *and* an identification strategy that can isolate the

role model effect. This paper overcomes this through a rare survey instrument in Vietnam

that asks citizens to identify the names of the country's top four leaders.[5] As discussed

below, while name recognition is a narrow measure of political knowledge, I argue that

name recognition is a necessary condition for the longer term effects of descriptive

representation on knowledge to hold. In short, if women do not pay more attention to

female leaders, then the longer term socialization process (Dassonneville and McAllister

2018) cannot take hold. With this in mind, the research design plausibly identifies the

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[4] See *UNDP Viet Nam.* "Women's Political Representation in Viet Nam." October 2,

2012.

http://www.vn.undp.org/content/vietnam/en/home/library/womens_empowerment/wome

n-s-political-representation-in-viet-nam.html. Last accessed June 15, 2018.

[5] These leaders are known as the "four pillars" (*Tứ trụ*) in Vietnam and include the

Communist Party General Secretary, the Prime Minister, the President and the National

Assembly chair.

role model effect because the survey was conducted both before and after a leadership change where one of these positions – the Vietnam National Assembly (VNA) chairpersonship – for the first time went to female leader Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan while the other three remained male. Comparing the changes in rates of name identification between men and women for Ngan [6] versus the other leaders allows for an identification of the role model effect.

The results show that Ngan's selection increased the ability of *all* respondents to name the VNA chair, thus supporting the theory that female leaders may gain attention from men and women due to the novelty effect (Fridkin and Kenney 2014). However, the increase for women was significantly larger for women than men, providing evidence for the role model effect. Additionally, the results also show there may have been some effect on actual behavior, as women also increased their attention to VNA proceedings at a higher rate than men.

In addition to showing the role model effect, further analysis examines potential heterogeneous effects to assess whether specific subgroups of women are more likely to pay attention than others. Further analysis shows that that contrary to democracies, Ngan's selection had the strongest effect on those *unaffiliated* with the regime rather than for co-partisans as is the case in democracies (Mariani, Marshall and Mathews-Schultz 2015). There were no heterogeneous effects for age, geographical context, or education as has been found in democracies (Fraile and Gomez 2015, Dassonneville and McAllister

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[6] Nguyen is the family name, but Vietnamese place the given name last and uses the given name when referring to people for a second time. This paper does the same.

2018). This suggests that the role model effect applies to autocracies, but the underlying mechanisms differ.

Theoretically, the findings suggest that the role model effect is not constrained to democracies, but that women in autocracies also pay attention to female leaders. This indicates that features particularly to democracies such as campaigns and ideological differentiation are not required for the role model effect to reduce the knowledge gap. More practically, these findings also suggest that efforts to increase the proportion of women in high ranking positions within autocracies may have a beneficial impact on women in those contexts. Therefore, such efforts to introduce gender parity are well placed.

Importance of Political Knowledge in Authoritarian Contexts

Before proceeding with the theory and research design, it is worth asking why scholars and practioners should care about a potential gender gap in knowledge in an authoritarian context. In democracies, the logic is simple. More knowledgeable citizens are more likely to engage politically (Verba and Nie 1972). Furthermore, when knowledgeable citizens participate, they are more likely to accurately identify politicians and policies that are consistent with their interests (Lau, Andersen and Redlawsk 2008, Singh and Neundorf 2014). Applied to the issue of the gender gap, lower knowledge for women could mean less political engagement and therefore less accountability. Indeed, some research shows that when women are represented by women, they are not only more aware of those politicians (Fridkin and Kenney 2014), but they are also more likely to hold their female legislators accountable (Jones 2014).

Autocracies, however, differ from democracies in important ways. The most important difference is weaker bottom-up accountability. Although authoritarian regimes vary in the degree to which elections are meaningful, many autocratic regimes restrict electoral participation so sharply that there is little chance for citizens to enforce accountability through the ballot box.[7] Despite the lack of electoral accountability, scholars have identified a wide range of channels that citizens have at their disposal to hold authoritarian regimes accountable. These mechanisms include online petitions and denunciations, where research shows that government officials do take into account their interactions with citizens (Chen, Pan and Xu 2016). Scholars have also found that citizens can hold legislators accountable even in cases like China and Vietnam where the electoral connection is weak or non-existent (Malesky and Schuler 2010, Truex 2016). In these contexts, it is possible that legislators respond through pressure from voters in constituency meetings (Ong 2015). Because such accountability mechanisms are effective, some regimes have expanded the suite of non-electoral accountability institutions available to citizens in order to improve their performance without opening themselves up to political competition (Stromseth, Malesky and Gueorguiev 2017).

As with democracies, the existence of effective accountability mechanisms raises the possibility that certain groups may be more likely to avail themselves of such institutions than others. Research shows that in autocracies well-connected individuals have greater access to government officials than others (Pan and Xu 2017, Truex 2014). Importantly for this study, this research shows that politically knowledgeable citizens are

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[7] The literature on elections in authoritarian regimes is vast. For a review, see Gandhi and Lust-Okar (2009).

more likely use accountability mechanisms in autocracies. Specifically, Tsai and Xu (2017) show that politically connected citizens are more likely to petition government officials because they have greater awareness of the accountability mechanisms and more confidence in using them. With this in mind, it logically follows that if women are less political knowledegable in autocracies as is the case in democracies, this could also decrease the degree to which they avail themselves of these non-electoral accountability mechanisms. As such, understanding the potential determinants of gender gaps in political knowledge in autocracies is an important question.

Theory: Why Authoritarian Women May Not be Role Models

As discussed in the introduction, research suggests that female political role models can increase political knowledge for women. Why might potential female role model politicians have a different impact on knowledge in autocracies? There are number of possibilities why the role model effect may not translate. One possible difference is the salience of the political figures. Studies show that the salience of the official or the policy matters with regards to political knowledge and political participation in democracies (Ladam, Harden and Windett 2018, Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006). In contrast to democracies, politicians in autocracies may be more reluctant to seek political attention than in democracies thus reducing their salience. Indeed, Gueorguiev and Schuler (2016) show that politicians in Vietnam and China go to great lengths to avoid attention as this could damage their promotion prospects. If this is the case in autocracies, we may not see an effect of women in power in reducing the knowledge gap.

A second difference is political context. Some research in democracies shows that regimes with power sharing institutions feature narrower gender gaps (Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer 2010). Additionally, the level of government also matters, with women expressing greater knowledge about local affairs (Shaker 2012, Rapelli 2014). The explanation is that local politics concerns more private issues and hence is seen as closer to a woman's life experience (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, 148). It is possible that authoritarian contexts, which are more secretive and less publicly contested, that women may be less likely to engage with politics than in democracies regardless of the role model.

Other research suggests that political affiliation mediates the role model effect. Mariani, Marshall and Mathews-Schultz (2015) find that Hillary Clinton and Nancy Pelosi were capable of increasing political participation among Democratic and liberal women but not Republicans. As recent studies have shown, ideology exists in single party contexts, but such differences are muted (Pan and Xu 2017). Furthermore, political leaders in single-party contexts do not emphasize their views to as great a degree. As such, to the extent to which women are drawn to ideologically like-minded women, such an effect should be diminished in single-party contexts.

Finally, in the specific case introduced below, it is possible that the fact that a woman has never been selected to a top position could generate a "novelty effect" where *men and women* both increase their awareness (Fridkin and Kenney 2014). If female political leaders are particularly rare in autocracies or are advertised for propaganda purposes, it may be that the selection of a female political leader increases her salience for both men and women.

With these differences in mind, why might one still expect a role model effect? Fridkin and Kenney (2014) propose a "saliency of self" theory, where the novelty of a female candidate interacts with one's identity. As they note, psychology research shows that people are likely to remember those that share the same traits (Markus and Wurf 1987). By this logic, women, who share the same gender as female leaders, will be more likely to remember the names of leaders regardless of institutional context. In an authoritarian context, particularly single-party contexts that lack opposition parties, ideology may be less helpful in linking citizens to political leaders.

In aggregating these theories, there are reasons to suggest both that the role model effect may not translate to autocracies due to salience, institutional context, ideology, or novelty. However, it is also possible that the same mechanism – the "salience of self" – could transcend these differences. Given the lack of evidence to adjudicate between these rival explanations, the rest of this paper tests between these competing predictions.

Vietnam: Context and Research Design

The following analysis is set in Vietnam, which is by nearly any definition an autocracy.[8] All parties except the Vietnam Communist Party are banned and all government officials are required to be party members. Similar to other communist regimes, the most powerful institutions are within the party. In Vietnam, these institutions include the Politburo, a 17-member body that meets regularly to set the major policy

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[8] All common datasets such as Polity IV, Geddes, Wright and Frantz (2014), and Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland (2010) code it as an autocracy or highly autocratic.

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outlines in Vietnam.[9] One important difference between Vietnam and other single party contexts such as China, Cuba, and North Korea is that its top leadership is more collective. In contrast to those contexts, where the party general secretary is also the president and far more powerful than the prime minister, in Vietnam power is shared more evenly between "four pillars" (*Tứ trụ*) – which include the CPV General Secretary, the Prime Minister, the President, and the VNA chairperson.[10] This distinction is important for the analysis that follows, because the research design will rely on differential levels of awareness for these top leaders.

While the institutional structure and the particularities of the 2016 leadership change make Vietnam a useful case, Vietnam is also a useful case because many of the patterns found elsewhere – namely a gender gap in knowledge and higher levels of engagement for politically knowledgeable citizens – apply to Vietnam as well. To show some evidence of this, I rely on the Provincial Public Administration and Governance Performance Index (PAPI) survey, which has been conducted annually since 2011 by the UNDP. The goal of the survey is to measure provincial governance, thus it has a massive,

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[9] See Malesky, Abrami and Zheng (2011) for a good description of Vietnam's political institutions.

[10] For a discussion of the "four pillars", see: *BBC Vietnam*. "Đánh giá 'Tứ trụ Việt Nam'" [Evaluating 'Vietnam's Four Pillars"]. April 8, 2016. https://www.bbc.com/vietnamese/vietnam/2016/04/160407_hangout_vn_leaders_assessm ents. Last accessed June 15, 2018.

nationally representative sample size of about 14,000 respondents per year. The survey is conducted on tablets through face-to-face interviews.[11]

As evidence of the knowledge gap and the participation gap, the survey includes several knowledge items such as the ability to correctly identify one of Vietnam's top-four leaders, awareness of the anti-corruption law, awareness of term limits for village heads, and awareness of the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Additionally, the survey also includes measures participation, such as making a proposal to local authorities, contacting local officials, attending meetings with local legislators, and voting in the VNA election. As Table 1 shows, women exhibit less political knowledge and are less likely to participate.

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[11] For more detail on the survey methodology, visit http://papi.org.vn/eng/. Respondents are selected from all 63 provinces. Below the provincial level, sampling is clustered at the district, commune, and village levels using probability proportion to size selection procedures to select the units. In each province, 12 villages in six communes and three districts are chosen, with the goal of surveying 20 respondents per village. This leads to an intended target of 240 respondents per province, with a handful of larger provinces featuring bigger sample sizes.

Table 1: Knowledge and Participation in Vietnam

	Name Leader	Know Corruption Law	Know VNA Term Limits	Know TPP
Male	58.45%	57.60%	26.41%	41.13%
Female	27.64%	43.45%	20.00%	30.28%

	Make Proposal	Contact Authority	Attend Meeting	Vote
Male	35.96%	27.13%	23.06%	57.40%
Female	20.22%	20.20%	16.38%	43.40%

Notes: Name leader means correctly naming one of Vietnam's top-four leaders; know anti-corruption law means awareness of the law, knowing term limits means correctly identifying 2.5 year village term limit, and know TPP means awareness of the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Make proposal refers to making a proposal to local officials, contacting authority means contacting a local official, attending a meeting means attending a meeting with a legislative delegate, and voting means voting in the VNA election (Source: PAPI Survey 2015-2017).

Although it is not the subject of this study, regression analysis shows that awareness is correlated with participation, supporting findings from democracies and autocracies showing that knowledge and engagement are positively linked. Furthermore, the inclusion of the gender reduces the impact of awareness on participation, suggesting the possibility that part of the gender effect on participation operates through knowledge. Given the similarities to other contexts, Vietnam is an important case to examine the potential for role models to increase knowledge.

Research Design

In examining the link between role models and knowledge, critical to the research design of this study is that in 2016, for the first time, a woman was named to one of the top four leadership positions. Ngan, who was previously deputy chair of the VNA, was promoted to the Politburo in 2013. In 2016, after the Party Congress where personnel

decisions are made, she was retained in the Politburo and promoted to VNA chair, thus

making her the first woman ever selected to one of the top four leadership positions. The

other three leadership positions remained male. One of these positions – the General

Secretary – was given to incumbent Nguyen Phu Trong. The other two changed from one

male leader to another (see Table 2).

In the transition, by far the most intrigue surrounded the battle between Nguyen

Phu Trong and former Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung for the position of general

secretary (Schuler and Ostwald 2016). However, the historic nature of Ngan's selection

was also emphasized. In announcing her selection, the state media emphasized that voters

would place a lot of hope in her as the country's first female VNA chair.[12] Furthermore,

major Vietnamese news outlets reported to the domestic audience that Forbes ranked

Ngan as Vietnam's most influential woman.[13] Therefore, the identity of Ngan and her

gender was a plausibly salient issue.

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[12] See *Vov.vn*. "Cử tri kỳ vọng vào nữ Chủ tịch Quốc hội đầu tiên." [The hopes of voters

for the first women National Assembly chair]. March 31, 2016. http://vov.vn/chinh-

tri/quoc-hoi/cu-tri-ky-vong-vao-nu-chu-tich-quoc-hoi-dau-tien-495353.vov. Last

accessed June 14, 2018.

[13] See *Vietnamnet*. "Forbes bầu bà Kim Ngân: Người phụ nữ ảnh hưởng nhất VN."

['Forbes Votes Kim Ngan: VN's Most Influential Woman"]. March 3, 2016.

http://vietnamnet.vn/vn/thoi-su/forbes-bau-ba-kim-ngan-la-nguoi-phu-nu-anh-huong-

nhat-vn-292137.html. Last accessed June 14, 2018.

Table 2: Vietnam's Leaders Pre and Post 2016 Party Congress

Position	2011-2016	2016-present
National Assembly Chair	Nguyen Sinh Hung (male)	Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan (female)
General Secretary	Nguyen Phu Trong (male)	Nguyen Phu Trong (male)
Prime Minister	Nguyen Tan Dung (male)	Nguyen Xuan Phuc (male)
President	Truong Tan Sang (male)	Tran Dai Quang (male)

To examine the role model effect, this paper assesses whether the rates of awareness of the top-four leaders changed for women to a greater degree for the position of the VNA chair as opposed to the other positions. Before proceeding, it is important to defend this measure – name recognition of leader – as a meaningful proxy for political knowledge. As a large literature notes, simple name recognition or reciting facts may not be equivalent to actual knowledge (Mondak and Anderson 2004). Furthermore, women may be more likely to know different facts, such as the number of women in the legislature, issues pertaining to women (Dolan 2011), or issues surrounding local politics (Rapelli 2014, Shaker 2012). Finally, the effect of role models on these knowledge items may take longer to manifest given that they could happen through socialization processes (Dassonneville and McAllister 2018).

While these criticisms are valid, for these longer term mechanisms to hold, the presence of a female role model, at least initially, must inspire the attention of females at a higher rate. Even though attention may dissipate after the role model retreats from the limelight, if the female politician did not attract attention initially, then these other long-term processes should not take hold. Therefore, in the short term, name recognition is

actually a good test of one of the crucial mechanisms underlying the longer term, substantive impacts on political knowledge.

With this in mind, to test for Ngan's impact on name recognition, a simple cross-sectional analysis of political awareness of the leaders between men and women for the leaders selected after 2016 does not suffice. This is because although the percentage of women able to identify Ngan may be less than men, it may still be the case that even fewer women relative to men were able to name a *male* VNA chair. Therefore, what is important is the *change* in awareness of the VNA chair between men and women relative to the change in awareness for the other positions pre and post transition.

Therefore, I use a triple-interaction probit model, where the interaction is between the following variables: *VNA chair*, *Female*, and *PostCongress*. *VNA Chair* is a binary variable indicating whether the respondent is answering a knowledge question about the VNA chair versus other positions. *Female* is the gender of the respondent. *PostCongress* indicates whether the knowledge question was asked prior to leadership transition or after. This model allows for a clear identification of the role model effect under the assumption that women recognize Ngan to a greater degree than men because of her gender rather than some other quality or potentially some issue discussed in the VNA during 2016 and 2017.

This design, while simple, requires data measuring political knowledge pre and post-Party Congress. This data is hard to find in single-party contexts, where public opinion research is scarce. Furthermore, even where such data is available, few surveys ask such political knowledge questions. Fortunately, the PAPI data began randomly asking respondents in an open-ended fashion to name the top four leaders in the country

in 2015 – the year before the Party Congress.[14] In the survey, the respondents were randomly divided into four groups with each group asked about only one of the leaders.[15] Fortunately, because of the large sample size – approximately 14,000 per year – there is still sufficient power to identify an effect. Furthermore, because interviewer effects could be a concern, the interviewers are trained by the Center for Community Support Development Studies, UNDP's local NGO partner, and are conducted without an official present.

As noted above, the survey allows me to create the following measures necessary to test the role model theory. The dependent variable is *correct*, which is simply whether or not the respondent correctly identified the leader and the important independent variables are *VNA*, *female, and postcongress*. Because other factors could impact knowledge, I take use other covariates gleaned from the survey associated with political knowledge such as education and income level. Unfortunately, income is not asked in each of the three years, so I use another measure, which is whether or not the respondent is on the poverty list. I also include ethnicity. Although Vietnam is relatively homogeneous, about 15 percent of the population is ethnic minority. Finally, and of greater theoretical interest, I also include a measure for regime affiliation. The PAPI

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[14] Because the survey was conducted between August and November of each year, the 2015 survey occurred before the Party Congress, while the 2016 and 2017 surveys occurred after the Party Congress.

[15] The survey asks specifically: "Please name the current [president/prime minister/general secretary/VNA chair]." The position is randomized so that 1/4th of the respondents are asked only about one of the positions.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Correct	42,115	0.4185682	0.4933302	0	1
Female	42,115	0.5385255	0.4985195	0	1
Read News	42,115	0.3971507	0.4893135	0	1
Regime Connected	42,115	0.5343464	0.4988248	0	1
Ethnic Majority	42,115	0.8369939	0.3693756	0	1
Age	42,089	47.62059	12.06812	17	91
Poor	41,785	0.0906545	0.2871207	0	1
Educ. (Quintiles)	42,115	2.692366	1.380451	1	5

survey asks whether respondents are members of the party or one of the party-affiliated mass organizations. This is important for studies that show party affiliation should increase political knowledge, particularly for women (Mariani, Marshall and Mathews-Schultz 2015). For women, one of the most important organizations is the Women's Union, which attracts a large number of members. Finally, I include a measure of whether the respondent regularly reads the news. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics.

Results

Table 4 shows the results of the three-way interaction effect using a probit model with standard errors clustered at the commune level to account for survey design effects. The first model pools the 2016 and 2017 results such that the *postcongress* variable includes both 2016 and 2017. The results reveal several dynamics consistent with existing literature. First, as expected, women are less likely to correctly identify the leaders than men. Second, consistent with the existing literature, people who read the news, ethnic majority respondents, older citizens, wealthier citizens, and educated respondents are more likely to get the correct answer.

On the main variables of interest, the interaction effects show that for both men and women, respondents are more likely to correctly identify Ngan than the previous VNA chair. This suggests that there is a novelty effect. However, looking at the main variable of interest, the triple interaction shows that the increased in knowledge is higher for women than it is for men. Figure 1 shows the substantive effects for Model 1. As it indicates, women were about 7 percent more likely to identify Ngan than the previous VNA chair, while they were about 4 percent less likely to identify the new leaders for other positions for a difference of about 11 percent. Men were about 5 percent less likely to identify the new leaders for other positions and about 2 percent more likely to identify Ngan than the previous VNA chair for a difference of about 7 percent. This shows that men and women identified Ngan more readily, but women to a greater degree.

To assess the robustness of the effect, Models 2 and 3 assess whether the findings are stable for the two year period after the transition. Model 2 includes only the 2016 results while Model 3 includes the 2017 results. The models show that the results are stronger for 2016 than 2017 but do not completely fade in 2017. To ensure that these results were not an artifact of a general increase in female knowledge on a range of items that somehow did not map onto the male leaders, I looked at changes in other knowledge questions over the three year period. Using the knowledge items in Table 1, Appendix 1 shows, women were not more likely to answer these questions in the post Congress period than men.

Table 4: Knowledge of Leaders

VARIABLES	Correct (1)	Correct (2)	Correct (3)
Female	-0.866***	-0.860***	-0.864***
	(0.0275)	(0.0274)	(0.0275)
VNA	-0.693***	-0.688***	-0.692***
	(0.0410)	(0.0407)	(0.0410)
Female*VNA	-0.179***	-0.179***	-0.179***
	(0.0624)	(0.0620)	(0.0623)
PostCongress	-0.165***	-0.204***	-0.126***
	(0.0255)	(0.0300)	(0.0278)
Female*PostCongress	0.0279	0.0303	0.0291
	(0.0341)	(0.0394)	(0.0384)
VNA*PostCongress	0.227***	0.209***	0.247***
	(0.0474)	(0.0535)	(0.0536)
Female*VNA*PostCongress	0.214***	0.265***	0.158*
	(0.0764)	(0.0871)	(0.0843)
ReadNews	0.405***	0.403***	0.417***
	(0.0150)	(0.0177)	(0.0183)
RegimeConnected	0.236***	0.223***	0.235***
	(0.0165)	(0.0190)	(0.0198)
Ethnic Majority	0.196***	0.193***	0.220***
	(0.0364)	(0.0401)	(0.0381)
Age	0.0226***	0.0215***	0.0219***
	(0.000716)	(0.000845)	(0.000864)
Poor	-0.304***	-0.285***	-0.327***
	(0.0316)	(0.0363)	(0.0400)
Education (quintiles)	0.331***	0.323***	0.325***
	(0.00709)	(0.00787)	(0.00814)
Constant	-1.950***	-1.873***	-1.926***
	(0.0547)	(0.0614)	(0.0596)
Observations	41,760	27,785	27,818
R-Squared (Psuedo)	0.238	0.235	0.240

Notes: Clustered standard errors in parentheses. The model is as a probit where the dependent variable is whether or not the respondent correctly identified the leader. Model 1 the Post Congress variable pools 2016 and 2017, Model 2 includes in 2016 only and Model 3 2017 only (*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$).

Figure 1: Knowledge of Leaders
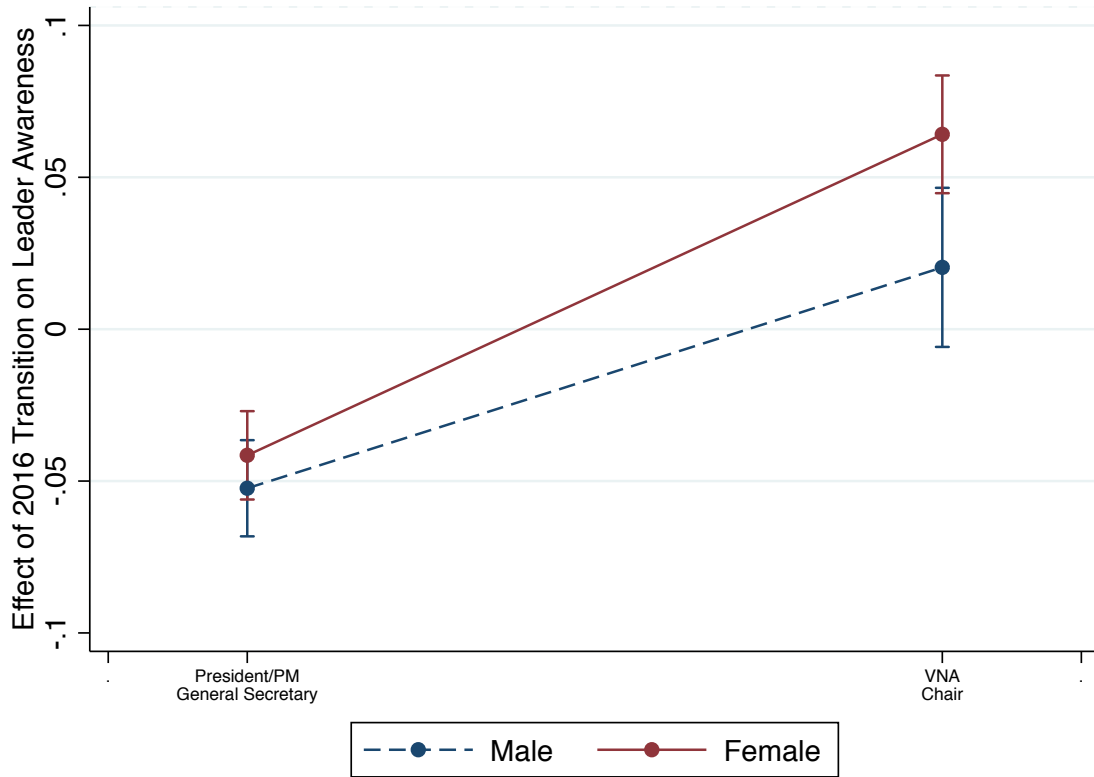
Notes: The points are the point estimates for the effect of the transition on knowledge for men and women for the different positions. The bars are the 95% confidence intervals

In short, the results show that Ngan clearly attracted more attention from women than men. However, in highlighting this finding, it is important to note that while significant, it does not erase the significant gender gap, even on that question. By 2017, about 19 percent of women could name the Ngan as compared to 12 percent in 2015 when it was held by Hung. By contrast, men increased their awareness of the VNA chair

from 44 percent in 2015 when Hung held the position to 47 percent in 2017.[16] Therefore, while her selection made a meaningful difference, the gap in knowledge remained large.

Heterogeneous Effects

This section assesses which groups of women experienced the highest increase in awareness. As noted above, some studies suggest that the role model effect should be most pronounced on younger respondents (Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006, Dassonneville and McAllister 2018). Others suggest the effect should occur among the more educated (Fraile and Gomez 2015). Finally, other studies suggest the effect should be strongest amongst co-partisans (Mariani, Marshall and Mathews-Schultz 2015).

To assess these effects, Appendix 2 includes interaction effects of the Party Congress on these different variables only for women. It shows that the only interaction effect that is significant is for non-regime connected women. That is, women that are not connected to the regime experience a greater decline in their awareness for the new male leaders. However, their awareness of the new VNA chair is comparable to the non-regime connected. This suggests that the non-regime connected experience a greater drop in awareness after a transition, but that this drop off is mitigated by Ngan's selection. The implication could be that the non-regime connected are generally more disengaged and

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[16] Once concern these numbers might highlight is a regression to the mean, where it is easier for women to increase their awareness due to their lower overall numbers. The additional analysis in Appendix 1 as well as the comparisons to the other leaders should allay these concerns. If it was a regression to the mean, that effect should be found across all indicators, not just Ngan.

Figure 2: Differential Effect for Regime Connected and Non-Connected Women
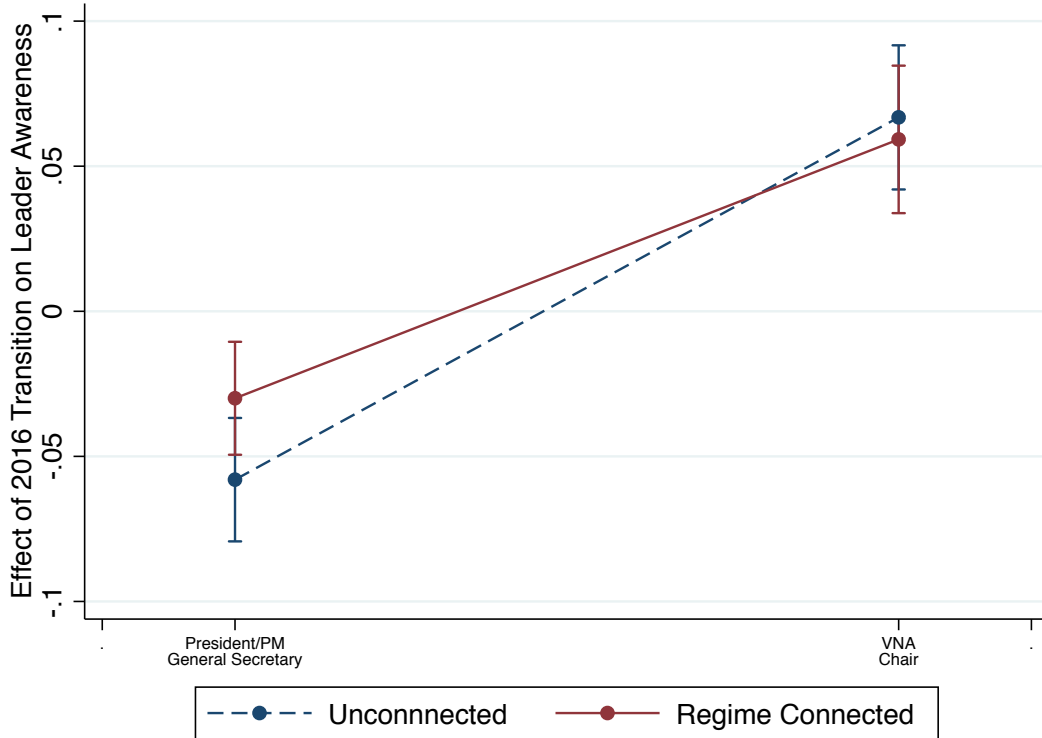
Notes: The points are the point estimates for the effect of the transition on knowledge for regime connected women and non-regime connected women based on model 1 in Appendix 1. The bars are the 95% confidence intervals

take longer to make themselves aware of new leaders. However, when a woman is selected, the non-regime connected women find a link – or as Fridkin and Kenney (2014) suggest, the "salience of self" – inducing them to connect with the autocrat despite the lack of a political connection.

Impact of Ngan's Role Model Effect on Political Engagement

This section assesses whether Ngan's selection had an impact on more than name recognition. Indeed, an important question is whether this name recognition translates

into actual behavior. Theoretically, the effect of Ngan's selection on behavior should manifest in engagement such as voting and willingness to run for office, effects that have been studied in other contexts. In the Vietnamese context, this is complicated by the fact that Ngan was not elected to VNA chair and the limitations and the top-down nature of selection for political office. Furthermore, the effects of Ngan's selection should take longer to manifest in behaviors such as those, even if there was an effect.

However, one area where Ngan's selection might have a more immediate effect is on the degree to which respondents are willing to pay attention to news. Unfortunately, because of the identification strategy, it is difficult to assess the impact of Ngan's selection specifically on the willingness to pay attention to politics, as a many other events occurring between 2015 and 2016 could impact the degree to which citizens watch the news. With that said, the PAPI survey includes one variable that does measure a willingness to pay attention that should relate more specifically to Ngan's selection. One survey question is the degree to which respondents watch the VNA sessions on television. Unlike China, Vietnam televises query sessions on live television. According to the PAPI survey, about 40 percent of respondents claim they have watched some of these sessions during the previous year. If Ngan's selection has an impact on engagement, it is plausible that this effect should be felt most strongly on watching the VNA proceedings.

To assess this, I use the same strategy as in the previous section. For the dependent variable, instead of knowledge, I assess whether respondents watched any of the VNA proceedings in the previous year. The descriptive statistics from Table 5 show a jump for men and women from 2015 to 2016. Men increased their attention by about 6

percent while women increased their attention by 8 percent. To test the proposition more fully, Figure 3 shows the marginal effects of gender on paying attention to the VNA before and after Ngan's selection. After controlling for the same factors in Table 4 (see Appendix 3 for results), Figure 4 shows the marginal effect of Ngan's selection on propensity to watch VNA sessions by gender. It shows that Ngan's selection may have increased women's likelihood of watching by six percent as compared to only four percent for men. The difference is small, but statistically significant, suggesting the possibility that Ngan's selection also impacted political engagement for women.

Figure 3: Effect of Ngan's Selection on Watching Legislative Proceedings
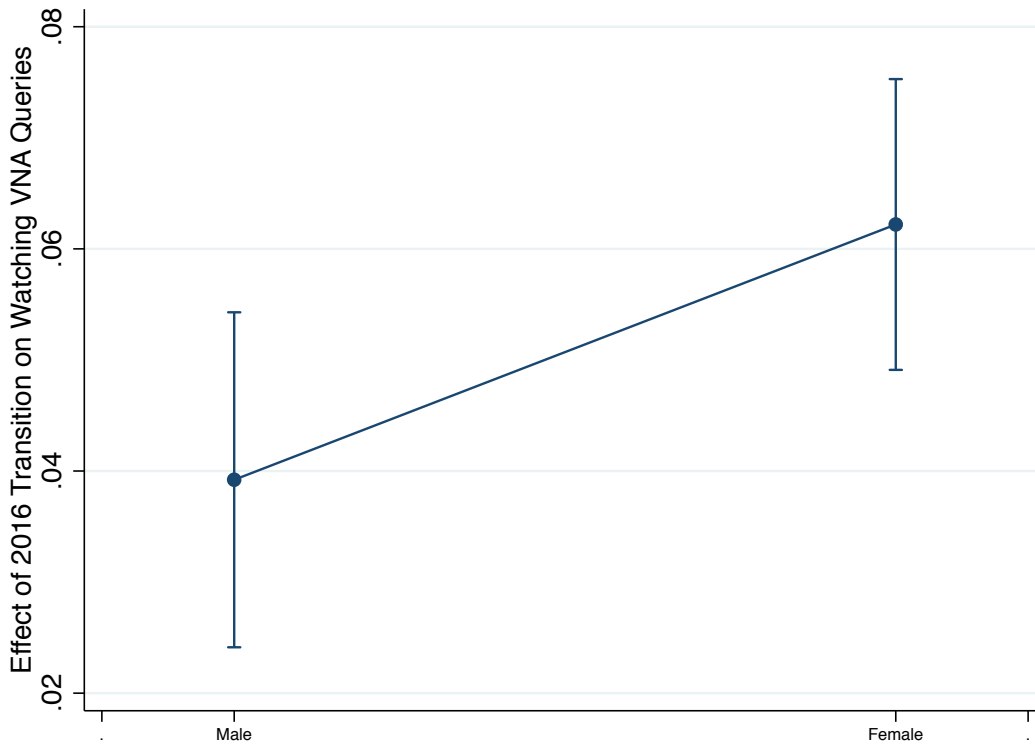
Notes: The points are the point estimates for the effect of the transition on watching VNA session pre and post Congress for men and women. The bars are the 95% confidence intervals

Table 5: Percentage of Respondents Watching VNA Sessions in Previous Year

	2015	2016	2017
Male	47.81%	54.12%	49.47%
Female	29.56%	37.71%	33.52%

Conclusion

This study examines whether descriptive representation plays a role in political knowledge and engagement in authoritarian contexts. While a number of factors, such as the lack of partisanship and lower leader visibility may militate against such an effect, the "saliency of self" theory should transcend regime type. The findings in this paper suggest that female leaders in authoritarian regimes have similar effects on knowledge and engagement to those found in democracies. However, in contrast to democracies, the effect is most pronounced for those not connected to the regime.

These findings have important theoretical and policy implications. Theoretically, they suggest that the findings from democracies partially translate to democracies. More research needs to be done on the heterogeneous effects to assess why the findings are stronger for non-connected women. In terms of policy, the findings suggest that policies aimed at increasing female representation in high-ranking positions in autocracies can have an impact on knowledge and engagement. However, in making this point, several points must be emphasized. First, despite Ngan's selection, the knowledge gap remains profound. Therefore, closing the gap entirely will require time and addition measures. Second, this study focuses on a particularly visible position – one of Vietnam's top-four leaders. Future research should assess the impact of the selection of women for lower level positions that may be less salient.

Finally, it should be noted other potential limitations of this study that future work should address. First, this paper considers a specific form of political knowledge – name recognition. While important, future work should address whether the presence of female role models can extend to other forms of knowledge over a longer period of time. While research finds this effect in democracies (Dassonneville and McAllister 2018), such work should examine it in autocracies. With that said, while name recognition is not tantamount to broad political knowledge, for the longer term effects to hold, a key intervening mechanisms is that women should have been inspired by the female role model to invest more energy in learning about politics. For this to work, women should be more likely to be aware of fellow female political figures. This paper suggests that that first step in the chain holds, even if only to a limited degree.

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Appendix 1: Impact of Party Congress on Other Knowledge Indicators

VARIABLES	Aware Village Head Term	Know Anti-Corruption Law
Female	-0.232***	-0.247***
	(0.0323)	(0.0229)
Post Congress	0.0838***	-0.0564***
	(0.0316)	(0.0218)
Female*PostCongress	-0.0739*	0.00213
	(0.0402)	(0.0284)
Read News	0.170***	0.479***
	(0.0233)	(0.0141)
Ethnic Majority	0.0678	0.140***
	(0.0633)	(0.0302)
Age	0.0110***	0.0159***
	(0.00117)	(0.000654)
Poverty List	-0.0907	-0.152***
	(0.0702)	(0.0279)
Education (quintiles)	0.126***	0.281***
	(0.0137)	(0.00662)
Constant	-2.108***	-1.630***
	(0.0967)	(0.0515)
Observations	27,757	41,760
r2_p	0.0454	0.129

Notes: Clustered standard errors in parentheses. The model is as a probit where the dependent variables are knowledge indicators. (*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1).

Appendix 2: Heterogeneous Effects

VARIABLES	Correct	Correct	Correct	Correct
VNA Chair	-1.013***	-1.150***	-0.870***	-0.989***
	(0.0744)	(0.109)	(0.0459)	(0.200)
Post Congress	-0.201***	-0.264***	-0.136***	-0.277***
	(0.0373)	(0.0511)	(0.0255)	(0.0978)
VNA Chair*Post Congress	0.595***	0.571***	0.448***	0.604**
	(0.0867)	(0.132)	(0.0564)	(0.245)
Education	0.343***	0.300***	0.343***	0.343***
	(0.00900)	(0.0140)	(0.00898)	(0.00899)
Poor	-0.272***	-0.273***	-0.282***	-0.274***
	(0.0457)	(0.0457)	(0.0947)	(0.0457)
Age	0.0167***	0.0167***	0.0167***	0.0147***
	(0.000995)	(0.000992)	(0.000993)	(0.00175)
Regime Connected	0.141***	0.222***	0.221***	0.220***
	(0.0403)	(0.0227)	(0.0227)	(0.0228)
VNA Chair*RegConnect	0.218**			
	(0.0977)			
Post Congress*RegConnect	0.105**			
	(0.0486)			
VNA Chair*PostCongress*Reg Connect	-0.231**			
	(0.111)			
VNA Chair*Education		0.0937***		
		(0.0307)		
Post Congress*Education		0.0471***		
		(0.0158)		
VNA Chair*Post Congress*Education		-0.0443		
		(0.0373)		
VNA Chair*Poor			0.0341	
			(0.230)	
Post Congress*Poor			0.0208	
			(0.110)	
VNA Chair*Post Congress*Poor			-0.105	
			(0.275)	
VNA Chair*Age				0.00254
				(0.00402)
Post Congress*Age				0.00298
				(0.00200)
VNA Chair*Post Congress*Age				-0.00339
				(0.00490)
Other Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	-2.471***	-2.405***	-2.521***	-2.426***
	(0.0715)	(0.0764)	(0.0703)	(0.0969)
Observations	22,492	22,492	22,492	22,492
r2_p	0.168	0.169	0.168	0.168

Notes: Clustered standard errors in parentheses. The model is as a probit where the variable is the correct identification of the leader. (*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1).

Appendix 3: Impact of Party Congress on Attention to VNA

VARIABLES	Watch VNA	Watch VNA	Watch VNA
Female	-0.420***	-0.417***	-0.417***
	(0.0246)	(0.0246)	(0.0249)
Post Congress	0.113***	0.171***	0.0622**
	(0.0223)	(0.0252)	(0.0255)
Female*PostCongress	0.0810***	0.0902***	0.0616*
	(0.0296)	(0.0331)	(0.0349)
Regime Connected	0.342***	0.321***	0.347***
	(0.0154)	(0.0181)	(0.0183)
Read News	0.683***	0.678***	0.709***
	(0.0145)	(0.0176)	(0.0172)
Ethnic Majority	-0.0160	-0.00926	-0.0310
	(0.0255)	(0.0284)	(0.0315)
Age	0.0170***	0.0179***	0.0186***
	(0.000736)	(0.000860)	(0.000854)
Poverty List	-0.0252	-0.0419	-0.0462
	(0.0243)	(0.0301)	(0.0311)
Education (quintiles)	0.165***	0.158***	0.164***
	(0.00611)	(0.00702)	(0.00736)
Constant	-1.819***	-1.829***	-1.892***
	(0.0502)	(0.0558)	(0.0608)
Observations	41,760	27,785	27,818
r2_p	0.143	0.143	0.151

Notes: Clustered standard errors in parentheses. The model is as a probit where the variable is whether or not the respondent watched VNA proceedings. Model 1 includes all years, Model 2 only 2015 and 2016, Model 3 only 2015 and 2017 (*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1).