

## Why No Gender Gap in Electoral Participation? A Civic Duty Explanation

Miguel Carreras (UC Riverside)  
[carreras@ucr.edu](mailto:carreras@ucr.edu)

Forthcoming in *Electoral Studies*

### Abstract

Previous research in comparative political behavior has generated an interesting paradox. Female citizens are less likely to engage in a variety of political activities (e.g. contacting politicians and working for parties), and are less cognitively engaged with the political process (i.e. they have lower levels of political interest and political efficacy). However, for reasons that remain unclear, several cross-national surveys reveal that there is no gender gap in electoral participation. In a number of countries, such as the United States, turnout rates for women have even slightly exceeded turnout rates for men in recent elections. I argue that the main reason for this pattern is the higher sense of civic duty of female citizens. This theory is grounded in research in social psychology that demonstrates that women have a higher level of conscientiousness than men. I use data from the 2014 ISSP Citizenship module to test my theoretical expectations, and find strong support for the argument that civic duty mediates the relationship between sex and electoral participation.

## Introduction

One of the most robust findings in the political participation literature is that there are persistent participatory inequalities. Certain sociodemographic groups are considerably less likely to engage in mainstream political activities, such as voting, contacting politicians, and working for political parties. In particular, young citizens, individuals with lower socioeconomic status, and women tend to participate less in conventional political activities (Dalton, 2017; Schlozman, Verba, & Brady, 2012; Teorell, Sum, & Tobiasen, 2007; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). In this paper, I focus on an understudied paradox in the study of gender participatory inequalities: i.e. the lack of a gender gap in *electoral* participation.

Previous comparative research has shown a clear gender gap in political engagement. First, women are less likely to be cognitively engaged with the political process. Female citizens tend to be less politically interested and less politically informed than male citizens (Fraile & Gómez, forthcoming; Inglehart & Norris, 2003). Second, women tend to participate less in the political arena. They are less likely to contact politicians, to work for political parties, and to participate in demonstrations (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010; Marien, Hooghe, & Quintelier, 2010).

Two types of arguments have commonly been offered to explain why women are less likely to participate in political activities. First, cultural explanations emphasize the traditional norms, attitudes, and values about the role of men and women in public life. Cultural norms limit female political engagement because the political arena is perceived as a male domain (Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Jennings, 1983; Paxton & Kunovich, 2003). Second, resource-based explanations link gender gaps in political activism to concomitant gender gaps in wealth, income, time, or access to networks. The non-political institutions of daily life (e.g. the family and the workplace) generate gender differences in resources and skills which create barriers for female political participation (Burns, Schlozman, & Verba, 2001; Schlozman, Burns, & Verba, 1994).

However, previous research studying the impact of sex on electoral participation finds no clear gender gap. While some studies report no statistically significant difference in turnout across genders (Alexander & Coffé, 2018; Gallego, 2007; Marien et al., 2010; Norris, 2002), other studies suggest that women are slightly more likely to vote in a variety of contexts (Carreras & Castañeda-Angarita, 2014; Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010; Conway, Steuernagel, & Ahern, 1997). This is a relatively new phenomenon. Until about the 1990s, female turnout was lower than that of men in most countries where this relationship was investigated. This was due to a habit of non-voting which resulted from women's political socialization before female enfranchisement (Franklin, 2004). But the trend has clearly reversed in the past few decades. This constitutes a real paradox. If women are less interested in politics, less informed, and less knowledgeable; why are they not less likely to go to the polls on Election Day? While previous studies have shown this inconsistency between the electoral participation of women and their overall political participation, they have not fully explained what drives these patterns.

I argue that the lack of a gender gap in electoral participation is related to the fact that female citizens are more likely to feel a strong civic duty to participate in elections. Previous research in social psychology has established that women are more conscientious than men, i.e. they are more likely to dutifully perform tasks and to take seriously obligations to others. This is critical to understand why there is no gender gap in electoral participation (a participatory form often presented as a democratic duty), while at the same time women participate less in other political activities, such as protest or party work (participatory forms that can be described as democratic rights rather than duties).

### Gender Differences in Political Participation

After conducting a seven-nation comparison of different dimensions of political participation during the 1970s, Verba, Nie, and Kim (1978: 267) concluded: “In all societies for which we have data, sex is related to political activity; men are more active than women.” By and large, the gender gap in political engagement has been confirmed in more recent cross-national studies. Women are less likely to participate in the political arena, even after controlling for sociodemographic characteristics and relevant political attitudes, such as political interest (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010; Marien et al., 2010).<sup>1</sup> However, for reasons that remain unclear, there is no gender gap in electoral participation (Carreras & Castañeda-Angarita, 2014; Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010; Marien et al., 2010).

This section uses several recent cross-national datasets to assess whether these patterns can be observed in various contexts. I used data from the 2014 International Social Survey Program (ISSP) Citizenship module, several waves of the European Social Surveys (ESS), and several waves of the AmericasBarometer (LAPOP) to evaluate whether female respondents are more or less likely to be politically engaged and to participate in different political activities.

[Table 1 about here]

[Table 2 about here]

[Table 3 about here]

The models presented in Tables 1-3 evaluate whether respondents’ sex is associated with cognitive political engagement (models 1-4) and a variety of participatory forms (models 5-8). The results of these analyses provide additional support for the gender participation gaps identified in previous research. Women are markedly less cognitively engaged with the political process. The cross-national survey data reveals that female respondents are less likely to be politically interested, to be politically informed, to feel politically efficacious and to have a partisan identification. Similarly, the results confirm that women are less likely to engage in a variety of participatory forms in the political arena, such as contacting politicians (except in Latin America), working for a political party, attending political meetings, and participating in protest demonstrations. In sum, the models clearly show that women tend to be less politically active than men.

However, the gender gap is reversed for the models estimating the relationship between respondents’ sex and electoral participation (model 8 in Tables 1-3). The three cross-national survey datasets show that female respondents are more likely to vote in national elections. In order to assess the substantive importance of this gender gap, I estimated the predicted probabilities of electoral participation for female

---

<sup>1</sup> In this article, I adopt the classical perspective of political participation as actions “aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and/or the actions they take” (Verba & Nie, 1972: 2). This broad definition includes ‘conventional’ actions –e.g. voting, contacting politicians– and ‘unconventional’ actions –e.g. joining demonstrations–, but excludes actions such as political consumerism that are not directly aimed at electing/influencing government officials. It is important to note, however, that a growing literature shows that women are more actively involved in ‘emerging’ or non-institutionalized forms of political participation, such as boycotting products or signing petitions (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010; Marien et al., 2010; Stolle & Hooghe, 2011; Stolle, Hooghe, & Micheletti, 2005).

and male respondents when other variables are held at their mean values. These predicted probabilities are presented in Table 4.<sup>2</sup> The gap in electoral participation is substantively small in the three cross-national surveys. The regression models based on ESS and ISSP surveys show a 1 percentage point difference in the likelihood of voting, while the results of the analysis using LAPOP data suggest a slightly larger effect (a 3-percentage points difference). My results therefore confirm the findings of recent studies that show that there is no gender gap in electoral participation (Alexander & Coffé, 2018; Gallego, 2007; Marien et al., 2010). If anything, the predicted probabilities indicate that women are slightly more likely to vote.

[Table 4 about here]

How can we make sense of the results presented in this section? In particular, why is there no gender gap in turnout? The literature offers three possible explanations for this pattern. First, previous research has shown that voting is the most egalitarian form of political participation (Dalton, Scarrow, & Cain, 2005; Verba et al., 1995). Participating in elections requires fewer resources (in terms of time, economic, and cognitive resources) than contacting politicians or working for a political party (Burns et al., 2001). For instance, Teorell et al. (2007) conduct a cross-national analysis of participatory inequalities in 13 European societies and they conclude that “voting appears to be greatly insulated from inequalities based on social groupings” (Teorell et al., 2007: 398).<sup>3</sup> Second, voting is a more private form of participation—the vote is secret and individuals are alone in the ballot box—which allows women to have a voice without having to openly and vocally defend their ideas in the political arena. Since many women feel that politics is a male domain and perceive themselves as less qualified than men to be politically active (Lawless & Fox, 2005; Paxton & Kunovich, 2003), the individualized nature of the act of voting might also contribute to the absence of a gender gap in electoral participation. Third, scholars have suggested that women may “find it easier to participate in ways that can be incorporated in daily life and do not put more strain on already (relatively) limited resources” (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010: 320). While most studies tend to focus on non-institutionalized “private” actions—e.g. political consumerism and signing petitions—(Lowndes, 2000; Stolle & Hooghe, 2011; Stolle et al., 2005), voting is also a political activity that women can more easily intertwine with their daily routines.

In sum, previous studies suggest that the lack of a gender gap in electoral participation is related to the fact that voting is easier than other forms of political participation because it is less time-consuming, less public, and requires fewer civic skills. I argue here that this is only part of the explanation. The decision to take part in an election is not only a result of individual resources. In a survey analysis of the anticipated political engagement of American teenagers, Hooghe and Stolle (2004) reveal that fourteen-year old girls anticipate voting at a higher rate than fourteen-year old boys (83.8 vs. 75). This finding is interesting because it suggests that women report a higher likelihood of future turnout at a time when systematic differences in the availability of resources have not yet crystalized (i.e. adolescence).

More generally, the classic theoretical framework developed by Verba et al. (1995) suggests that the participatory process rests on three main factors: motivation, capacity, and networks of recruitment. The motivation to participate in elections is strongly associated with factors such as political interest, political efficacy, political awareness, and partisanship (Carreras & Castañeda-Angarita, 2014; Kuenzi & Lambright,

---

<sup>2</sup> Due to space constraints, I do not present the predicted probabilities of engaging in other political activities for female and male respondents. But these additional estimations are available in Table A1 in the online Appendix.

<sup>3</sup> In their analysis, they consider the participatory inequalities in terms of gender, age, education, and locality.

2011; Norris, 2002; Verba, Burns, & Schlozman, 1997). An extensive body of research (covering different geographical areas) reveals that women tend to know less about politics, be less politically interested, and less politically efficacious (Alexander & Coffé, 2018; Bennett & Bennett, 1989; Ferrín Pereira, Fraile, & Rubal, 2015; Fraile & Gómez, 2017, forthcoming; Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Verba et al., 1997). The results presented in Tables 1-3 once again confirm these patterns, and also show that women tend to be less attached to political parties.

We are then confronted with a paradox. Since women are less cognitively engaged with the political process (i.e. less interested in politics and less efficacious), they should be less motivated to vote. However, the results in Tables 1-3 suggest that, if anything, women's propensity to vote is slightly higher than that of male citizens. This paradox was also noted in a study of political interest in the United States: "since political interest has long been known to be a powerful determinant of turnout, why is it that women's turnout rate is now equal men's while gender differences in interest remain?" (Bennett & Bennett, 1989: 117). In the remainder of this paper, I argue that the lack of a gender gap in turnout is related to the fact that female citizens have a stronger sense of civic duty to vote, which acts as a powerful motivator for women's electoral participation.

#### Civic Duty and Female Electoral Participation

In any large election, the probability that any particular vote will be decisive is extremely small. From a rational choice perspective, the act of voting appears irrational because the costs of voting (e.g. the time required to go to the polling station) are always higher than any benefit that might be obtained (Owen & Grofman, 1984). Still, most people vote in most national elections. Fiorina (1981) describes this pattern as the "paradox of voting."

How can we make sense of the relatively high electoral participation rate in modern democracies? One of the main arguments that has been proposed to explain the paradox of voting is that citizens feel a civic duty to vote. As Galais and Blais (2016: 213) write,

"One possible reason [for high electoral participation] is that they feel it is a citizen's duty to vote in a democracy. People vote not because they calculate that the benefits outweigh the costs but because they consider that this is the 'right', 'ethical' thing to do. They believe that they have a moral obligation to vote."

The belief that there is a duty to vote is often associated with a social norm (Blais, 2000; Coleman, 1990; Mueller, 1989; Uhlener, 1986). Citizens are members of a broader community, and the act of voting is a public good. Turning out to vote is something that is perceived by citizens as necessary for the well-being of the community and for maintaining healthy democratic systems. In other words, citizens are not narrowly self-interested, and they vote to conform with a cooperative norm even when the costs of voting are relatively high. The civic duty to vote is internalized in early adulthood through socialization (Campbell, 2008; Gidengil, Wass, & Valaste, 2016), which creates a feeling of guilt when this socially cooperative norm is violated –i.e. when people do not vote– (Blais, 2000). The duty to vote is also externally enforced by the social networks in which individuals are embedded, which often create a social pressure to go to the polls on Election Day (Knack & Kropf, 1998).

Moreover, citizens are often reminded of their moral obligation to vote by the media, political leaders, and even some religious institutions around election time. Major national newspapers often publish

editorials or op-ed pieces before elections reminding citizens of the importance of the act of voting (Bátiz, 2009; Guénolé, 2012; Maskivker, 2016). Knack and Kropf (1998: 593) similarly show that local newspapers in the United States communicate to their readers that voting is a civic duty. Political leaders also remind voters of the importance of voting before elections, and celebrate high rates of electoral participation after elections (even when they are defeated). In a similar vein, some religious institutions (in particular the Catholic Church) present the act of voting as a moral obligation that citizens should perform (Clarín, 2001; El País, 2008). It is then not surprising that the belief that voting is a civic duty is held by a majority of citizens in most democracies. Previous research estimates that between 70% and 80% of citizens in different democratic regimes have internalized the norm that voting in national elections is a duty (Blais, 2000: 105; Bolzendahl & Coffé, 2013: 52; Bowler & Donovan, 2013: 269)

Several studies demonstrate a strong link between civic duty and turnout. People who express a moral obligation to vote are much more likely to participate in elections (Blais, 2000; Bolzendahl & Coffé, 2013; Verba et al., 1995). In fact, previous research suggests that citizens' duty is one of the strongest predictors of electoral participation at the individual level (Clarke, Sanders, Stewart, & Whiteley, 2004: 259; Dalton, 2008). While some scholars argue that the 'D term' might simply be an a posteriori rationalization of the act of voting (Matsusaka & Palda, 1999), recent research with panel data suggests that this view is misguided. In fact, several studies show that respondents who express a civic duty to vote *before* an election are more likely to go to the polls on Election Day (Blais & Rubenson, 2013; Galais & Blais, 2016). In a similar vein, experimental research shows that when people are reminded of their duty to participate in elections, they are significantly more likely to vote (Gerber, Green, & Larimer, 2008).

The key argument in this paper is that female citizens are more likely to feel a moral obligation to vote. This hypothesis is based on psychological research which has identified consistent gender gaps in personality traits. The Five Factor Model in psychology suggests that five broad dimensions can be used to describe the human personality: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (Digman, 1990). One of these dimensions is particularly important for our purposes, i.e. conscientiousness. John and Srivastava (1999: 121) describe conscientiousness as "socially prescribed impulse control that facilitates task- and goal-directed behavior, such as thinking before acting, delaying gratification, following norms and rules, and planning, organizing, and prioritizing tasks." Conscientious individuals are more likely to behave dutifully and to follow social norms (McCrae & Costa, 2005; Mondak, 2010). Recent studies similarly show that conscientious people feel a stronger sense of civic duty to vote in US and Spanish elections (Gallego & Oberski, 2012; Weinschenk, 2014).

Previous research in psychology has revealed that women tend to be more conscientious than men. Schmitt et al. (2008) study gender differences in personality traits across 55 cultures, and find that women report higher levels of conscientiousness than men in most countries. Feingold (1994) similarly shows that women in Canada, China, Finland, Germany, Poland, and Russia score higher than men on a scale related to the personality trait of conscientiousness. Another cross-national analysis of 25 countries shows that women are more dutiful than men (Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001). In sum, there is consistent cross-national evidence indicating a higher level of conscientiousness among women.

The reason for this difference is not entirely clear. One of the leading explanations of sex differences in personality traits across cultures is the social role model. According to this model, the observed gender differences in personality and social behavior result from a process of sex role socialization which defines appropriate behavior for men and women. Individuals observe since an early age the social roles occupied

by men and women, and derive from this socialization a series of beliefs about the desirable attributes for each sex (Eagly, 1987; Ruble, Martin, & Berenbaum, 2007). In most cultures, women are much less likely to occupy leadership positions and are overrepresented in lower-level positions in organizations (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001). This unequal gender distribution of leadership roles might influence the personality traits of women and men. In particular, the higher level of conscientiousness observed among women might result from the fact that women occupy lower-level positions in which they have to follow norms decided by people in leadership positions (mostly men). In fact, research in social and political psychology has consistently shown that men are more likely than women to be perceived as having *agentic* characteristics –i.e. forcefulness, self-sufficiency, and self-confidence– (Eagly, 1987; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993).

Regardless of what drives this gender gap in dutifulness and conscientiousness, I argue that these personality differences are critical to explain why women are more likely to go to the polls on Election Day. From the discussion above, it is clear that conscientiousness is positively associated with the feeling of civic duty; and the feeling of civic duty is in turn positively associated with the decision to participate in elections. Hence, the higher level of conscientiousness observed among women might be the key element to solve the puzzle identified above, i.e. lower female political engagement but no gender gap in electoral participation.

To my knowledge, this is the first study that attempts to explain the absence of a gender gap in electoral participation by looking at differences in the civic duty to vote for each sex. However, there are some findings in recent studies that are consistent with this argument. Córdova and Rangel (2017) show that compulsory voting increases electoral participation, but that this effect is particularly strong for female citizens. In other words, female citizens are more responsive to norms that make voting mandatory. This is exactly what the theory of this paper would predict. In a similar vein, Wang (2014) shows that conscientiousness increases female electoral participation in the United States, but has no effect on male turnout. Both studies suggest that dutifulness and respect for social norms are particularly important to explain the turnout decision of female citizens.

Building on these studies, I argue that female citizens have a higher sense of civic duty than male citizens. I further contend that this gender gap in civic duty is largely responsible for the relatively high level of female turnout. While previous research has shown that women are more likely to express a civic duty to vote in countries such as Canada (Blais, 2000), the United Kingdom (Bowler & Donovan, 2013), and the United States (Weinschenk, 2014), no study has addressed this hypothesis systematically with a large cross-national dataset.

The hypotheses of this paper follow from this discussion:

Hypothesis 1: Female citizens are more likely to feel a civic duty to vote.

Hypothesis 2: The positive relationship between the variables “female” and “turnout” is mediated by the sense of civic duty.

### Research Design

I use data from the 2014 International Social Survey Program (ISSP) module on Citizenship. The ISSP is a cross-national collaboration conducting annual surveys on diverse topics relevant to social sciences. Each survey is fielded by a scientific organization within the member nation, typically as part of a larger random

survey of the adult population. More detailed information on the 2014 Citizenship module is available in Scholz et al. (2017).

The sample I analyze has individual-level data from 33 countries. The 2014 ISSP module includes data from several rich consolidated democracies, but also a number of newer and more fragile democracies.<sup>4</sup> After dropping observations with missing data on the independent variables (Allison, 2002), the sample size is 44,675.

This 2014 ISSP Citizenship module is appropriate for this analysis because it includes a question that can be used to capture respondents' civic duty to vote.<sup>5</sup> The survey item used asked respondents the following question: *"There are different opinions as to what it takes to be a good citizen. As far as you are concerned personally on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is not at all important and 7 is very important, how important is it: always to vote in elections."* Using this question, I created a dummy variable "civic duty to vote" coded as 1 when respondents answered 6 or 7 to the above question, and 0 otherwise.<sup>6</sup>

The survey also includes a few questions that capture whether respondents feel a civic duty to be politically engaged (beyond voting). In particular, using the same 1-7 scale two survey items asked respondents whether keeping watch on the actions of government and being active in social or political associations was important to be a good citizen. I also recoded these variables into dummy variables to create the variables "duty to be politically active" and "duty to keep watch on government actions" (respondents who answered 6 or 7 on these items are coded as 1, everyone else is coded as 0).

The main independent variable in the statistical analysis below captures the sex of the respondent (coded as 1 if the respondent is a woman, and 0 if the respondent is a man). I also include in the analysis several sociodemographic characteristics (age, education, employment status, and place of residence) and one political attitude (satisfaction with democracy) that are traditionally associated with electoral participation in comparative studies (Carreras & Castañeda-Angarita, 2014; Kuenzi & Lambricht, 2011), and might also be associated with the civic duty to vote.

### Model Estimation

The empirical model in this paper applies multilevel techniques that distinguish between two levels, that is, the individual level and the country level. The multilevel approach takes the layered character of the data into account. In my data set, individuals are embedded within 33 different countries. Multilevel

---

<sup>4</sup> The countries included in the 2014 ISSP module are: Austria; Australia; Belgium; Switzerland; Chile; Czech Republic; Germany; Denmark; Spain; Finland; France; Great Britain; Georgia; Croatia; Hungary; Israel; India; Iceland; Japan; Republic of Korea; Lithuania; the Netherlands; Norway; Philippines; Poland; Russia; Sweden; Slovenia; Slovakia; Turkey; the United States; Venezuela; and South Africa.

<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, other cross-national public opinion surveys such as the European Social Surveys, the AmericasBarometer, or the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems do not include variables to capture the civic duty to vote.

<sup>6</sup> The reason for creating a dichotomous variable is that the variations at the low end of the scale (e.g. from 1 to 2 or from 2 to 3) are not relevant for this analysis. What I want to assess is whether women are more likely to feel a strong sense of civic duty (i.e. to place themselves at the high end of the scale). However, using the continuous variable rather than the dummy variable does not change the results. These alternative models are available in Tables A3 and A4 in the online Appendix.



models have the advantage that separate residual components can be specified at each level, and therefore, they adjust for the correlation of these error components of the various levels when estimating the coefficients (Gelman & Hill, 2006; Steenbergen & Jones, 2002). Hierarchical models also allow for a more precise estimation of individual-level factors because they control for important contextual factors that may bias the results. Because the dependent variables used in the empirical analysis are binary (duty to vote, duty to be politically active, and duty to keep watch on government actions), these models were estimated using a multilevel logistic regression.

## Results

Table 5 presents three multilevel models estimating duty to engage in different political activities at the individual level. Three different “duties” are analyzed: the duty to vote, the duty to be active in social and political associations, and the duty to keep watch on government actions.

[Table 5 about here]

The first interesting finding is that, as expected, female respondents are more likely to express a sense of civic duty to participate in elections. In model 1, the variable “female” is positive and statistically significant. In order to find out whether this significant coefficient is substantively important, I estimated the predicted probabilities of civic duty to vote. Table 6 presents the predicted probabilities of voting at different values of the independent variables that were statistically significant in Model 1 above, holding all other variables at their means.

[Table 6 about here]

The predicted probabilities show that female voters are significantly more likely to feel a civic duty to vote than male citizens. When all variables are at their mean values, a respondent has a 71% probability of expressing a civic duty to vote. This probability goes up (down) by 2 percentage points when the respondent is a woman (man). While two other variables are more strongly associated with civic duty (age and political interest), the sex of the respondent is clearly related with the probability of feeling a civic duty to vote.<sup>7</sup> This may help explain why women participate more in elections, while they are less politically engaged overall.

However, the higher predisposition to feel a civic duty to vote among female respondents could not explain the puzzle of higher female turnout if women also felt a stronger sense of duty to participate in other political activities. Since other forms of political participation (e.g. protest or contacting politicians) tend to be presented as democratic rights rather than democratic norms, I do not expect women to feel a moral obligation to be politically active in other domains. This is exactly what the results suggest.

---

<sup>7</sup> These predicted probabilities suggest that the civic duty to vote is weak in early adulthood and becomes stronger during the life-cycle. This suggests that the perception that voting is a duty is constantly being reinforced as citizens are exposed to more electoral processes during their adult life.

The models 2 and 3 in Table 5 show that women are not more likely to feel a duty to be politically active in social and political associations or to keep watch on government actions. The coefficient for the variable “female” is positive in model 2 and negative in model 3 but is not statistically significant in either model.

In sum, the three models reported in this section are consistent with my theoretical intuitions. In line with psychological research which shows a higher level of conscientiousness among women, the results indicate that female citizens are more likely to express a civic duty to vote. However, the models also suggest that women are not more likely to feel a moral obligation to engage in other political activities.

### Mediation analysis

To test Hypothesis 2, I conducted a mediation analysis to show that the relationship between the respondents’ sex and turnout is mediated by civic duty. Four conditions need to be met to show that there is (complete) mediation (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Judd & Kenny, 1981). First, the key independent variable, “female,” should be significantly correlated with the main outcome variable, “electoral participation,” without controlling for the mediator, “civic duty.” Model 1 in Table 7 shows that this correlation exists. Second, the variable “female” should be positively and significantly associated with the mediator variable, “civic duty.” Model 2 in Table 7 shows this to be the case. Third, the mediator, “civic duty,” should be positively related to “electoral participation” controlling for the key independent variable, “female.” And fourth, the correlation between “female” and “electoral participation” should be small and not statistically significant when controlling for “civic duty.” Model 3 in Table 7 shows that conditions 3 and 4 are also satisfied. Figure 1 graphically presents the relevant coefficients from these models in Table 7.

[Table 7 about here]

[Figure 1 about here]

In order to assess more precisely the magnitude of this mediation, I estimated the proportion of the total effect that is mediated (Preacher & Kelley, 2011) using the Stata command “binary mediation.”<sup>8</sup> In this model, 45% of the total effect of “female” on “electoral participation” is mediated through “civic duty,” which shows that there is a (partial) mediation. This again confirms that the fact that women have a higher sense of civic duty to vote is critical to explain the absence of a gender gap in electoral participation.

It is important to note here that the civic duty to vote only mediates the relationship between sex and *electoral* participation. In fact, I reproduced the mediation analysis reported in Table 7 for each of the different forms of political participation reported in Table 1. The results indicate that the civic duty to vote is positively associated with these other political activities, but the coefficient of the variable “female” remains negative and statistically significant when the variable “civic duty” is included in these models. In other words, there is no indication that civic duty mediates the relationship between sex and political

---

<sup>8</sup> Since the models include dichotomous variables, the coefficients have to be rescaled (standardized) before the mediation effect can be estimated (Kenny, 2013). Given the hierarchical structure of the data, I added country fixed effects to the list of covariates in this estimation.

engagement more broadly. These additional mediation analyses are reported in the online Appendix (Tables A5 to A10).

### Robustness models

I estimated a series of additional models to make sure that the results presented above are robust. There are alternative ways to deal with multilevel data. One possibility is to estimate logistic regressions with country fixed effects. Another option is to estimate logistic regressions with standard errors clustered around countries. I re-estimated the models in Table 5 using these alternative ways to estimate the models, and the results are the same. The variable “female” is positive and statistically significant in the models analyzing the determinants of civic duty to vote, but not significant in the models analyzing the moral obligation to engage in other political activities. The results of these models are presented in Table A2 in the online Appendix.

I also made sure that the relationship between the variables “female” and “civic duty” is not driven by any single country. In fact, the main result reported in model 1 in Table 5 (i.e. women are more likely to feel a sense of civic duty to vote) holds when each country is successively dropped from the regression, and the size of the coefficients is very similar in all the models.

Finally, I re-estimated the civic duty model in Table 5 and the mediation analysis in Table 7 using the ordinal variable “importance of voting” (1-7 scale) rather than the dummy variable I created to capture “civic duty.” The results are very similar. The variable “female” is positively associated with the feeling that voting is important to be a good citizen, and the coefficient is statistically significant. The mediation analysis with this alternative measure of “civic duty” also provides support for the theoretical expectations of this paper. The four conditions of the mediation analysis are fulfilled. The variable “female” is positively associated with electoral participation and with the belief that voting is important to be a good citizen. However, when the belief that voting is important for citizenship is controlled for, the sex of the respondent does not predict turnout. I also estimated the proportion of the total effect that is mediated. In this alternative mediation analysis, 61% of the total effect of “female” on “electoral participation” is mediated through “belief in the importance of voting,” which shows that the mediation analysis reported above is robust. The models described in this paragraph are presented in Tables A3-A4 in the online Appendix.

In sum, this section has shown that the findings reported in the paper are not an artifact of a particular form of estimating the model or the way in which the variable “civic duty” is operationalized.

### Supplementary analyses

This study relies on the largest cross-national survey dataset that includes a survey item that can be used to measure citizens’ civic duty to vote. A potential limitation of the empirical analysis is that only one variable is used to capture respondents’ belief that it is a moral obligation to go the polls on Election Day.

Several studies emphasize the importance of using several indicators for measuring attitudinal dimensions (Ansolabehere, Rodden, & Snyder, 2008; Carmines & Zeller, 1979).

Fortunately, a recent cross-national internet survey that was conducted after the 2014 European Parliament election in seven different countries (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Austria, Greece, and Portugal) includes a battery of 13 questions to measure civic duty.<sup>9</sup> Using this dataset, Blais and Galais (2016) conduct a confirmatory factor analysis and determine that four indicators are particularly suitable to create a “civic duty” construct that is both internally consistent and has sufficient item heterogeneity. These four items are described in Table 8.

[Table 8 about here]

I recoded these four indicators into dummies (as detailed in Table 8), and then created a civic duty additive scale that ranges from 0 to 3. This procedure suggests that the belief that voting is a civic duty is widespread in these seven countries, but the strength of that belief varies considerably.<sup>10</sup> I then replicated the statistical analysis presented in the paper in this smaller sample of seven countries using this more fine-grained and very reliable construct of civic duty. The results are very similar, as can be observed in Table 9. The coefficients for the variable “female” are positive and statistically significant in models 1 and 2, which suggests that women are more likely to vote and to have a strong sense of civic duty. However, the sex of the respondent is no longer a statistically significant predictor of electoral participation when the civic duty scale is included as an independent variable. Again, this suggests that civic duty mediates the relationship between sex and turnout.<sup>11</sup>

[Table 9 about here]

## Conclusion

While women are less interested in politics and less likely to participate in a diverse array of political activities, recent cross-national survey research shows that there is no gender gap in electoral participation. The results presented above suggest that, if anything, women are slightly more likely to vote. This paper provides an explanation for this paradox. Social psychological research has shown repeatedly that women tend to be more conscientious than men. I therefore argue that women should have a higher sense of civic duty, which in turn explains why they are more likely to turnout. I conduct several tests of these hypotheses and find strong support for my theoretical intuitions. Using data from the 2014 ISSP module, I find that women are significantly more likely to express a civic duty to vote.

---

<sup>9</sup> Fieldwork was conducted by the institute TNS-Sofres in all seven countries. In each country, nationally representative samples were drawn from existing online panels which include several hundred thousands of email addresses, randomly chosen with a simple stratification by region. In order to overcome the well-known sociodemographic biases of internet samples, quotas on sex, age, and social status were also imposed (Sauger, Dehousse, & Gougou, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> The descriptive statistics are as follows: no civic duty (0): 21%, moderate civic duty (1): 34.5%, high civic duty (2): 26%, and very high civic duty (3): 18.5%.

<sup>11</sup> In this model, 29% of the total effect of “female” on “electoral participation” is mediated through “civic duty,” which again shows that there is a (partial) mediation

The main contribution of this paper is therefore to show that there are psychological factors that contribute to closing the gender gap in a critical form of political participation: voting. This finding has important implications. First, it is well known that elections serve as a key mechanism of political representation and accountability (Manin, Przeworski, & Stokes, 1999). Political leaders pay less attention to citizens who do not vote (Lijphart, 1997). The fact that women now vote at least as much as men in most contexts might lead political parties to adopt policy programs that better represent specific demands and preferences of women. Second, the relatively high level of female political participation might gradually lead to more women in elected offices (Jalalzai, 2013). Women are less likely to hold gender biases against female politicians, and presumably are more likely to support them for elected positions. While the political advancement of women is in part the result of institutional mechanisms (e.g. gender quotas), the absence of a gender gap in turnout might also facilitate the election of women to different political offices.

The results of the mediation analysis suggest that about half of the total effect of sex on electoral participation is mediated through civic duty. This is an important finding, but also one that suggests that there might be other factors contributing to the paradox analyzed in this paper. First, women might prioritize electoral participation (rather than contacting politicians or attending political meetings) because voting is a participatory form that requires relatively little time, and time is a resource that women often lack (Schlozman et al., 1994). Second, voting is a more private form of participation –the vote is secret and individuals are alone in the ballot box– which allows women to be politically engaged in a way that is less public and confrontational than working for a political party or joining a demonstration. Future research should assess whether (and to what extent) these factors also contribute to the absence of a gender gap in electoral participation.

The findings in this paper also point to an interesting distinction between participatory forms that are widely perceived as civic *duties* (e.g. voting) and political actions that are normally perceived as civic *rights* in democratic systems (e.g. contacting politicians or joining a demonstration). Of course, not all individuals perceive these different actions in a similar light. Individual traits might affect which forms of political participation are considered civic duties and which actions are considered democratic rights. In this paper, I investigated the impact of gender on the perception that voting is a civic duty but other factors (in particular age and education) might influence perceptions of dutifulness in regard to different political actions. It might also be interesting to explore how contextual (e.g. institutional) factors shape mass perceptions of dutifulness at the cross-national level. These are all interesting avenues for further research.

**Table 1.** Determinants of political participation in 33 countries (ISSP 2014)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Political Interest	Party ID	Attention to news	Political Efficacy	Contact Politicians	Attend political meeting	Protest	Vote
VARIABLES								
<b>Female</b>	<b>-0.195***</b>	<b>-0.264***</b>	<b>-0.200***</b>	<b>-.204***</b>	<b>-0.348***</b>	<b>-0.317***</b>	<b>-0.073*</b>	<b>0.093***</b>
	<b>(0.008)</b>	<b>(0.032)</b>	<b>(0.015)</b>	<b>(0.008)</b>	<b>(0.037)</b>	<b>(0.037)</b>	<b>(0.042)</b>	<b>(0.029)</b>
Age	0.096***	0.216***	0.212***	.091***	0.179***	0.016	-0.173***	0.516***
	(0.003)	(0.014)	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.018)	(0.012)
Education	0.247***	0.225***	0.226***	.193***	0.532***	0.332***	0.463***	0.389***
	(0.007)	(0.027)	(0.013)	(0.007)	(0.033)	(0.032)	(0.037)	(0.026)
Satisfaction with democracy	0.026***	0.021***	0.032***	.000	-0.027***	-0.002	-0.073***	0.070***
	(0.002)	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.006)
Employment status	-0.025***	0.064*	-0.087***	-.008	0.166***	0.044	0.069	0.260***
	(0.009)	(0.035)	(0.016)	(0.009)	(0.041)	(0.039)	(0.046)	(0.031)
Urban	0.064***	-0.291***	0.094***	.070***	-0.201***	-0.087**	0.502***	-0.205***
	(0.009)	(0.037)	(0.017)	(0.010)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.053)	(0.033)
Constant	1.545***	-3.400***	3.508***	1.928***	-3.972***	-3.163***	-3.427***	-1.154***
	(0.047)	(0.194)	(0.070)	(0.052)	(0.162)	(0.163)	(0.176)	(0.154)
Observations	43,395	43,459	41,285	40,413	43,131	43,086	43,173	39,548
Number of groups	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	32

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1

**Table 2.** Determinants of political participation in Europe (ESS 2002-2014)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Political Interest	Party ID	Attention to news	Political Efficacy	Contact Politicians	Work for Party	Protest	Vote
VARIABLES								
<b>Female</b>	<b>-0.225***</b>	<b>-0.219***</b>	<b>-0.156***</b>	<b>-0.357***</b>	<b>-0.290***</b>	<b>-0.473***</b>	<b>-0.179***</b>	<b>0.050***</b>
	<b>(0.003)</b>	<b>(0.007)</b>	<b>(0.004)</b>	<b>(0.005)</b>	<b>(0.010)</b>	<b>(0.018)</b>	<b>(0.015)</b>	<b>(0.009)</b>
Age	0.010***	0.022***	0.011***	0.004***	0.010***	0.009***	-0.014***	0.037***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Education	0.057***	0.051***	0.031***	0.062***	0.095***	0.090***	0.086***	0.093***
	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(.001)
Income	0.071***	0.106***	0.043***	.103***	0.022**	0.108***	-0.003	0.187***
	(0.002)	(0.005)	(0.002)	(.004)	(0.007)	(0.012)	(0.009)	(0.006)
Satisfaction with democracy	0.026***	0.087***	0.011***	0.033***	-0.002	0.012**	-0.047***	0.082***
	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.002)
Employment status	0.010**	-0.007	-0.055***	0.063***	0.250***	0.103***	-0.037**	0.317***
	(0.003)	(0.008)	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.011)	(0.020)	(0.015)	(0.010)
Urban	0.051***	0.010	0.055***	0.086***	-0.317***	-0.186***	0.390***	-0.217***
	(0.003)	(0.008)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.011)	(0.019)	(0.017)	(0.010)
Constant	0.954***	-2.316***	0.150***	1.583***	-3.427***	-4.858***	-3.157***	-2.456***
	(0.032)	(0.069)	(0.028)	(.033)	(0.077)	(0.089)	(0.131)	(0.106)
Observations	302,984	297,213	155,761	165,539	302,958	303,016	302,851	280,764
Number of groups	32	32	32	31	32	32	32	32

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1

**Table 3.** Determinants of political participation in Latin America (LAPOP 2004-2014)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Political Interest	Party ID	Attention to news	Political Efficacy	Contact Politicians	Work for Party	Protest	Vote
VARIABLES								
<b>Female</b>	<b>-0.148***</b> <b>(0.006)</b>	<b>-0.129***</b> <b>(0.014)</b>	<b>-0.169***</b> <b>(0.010)</b>	<b>-0.368***</b> <b>(0.011)</b>	<b>0.021</b> <b>(0.015)</b>	<b>-0.051***</b> <b>(0.004)</b>	<b>-0.204***</b> <b>(0.022)</b>	<b>0.191***</b> <b>(0.015)</b>
Age	0.003*** (0.000)	0.016*** (0.000)	0.003*** (0.000)	0.008*** (0.000)	0.010*** (0.000)	0.001*** (0.000)	-0.003*** (0.001)	0.050*** (0.001)
Education	0.102*** (0.002)	0.061*** (0.005)	0.180*** (0.004)	0.191*** (0.004)	0.079*** (0.006)	0.024*** (0.001)	0.174*** (0.008)	0.195*** (0.006)
Income	0.018*** (0.001)	0.030*** (0.003)	0.066*** (0.002)	0.035*** (0.002)	-0.042*** (0.003)	-0.005*** (0.001)	-0.015*** (0.004)	-0.015*** (0.003)
Satisfaction with democracy	0.108*** (0.004)	0.250*** (0.009)	0.011 (0.007)	0.197*** (0.008)	0.014 (0.010)	0.034*** (0.003)	-0.094*** (0.015)	0.123*** (0.010)
Employment status	0.037*** (0.006)	0.148*** (0.014)	0.043*** (0.011)	0.045*** (0.012)	0.164*** (0.015)	0.030*** (0.004)	0.300*** (0.023)	0.535*** (0.016)
Urban	-0.044*** (0.006)	-0.121*** (0.015)	0.338*** (0.011)	0.057*** (0.012)	-0.308*** (0.016)	-0.049*** (0.004)	0.060** (0.024)	-0.157*** (0.017)
Constant	1.363*** (0.034)	-2.227*** (0.129)	1.117*** (0.083)	2.459*** (0.059)	-1.837*** (0.289)	1.090*** (0.028)	-2.465*** (0.099)	-1.858*** (0.117)
Observations	117,886	116,686	40,334	101,770	118,612	113,218	98,513	117,102
Number of groups	22	22	22	22	22	21	22	22

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1



**Table 4.** Predicted probabilities of electoral participation, by sex (ESS and LAPOP)

<b>ISSP</b>	
Female	.85
Male	.84
<b>ESS</b>	
Female	.81
Male	.80
<b>LAPOP</b>	
Female	.78
Male	.75

**Table 5.** Determinants of civic duty to vote, to be politically active, and to keep watch on government (ISSP 2014)

VARIABLES	(1) Civic duty to vote	(2) Duty to be politically active	(3) Duty to keep watch on government
<b>Female</b>	<b>0.193***</b> <b>(0.022)</b>	<b>0.034</b> <b>(0.024)</b>	<b>-0.022</b> <b>(0.021)</b>
Age	0.020*** (0.001)	0.007*** (0.001)	0.011*** (0.001)
Education	0.022*** (0.003)	-0.001 (0.003)	0.007** (0.003)
Political interest	0.515*** (0.014)	0.412*** (0.014)	0.456*** (0.013)
Employment status	-0.030 (0.024)	-0.127*** (0.026)	-0.109*** (0.023)
Urban	-0.076*** (0.025)	-0.105*** (0.027)	0.074*** (0.023)
Constant	-1.511*** (0.129)	-2.437*** (0.134)	-1.516*** (0.127)
Observations	44,675	43,769	44,034
Number of groups	33	33	33

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1

**Table 6.** Predicted probabilities of civic duty (ISSP 2014)

Value on the independent variable	Predicted probability
All variables at their mean values	.71
Male	.69
Female	.73
Primary education	.69
Higher education	.73
Age 18-24	.60
Age 25-34	.65
Age 35-49	.70
Age 50-64	.75
Age > 64	.79
Low political interest (1)	.56
High political interest (4)	.85
Employed	.71
Unemployed	.72
Urban	.71
Rural	.72

**Table 7.** Mediation Analysis (ISSP 2014)

	(1) Vote	(2) Civic duty to vote	(3) Vote
<b>VARIABLES</b>			
Female	0.053** (0.026)	0.087*** (0.021)	0.043 (0.028)
Civic duty to vote			1.355*** (0.029)
Constant	1.639*** (0.137)	0.882*** (0.103)	0.829*** (0.136)
Observations	42,060	46,494	41,363
Number of groups	32	33	32

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1

**Table 8. Four duty indicators**

<i>Item</i>	<i>Question wording</i>	<i>Answer options</i>	<i>Recodification</i>
CHOICE	Different people feel differently about voting. For some voting is a duty. They feel that they should vote in every election however they feel about the candidates and parties. For some, voting is a choice. They feel free to vote or not to vote in an election depending on how they feel about the candidates and parties. For you personally, is voting in an election first and foremost a duty or a choice? (if duty) How strongly do you feel that voting in an election is a duty:	(0) choice/don't know; (1) Duty: not very strongly; (2) Duty: somewhat strongly; (3) Duty, very strongly	(0) 0/1; (1) 2/3
GUILTY	How guilty would you feel if you did not vote in an election?	(0) I would not feel guilty at all ... (10) I would feel extremely guilty	(0) 0/7 (1) 8/10
COUNTRY	I see voting as a way to show love for my country.	(0) Fully disagree ... (10) Fully agree	(0) 0/7 (1) 8/10
OPINION	It is OK to abstain if you have no opinion in an election.	(0) Fully disagree ... (10) Fully agree	(0) 3/10 (1) 0/2

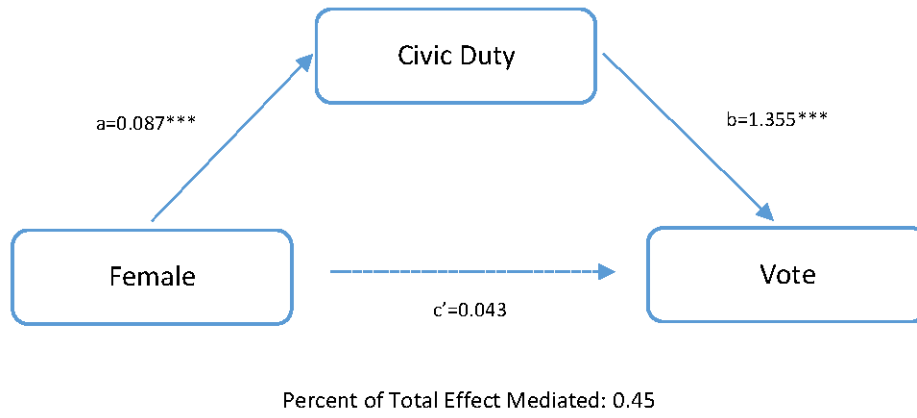
Source: Sauger et al. (2015) and Blais & Galais (2016)

**Table 9.** Determinants of Electoral Participation and Civic Duty (CED-EU14)

	(1)	(3)	(6)
	Vote	Civic duty to vote	Vote
VARIABLES			
<b>Female</b>	<b>0.086*</b>	<b>0.049***</b>	<b>0.067</b>
	<b>(0.047)</b>	<b>(0.014)</b>	<b>(0.048)</b>
<b>Civic duty (scale)</b>			<b>0.525***</b>
			<b>(0.027)</b>
Age	0.022***	0.007***	0.020***
	(0.002)	(0.000)	(0.002)
Education	0.072***	0.008*	0.066***
	(0.016)	(0.005)	(0.016)
Income	0.106***	0.009***	0.107***
	(0.010)	(0.003)	(0.010)
Political interest	0.179***	0.111***	0.138***
	(0.009)	(0.003)	(0.009)
Employment status	0.016	0.112***	-0.036
	(0.050)	(0.015)	(0.051)
Constant	-0.856***	0.318***	-1.117***
	(0.163)	(0.049)	(0.166)
Observations	18,435	19,706	18,435
Number of groups	7	7	7

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1

**Figure 1.** Mediation Model

## References

- Alexander, A. C., & Coffé, H. (2018). Women's Political Empowerment Through Public Opinion Research: The Citizen Perspective. In A. C. Alexander, C. Bolzendahl, & F. Jalalzai (Eds.), *Measuring Women's Political Empowerment across the Globe: Strategies, Challenges and Future Research* (pp. 27-53). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Allison, P. D. (2002). *Missing Data*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Ansolabehere, S., Rodden, J., & Snyder, J. M. (2008). The Strength of Issues: Using Multiple Measures to Gauge Preference Stability, Ideological Constraint, and Issue Voting. *American Political Science Review*, 102(2), 215-232.
- Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The Moderator-Mediator Variable Distinction in Social Psychological Research: Conceptual, Strategic, and Statistical Considerations *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51(6), 1173-1182.
- Bátiz, B. (2009, June 22, 2009). La obligación de votar. *La Jornada*.
- Bennett, L. L. M., & Bennett, S. E. (1989). Enduring Gender Differences in Political Interest: The Impact of Socialization and Political Dispositions. *American Politics Quarterly*, 17(1), 105-122.
- Blais, A. (2000). *To Vote or Not to Vote? The Merits and Limits of Rational Choice*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Blais, A., & Galais, C. (2016). Measuring the civic duty to vote: A proposal. *Electoral Studies*, 41, 60-69.
- Blais, A., & Rubenson, D. (2013). The Source of Turnout Decline New Values or New Contexts? *Comparative Political Studies*, 46(1), 95-117.
- Bolzendahl, C., & Coffé, H. (2013). Are 'Good' Citizens 'Good' Participants? Testing Citizenship Norms and Political Participation across 25 Nations. *Political Studies*, 61(S1), 45-65.
- Bowler, S., & Donovan, T. (2013). Civic duty and turnout in the UK referendum on AV: What shapes the duty to vote? *Electoral Studies*, 32(2), 265-273.
- Burns, N., Schlozman, K. L., & Verba, S. (2001). *The Private Roots of Public Action: Gender, Equality, and Political Participation*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Campbell, D. E. (2008). *Why We Vote: How Schools and Communities Shape Our Civic Life*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Carmines, E. G., & Zeller, R. A. (1979). *Reliability and Validity Assessment*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Carreras, M., & Castañeda-Angarita, N. (2014). Who Votes in Latin America? A Test of Three Theoretical Perspectives. *Comparative Political Studies*, 47(8), 1079-1104.
- Clarín. (2001, October 7, 2001). Según la Iglesia, votar es una obligación moral. *Clarín*.
- Clarke, H. D., Sanders, D., Stewart, M. C., & Whiteley, P. F. (2004). *Political Choice in Britain*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Coffé, H., & Bolzendahl, C. (2010). Same Game, Different Rules? Gender Differences in Political Participation. *Sex Roles*, 62(5-6), 318-333.
- Coleman, J. S. (1990). *Foundations of Social Theory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Conway, M. M., Steuernagel, G. A., & Ahern, D. W. (1997). *Women & Political Participation: Cultural Change in the Political Arena*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- Córdova, A., & Rangel, G. (2017). Addressing the Gender Gap: The Effect of Compulsory Voting on Women's Electoral Engagement. *Comparative Political Studies*, 50(2), 264-290.
- Costa, P. T., Terracciano, A., & McCrae, R. R. (2001). Gender Differences in Personality Traits Across Cultures: Robust and Surprising Findings. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81(2), 322-331.
- Dalton, R. J. (2008). Citizenship Norms and the Expansion of Political Participation. *Political Studies*, 56(1), 76-98.



- Dalton, R. J. (2017). *The Participation Gap: Social Status and Political Inequality*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dalton, R. J., Scarrow, S. E., & Cain, B. E. (2005). Advanced Democracies and the New Politics. *Journal of Democracy*, 15(1), 124-138.
- Digman, J. M. (1990). Personality Structure: Emergence of the Five-Factor Model. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 41, 417-440.
- Eagly, A. H. (1987). *Sex Differences in Social Behavior: A Social-Role Interpretation*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice Toward Female Leaders. *Psychological Review*, 109(3), 573-598.
- El País. (2008, January 31, 2008). Votar es un derecho y deber: Documento de la Conferencia Episcopal difundido en vísperas de las elecciones generales de marzo de 2004. *El País*.
- Feingold, A. (1994). Gender Differences in Personality: A Meta-Analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 116(3), 429-456.
- Ferrín Pereira, M., Fraile, M., & Rubal, M. (2015). Young and Gapped? Political Knowledge of Girls and Boys in Europe. *Political Research Quarterly*, 68(1), 63-76.
- Fiorina, M. P. (1981). *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Fraile, M., & Gómez, R. (2017). Why Does Alejandro Know More about Politics than Catalina? Explaining the Latin American Gender Gap in Political Knowledge. *British Journal of Political Science*, 47(1), 91-112.
- Fraile, M., & Gómez, R. (forthcoming). Bridging the enduring gender gap in political interest in Europe: The relevance of promoting gender equality. *European Journal of Political Research*.
- Franklin, M. N. (2004). *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies since 1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Galais, C., & Blais, A. (2016). Beyond rationalization: Voting out of duty or expressing duty after voting? *International Political Science Review*, 37(2), 213-229.
- Gallego, A. (2007). *Inequality in Political Participation: Contemporary Patterns in European Countries*. CSD Working Papers. Center for the Study of Democracy. Irvine.
- Gallego, A., & Oberski, D. (2012). Personality and Political Participation: The Mediation Hypothesis. *Political Behavior*, 34(3), 425-451.
- Gelman, A., & Hill, J. (2006). *Data Analysis Using Regression and Multilevel/Hierarchical Models*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Gerber, A. S., Green, D. P., & Larimer, C. W. (2008). Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment. *American Political Science Review*, 102(1), 33-48.
- Gidengil, E., Wass, H., & Valaste, M. (2016). Political Socialization and Voting: The Parent-Child Link in Turnout. *Political Research Quarterly*, 69(2), 373-383.
- Guénolé, T. (2012, June 13, 2012). Droit ou devoir de vote ? *Libération*.
- Heilman, M. E. (2001). Description and Prescription: How Gender Stereotypes Prevent Women's Ascent Up the Organizational Ladder. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(1), 657-674.
- Hooghe, M., & Stolle, D. (2004). Good Girls Go to the Polling Booth, Bad Boys Go Everywhere. *Women & Politics*, 26(3), 1-23.
- Huddy, L., & Terkildsen, N. (1993). Gender Stereotypes and the Perception of Male and Female Candidates. *American Journal of Political Science*, 37(1), 119-147.
- Inglehart, R., & Norris, P. (2003). *Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change around the World*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Jalalzai, F. (2013). *Shattered, Cracked, or Firmly Intact?: Women and the Executive Glass Ceiling Worldwide*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Jennings, M. K. (1983). Gender Roles and Inequalities in Political Participation: Results from an Eight-Nation Study. *Western Political Quarterly*, 36(3), 364-385.
- John, O. P., & Srivastava, S. (1999). The Big Five Trait Taxonomy: History, Measurement, and Theoretical Perspectives. In L. A. Pervin & O. P. John (Eds.), *Handbook of Personality: Theory and Research* (pp. 102-138). New York: Guilford Press.
- Judd, C. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1981). Process Analysis: Estimating Mediation in Treatment Evaluations. *Evaluation Review*, 5(5), 602-619.
- Kenny, D. A. (2013). *Mediation with Dichotomous Outcomes*. Retrieved from <http://davidakenny.net/doc/dichmed.pdf>
- Knack, S., & Kropf, M. E. (1998). For Shame! The Effect of Community Cooperative Context on the Probability of Voting. *Political Psychology*, 19(3), 585-599.
- Kuenzi, M., & Lambright, G. M. S. (2011). Who votes in Africa? An examination of electoral participation in 10 African countries. *Party Politics*, 17(6), 767-799.
- Lawless, J. L., & Fox, R. L. (2005). *It Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lijphart, A. (1997). Unequal Participation: Democracy's Unresolved Dilemma. *American Political Science Review*, 91(1), 1-14.
- Lowndes, V. (2000). Women and Social Capital: A Comment on Hall's 'Social Capital in Britain'. *British Journal of Political Science*, 30(3), 533-537.
- Manin, B., Przeworski, A., & Stokes, S. C. (1999). Elections and Representation. In A. Przeworski, S. C. Stokes, & B. Manin (Eds.), *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Marien, S., Hooghe, M., & Quintelier, E. (2010). Inequalities in Non-institutionalised Forms of Political Participation: A Multi-level Analysis of 25 countries. *Political Studies*, 58(1), 187-213.
- Maskivker, J. (2016, November 2, 2016). It's your moral duty to vote. Here are 3 reasons. *Washington Post*.
- Matsusaka, J. G., & Palda, F. (1999). Voter turnout: How much can we explain? *Public Choice*, 98(3-4), 431-446.
- McCrae, R. R., & Costa, P. T. (2005). *Personality in Adulthood: A Five-Factor Theory Perspective* (2 ed.). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Mondak, J. J. (2010). *Personality and the Foundations of Political Behavior*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Mueller, D. C. (1989). *Public Choice II*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, P. (2002). *Democratic Phoenix: Reinventing Political Activism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Owen, G., & Grofman, B. (1984). To vote or not to vote: The paradox of nonvoting. *Public Choice*, 42(3), 311-325.
- Paxton, P., & Kunovich, S. (2003). Women's Political Representation: The Importance of Ideology. *Social Forces*, 82(1), 87-113.
- Preacher, K. J., & Kelley, K. (2011). Effect Size Measures for Mediation Models: Quantitative Strategies for Communicating Indirect Effects. *Psychological Methods*, 16(2), 93-115.
- Ruble, D. N., Martin, C. L., & Berenbaum, S. A. (2007). Gender Development: Social, Emotional, and Personality Development. In N. Eisenberg (Ed.), *Handbook of Child Psychology* (6 ed., Vol. 3). New York: Wiley.
- Sauger, N., Dehousse, R., & Gougou, F. (2015). Comparative Electoral Dynamics in the European Union in 2014 (CED-EU14): a Data User's Guide. *Les Cahiers européens de Sciences Po*, 1.
- Schlozman, K. L., Burns, N., & Verba, S. (1994). Gender and the Pathways to Participation: The Role of Resources. *Journal of Politics*, 56(4), 963-990.

- Schlozman, K. L., Verba, S., & Brady, H. E. (2012). *The Unheavenly Chorus: Unequal Political Voice and the Broken Promise of American Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Schmitt, D. P., Realo, A., Voracek, M., & Allik, J. (2008). Why Can't a Man Be More Like a Woman? Sex Differences in Big Five Personality Traits Across 55 Cultures. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 94*(1), 168-182.
- Scholz, E., Jutz, R., Pammett, J. H., & Hadler, M. (2017). ISSP and the ISSP 2014 Citizenship II Module: An Introduction. *International Journal of Sociology, 47*(1), 1-9.
- Steenbergen, M. R., & Jones, B. S. (2002). Modeling Multilevel Data Structures. *American Journal of Political Science, 46*(1), 218-237.
- Stolle, D., & Hooghe, M. (2011). Shifting Inequalities: Patterns of Exclusion and Inclusion in Emerging Forms of Political Participation. *European Societies, 13*(1), 119-142.
- Stolle, D., Hooghe, M., & Micheletti, M. (2005). Politics in the Supermarket: Political Consumerism as a Form of Political Participation. *International Political Science Review, 26*(3), 245-269.
- Teorell, J., Sum, P., & Tobiasen, M. (2007). Participation and political equality: an assessment of large-scale democracy. In J. W. Van Deth, J. R. Montero, & A. Westholm (Eds.), *Citizenship and Involvement in European Democracies: A Comparative Analysis*. London: Routledge.
- Uhlener, C. J. (1986). Political Participation, Rational Actors, and Rationality. *Political Psychology, 7*(3), 551-573.
- Verba, S., Burns, N., & Schlozman, K. L. (1997). Knowing and Caring about Politics: Gender and Political Engagement. *Journal of Politics, 59*(4), 1051-1072.
- Verba, S., & Nie, N. H. (1972). *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Verba, S., Nie, N. H., & Kim, J.-O. (1978). *Participation and Political Equality: A Seven-Nation Comparison*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wang, C.-H. (2014). Gender differences in the effects of personality traits on voter turnout. *Electoral Studies, 34*, 167-176.
- Weinschenk, A. C. (2014). Personality Traits and the Sense of Civic Duty. *American Politics Research, 42*(1), 90-113.

**Table A1.** Predicted probabilities of political participation, by sex

<b>ISSP</b>								
	High Political Interest	High Political Efficacy	Party ID	High Attention to News	Contact Politicians	Attend Political Meetings	Protest	Vote
Female	.073	.109	.076	.377	.059	.059	.046	.847
Male	.128	.167	.097	.451	.082	.079	.050	.835
<b>% difference (baseline male)</b>	<b>-42.7</b>	<b>-34.7</b>	<b>-21.6</b>	<b>-16.4</b>	<b>-28.0</b>	<b>-25.3</b>	<b>-8</b>	<b>1.4</b>
Note: High political interest = people who answer that they are very interested in politics; High political efficacy = people who strongly agree with statement that a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing their country; High attention to news = people who declare using the media several times a day to get political information.								
<b>ESS</b>								
	High Political Interest	High Political Efficacy	Party ID	High Attention to News	Contact Politicians	Work for Political Party	Protest	Vote
Female	.075	.236	.481	.218	.119	.033	.055	.805
Male	.136	.376	.533	.286	.153	.052	.064	.797
<b>% difference (baseline male)</b>	<b>-45.3</b>	<b>-37.2</b>	<b>-9.75</b>	<b>-23.7</b>	<b>-22.2</b>	<b>-36.5</b>	<b>-14.1</b>	<b>1.0</b>
Note: High political interest = people who answer that they are very interested in politics; High political efficacy = people who never or seldom perceive that politics is so complicated that you can't understand what is going on; High attention to news = people who declare spending at least half an hour every day reading about politics.								
<b>LAPOP</b>								
	High Political Interest	High Political Efficacy	Party ID	High Attention to News	Contact Politicians	Attend Party Meetings	Protest	Vote
Female	.077	.165	.326	.627	.200	.049	.094	.775
Male	.112	.231	.354	.662	.197	.062	.113	.743
<b>% difference (baseline male)</b>	<b>-31.3</b>	<b>-28.6</b>	<b>-7.9</b>	<b>-5.2</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>-20.9</b>	<b>-16.8</b>	<b>4.3</b>
Note: High political interest = people who answer that they have a lot of interest in politics; High political efficacy = people who strongly feel that they understand the most important political issues in their countries; High attention to news = people who pay attention to the political news on a daily basis.								

**Table A2.** Determinants of civic duty to vote, to be politically active, and to keep watch on government (ISSP 2014)

VARIABLES	Logistic regressions w/ country fixed effects			Logistic regressions w/ clustered standard errors (by country)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Vote duty	Participation duty	Watch GVT duty	Vote duty	Participation duty	Watch GVT duty
Female	0.192*** (0.022)	0.034 (0.024)	-0.026 (0.021)	0.169*** (0.040)	0.010 (0.035)	-0.033 (0.026)
Age	0.246*** (0.009)	0.095*** (0.010)	0.139*** (0.009)	0.179*** (0.033)	-0.029 (0.035)	0.104*** (0.031)
Education	0.113*** (0.020)	-0.009 (0.021)	0.024 (0.018)	-0.023 (0.079)	-0.299*** (0.091)	-0.094 (0.069)
Political interest	0.521*** (0.014)	0.416*** (0.014)	0.462*** (0.013)	0.513*** (0.051)	0.368*** (0.057)	0.372*** (0.061)
Employment status	-0.071*** (0.024)	-0.149*** (0.025)	-0.131*** (0.022)	-0.142*** (0.045)	-0.280*** (0.054)	-0.159*** (0.039)
Urban	-0.074*** (0.025)	-0.108*** (0.027)	0.075*** (0.023)	0.069 (0.071)	-0.016 (0.051)	0.267*** (0.062)
Constant	-0.830*** (0.107)	-3.013*** (0.113)	-1.010*** (0.092)	-0.959*** (0.347)	-1.155*** (0.395)	-0.986*** (0.290)
Observations	44,910	43,999	44,272	44,910	43,999	44,272

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1

**Table A3.** Determinants of belief that voting is important to be a good citizen (ISSP 2014)

VARIABLES	(1) Importance of voting for citizenship
<b>Female</b>	<b>0.169***</b> <b>(0.015)</b>
Age	0.170*** (0.006)
Education	0.077*** (0.013)
Political interest	0.395*** (0.009)
Employment status	-0.020 (0.016)
Urban	-0.043** (0.017)
Constant	4.103*** (0.083)
Observations	44,910
Number of groups	33
Standard errors in parentheses	
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1	

**Table A4.** Mediation Analysis with alternative measure of civic duty (ISSP 2014)

	(1) Vote	(2) Importance of vote for citizenship	(3) Vote
<b>VARIABLES</b>			
Female	0.053** (0.026)	0.088*** (0.015)	0.025 (0.028)
Importance of vote for citizenship			0.404*** (0.008)
Constant	1.639*** (0.137)	5.787*** (0.071)	-0.553*** (0.143)
Observations	42,060	46,494	41,363
Number of groups	32	33	32

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1

**Table A5.** Mediation Analysis with political interest as DV (ISSP 2014)

	(1) Political interest	(2) Civic duty to vote	(3) Political interest
<b>VARIABLES</b>			
Female	-0.214*** (0.008)	0.087*** (0.021)	-0.218*** (0.008)
Civic duty to vote			0.371*** (0.009)
Constant	2.543*** (0.048)	0.882*** (0.103)	2.290*** (0.047)
Observations	46,307	46,494	45,454
Number of groups	33	33	33

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1



**Table A6.** Mediation Analysis with party ID as DV (ISSP 2014)

	(1) Party ID	(2) Civic duty to vote	(3) Party ID
<b>VARIABLES</b>			
Female	-0.307*** (0.031)	0.087*** (0.021)	-0.317*** (0.032)
Civic duty to vote			0.543*** (0.039)
Constant	-2.233*** (0.160)	0.882*** (0.103)	-2.626*** (0.160)
Observations	46,443	46,494	45,597
Number of groups	33	33	33

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1

**Table A7.** Mediation Analysis with attention to news as DV (ISSP 2014)

	(1) Attention to news	(2) Civic duty to vote	(3) Attention to news
<b>VARIABLES</b>			
Female	-0.204*** (0.014)	0.087*** (0.021)	-0.212*** (0.014)
Civic duty to vote			0.433*** (0.016)
Constant	4.869*** (0.057)	0.882*** (0.103)	4.571*** (0.057)
Observations	43,939	46,494	43,174
Number of groups	33	33	33

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1

**Table A8.** Mediation Analysis with contacting politicians as DV (ISSP 2014)

	(1) Contacting politicians	(2) Civic duty to vote	(3) Contacting politicians
<b>VARIABLES</b>			
Female	-0.405*** (0.036)	0.087*** (0.021)	-0.408*** (0.036)
Civic duty to vote			0.483*** (0.044)
Constant	-2.420*** (0.119)	0.882*** (0.103)	-2.766*** (0.121)
Observations	46,091	46,494	45,314
Number of groups	33	33	33

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1

**Table A9.** Mediation Analysis with attending political meetings as DV (ISSP 2014)

	(1) Attending political meetings	(2) Civic duty to vote	(3) Attending political meetings
<b>VARIABLES</b>			
Female	-0.358*** (0.036)	0.087*** (0.021)	-0.361*** (0.036)
Civic duty to vote			0.602*** (0.046)
Constant	-2.457*** (0.126)	0.882*** (0.103)	-2.901*** (0.126)
Observations	46,036	46,494	45,260
Number of groups	33	33	33

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1

**Table A10.** Mediation Analysis with protest as DV (ISSP 2014)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Protest	Civic duty to vote	Protest
<b>VARIABLES</b>			
Female	-0.090** (0.041)	0.087*** (0.021)	-0.093** (0.041)
Civic duty to vote			0.205*** (0.048)
Constant	-2.967*** (0.130)	0.882*** (0.103)	-3.110*** (0.134)
Observations	46,161	46,494	45,388
Number of groups	33	33	33

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1