

Gender Gaps in Civic and Political Participation in Latin America

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ABSTRACT

This article examines whether there is gender segmentation in civic participation in Latin America, and whether such segmentation is related to gender differences in political participation. Confirming the findings of other studies, this analysis indicates that there is gender segmentation in civic associational activities, and that men are more involved than women in political activities, except for voting. Among those involved in civic activities, however, women attend meetings more often than men or about equally in all types of activities under consideration, except for sports and recreational pursuits. This highlights the need to differentiate between type and intensity of civic participation and provides empirical evidence that Latin American women have strong community ties through a variety of organizations. The regression analysis shows that civic engagement has a positive effect on political participation but that the magnitude of that effect varies by gender depending on the activity.

In the past 50 years, gender has been extensively studied from different theoretical perspectives as a concept, an array of social roles, a set of attitudes and behaviors, an institution, a social structure, and a set of meanings or interactions. Gender gaps, in turn, have been examined to document persistent or changing differences between men and women in a wide range of attitudes and behaviors (Acker 1992; Beckwith 2010; Lorber 1994; Ritter 2007; West and Zimmerman 1987). In politics, topics of particular research interest have included voting, political knowledge and interest, policy preferences, and political participation, with diverging views prevailing in the academic literature on the nature and explanations of the gender gaps (Campbell 2012; Howell and Day 2000; Norrander 1999; Schlesinger and Heldman 2001; Manza and Brooks 1998; Wirls 1986). Some researchers have shown the disappearance of gender gaps in specific political attitudes or behaviors, such as voting participation (Coffé and Bolzendhal 2010; Evans 1980; Inglehart and Norris 2000; Schlozman et al. 1995). Others have shown the persistence of gender gaps in activities such as participation in political parties (Desposato and Norrander 2009; Norris and Inglehart 2003), and others have identified new gender gaps as in the case of voting preferences (Manza and Brooks 1998).

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This study seeks to assess the state of gender gaps in civic and political participation in Latin America after three decades of democratization, with a large dataset from the AmericasBarometer collected in 2012. Although numerous studies have been conducted in advanced democracies on a wide range of topics, from voting participation to policy preferences, much less is known about gender gaps in civic and political participation in Latin America during this “third wave” of democratization that began in the late 1970s (Huntington 1991). Examining a set of civic and political activities that interviewees reported in national surveys, this study shows where significant gender gaps are found and how gender influences the relationship between civic and political participation.

This analysis is particularly relevant to theories of social capital and democratization (Putnam et al. 1993). If civic engagement encourages more political participation, as the social capital literature postulates (Verba et al. 1995), and if women lag behind men in civic and political participation, as various studies have documented (Desposato and Norrander 2009; Norris and Inglehart 2003), then it is important to know how much Latin American women participate in civic and political activities compared to men, in what civic activities women participate more or less, how civic engagement relates to political participation, and whether civic engagement has a differential effect on political participation for men and women.

GENDER GAPS AND DEMOCRATIZATION

Early studies in advanced liberal democracies, particularly in the United States, highlighted traditional gender differences: women showed less interest in politics, less political knowledge, less voting, and more conservative positions (Almond and Verba 1963; Campbell et al. 1964; Lane 1959). Such views were challenged by feminists, who argued that lower levels of political interest and participation among women than men were the result of a patriarchal culture, the burden of domestic responsibilities, sex-segregated institutions, and unfair institutional practices (Bourque and Grassholz 1974; Lorber 2001). Other researchers claimed that women were not less politically engaged than men, but participated mostly in small-scale local organizations and activities frequently dismissed or overlooked in traditional political studies (Randall 1987; Waylen 1992, 2012).

In the 1970s and 1980s, empirical evidence from advanced economies showed that as more women held paid jobs, they developed new political interests and participated more. For the United States, Andersen (1975) demonstrated that women in paid jobs were more politically engaged than housewives and participated at a rate similar to men. Similarly, Evans (1980) showed small, declining, or no gender gaps in a wide range of political behaviors among women in the United States and Britain. Later, Schlozman et al. (1995, 267) argued that while American women were “slightly less active than men,” there were gender similarities in the patterns of civic and political participation in the United States.

Examining voting trends in the 1980s and 1990s, researchers showed that the voting participation gap was vanishing (Inglehart and Norris 2000), and others

argued that American women were becoming more liberal than men and more inclined to vote for the Democratic Party (Manza and Brooks 1998; Norrander 1999). This line of research helped to popularize the term *gender gap* in political studies. Atkeson (2003) looked beyond individual-level factors to find that having competitive female candidates at the state level resulted in greater female political participation in the United States.

In Latin America, transitions from authoritarianism to electoral democracy were characterized by the active presence of women and women's organizations as a force for change in various social movements. Since the mid-1970s, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina and similar groups elsewhere have made women more politically visible. Facing the disappearance of their children, average middle-aged women defied traditional gender roles and mobilized in a demand for justice and the return of their loved ones (Alvarez 1990; Baldez 2003; Jaquette 1989; Navarro 1989; Waylen 1992, 1993).

Some scholars have argued that the political context of the 1970s and 1980s in Latin America favored greater women's participation because conventional channels traditionally dominated by men, like unions and parties, were banned during the dictatorships; or because the struggles against austerity measures in the posttransition period had community roots, where women were traditionally engaged through neighborhood, religious, and women's groups (Jaquette 1989; Safa 1990; Waylen 1993). Along these lines, Molyneux (2002) claims that the stock of social capital that development experts found in Latin America in the 1990s was not new but the result of community organizational work in previous decades by the Catholic Church and the left, populist and clientelistic traditions that created bonds between government and community organizations, and social movements and associational activities with significant female participation.

Once Latin American dictators fell in the late 1970s and early 1980s, scholars were concerned that women would retreat and diminish their political involvement during democratization and that men would take over. Yet there was also hope that the new democratic regimes would favor and facilitate women's participation in civic and political activities (Morgan et al. 2008; Safa 1990; Waylen 2000) and also that new legislation, such as gender quotas, would help to broaden female participation (Htun and Jones 2002; Llanos and Sample 2008).

Indeed, the 1980s, known as the Lost Decade for the austerity measures imposed to reduce public deficits and pay foreign debt, saw widespread popular protests and women actively engaged in them (Safa 1990). And indeed, there have been noticeable changes toward greater female representation in the postdemocratic transition. Six Latin American countries have elected women presidents since 1990 (Nicaragua, Panama, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, and Costa Rica); many have established gender quotas, bringing more women to Congress and local governments. Female representation is particularly high in the lower or single houses of Nicaragua (40.2 percent), Costa Rica (38.6 percent), Argentina (37.4 percent), Mexico (36.8 percent), and Ecuador (32.3 percent). These numbers were higher than both the world average of 20.8 percent and the Americas average of

23.9 percent, based on data from February 2013 (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2013).

The specific impact of these advances, however, remains unspecified. For instance, while observers believed that gender quotas would promote attitudinal change and political engagement among women, neither Zetterberg (2009) nor Schwindt-Bayer (2011) found evidence to support such a claim in the studies they conducted with large datasets from Latin America. Morgan and Buice (2013) showed that attitudes toward women's participation in politics are mostly facilitated by status discontent among the public and by elite cues, not by deep-seated democratic attitudes, although prodemocracy views help. This means that changing contextual factors, even in democratic regimes, could potentially generate negative attitudes toward women's political participation after progress has been made. In other words, these findings suggest that democratization does not eliminate the possibility of political backlash.

CROSS-NATIONAL RESEARCH ON GENDER GAPS

The power of associational life in human communities has been long acknowledged, and the social benefits of civic engagement have been documented in the social capital literature (Booth and Richard 2012; Fukuyama 2010; Putnam et al. 1993, 1995a, b). The central argument has been that civic engagement is beneficial to citizens because it empowers them, and to democracy because it makes citizens and governments more responsible and responsive through the creation of social networks and trust that allow people to come together to pursue shared objectives more effectively.

Specifically, participation in voluntary associations has been linked in contemporary research to a long list of benefits (Theiss-Morse and Hibbing 2005), including greater interpersonal trust (Brehm and Rahn 1997; Putnam 2000), a sense of political efficacy (Joslyn and Cigler 2001), more information and knowledge (Norris 1996), civic skills applicable to politics (Putnam 1995b; Verba et al. 1995), community bonding (Dekker and van den Broek 1998), community problem solving (Brehm and Rahn 1997), more political participation (Verba et al. 1995; Ayala 2000), more political capital (Booth and Richard 2012), more efficient and effective government (Fukuyama 2010), more trust in government (Joslyn and Cigler 2001), and preventing government from becoming all-powerful (Fukuyama 2010).

For North America and Western Europe, Dekker and van den Broek (1998) found, with data from the 1990 World Values Survey, that membership in voluntary associations is closely related to more political interest in and discussion of politics. In a study of 60 states, Tusalem (2007) concluded that a dense civil society before and after a democratic transition has political benefits: it deepens political freedoms and civil liberties and enhances institutional performance. Therefore he claims that Putnam's major findings of the benefits of civic engagement are valid in third- and fourth-wave democracies. With data from Norway, Wollebaek and Selle (2002) found that people affiliated with voluntary associations show higher levels of

social capital; the accumulated effect is negligible in the case of intensity of participation but is more significant in the case of multiple affiliations. Thus, more attention should be paid in empirical research to three dimensions of participation: type of association, intensity of participation, and scope of participation.

Using data from the 2001 World Values Survey, Norris and Inglehart (2003) showed that associational membership is not equally distributed across society and indicated two types of differences: horizontal segmentation, which refers to the type of organization people belong to, and vertical segmentation, which refers to the number of associations people belong to. They found that men and women tend to join different types of organizations: men predominate in political parties, sports clubs, professional associations, and community organizations, and women in organizations related to education, religion, the arts, social services, and women's groups. They also found that men tend to belong to more associations than women in all societies at different levels of development, and that the gap is stronger among women confined to the home than among women in paid jobs. In an earlier study, however, Inglehart and Norris (2000) found disappearing gender gaps in voting participation.

In a cross-national study of 18 advanced democracies with data from the 2004 International Social Survey Program (ISSP), Coffé and Bolzendahl (2010) showed that there was no gap in voting, except that women interested in politics voted more than men; yet women were less engaged in all forms of political activism except more individualized actions, such as donating, signing a petition, or boycotting.

There are very few cross-national empirical studies of gender differences in civic and political participation in Latin America during this "third wave" of democratization. Using 1998 Latinobarómetro data from 17 countries, Desposato and Norrander (2009) found statistically significant gender gaps in political participation in many Latin American countries, both in conventional and unconventional forms, with more male than female participation. They explain these gaps with a combination of individual characteristics and contextual factors, such as the level of political liberties.

With data from the 2010 AmericasBarometer, Batista (2012) documented that women participated less than men in community activities in Latin America and the Caribbean, and showed that while education, wealth, and political interest—widely used in mainstream models of political participation—explained some of the difference, homemaker status and the number of children at home were key in accounting for the gender gap in community participation. Furthermore, with the same dataset used in this study from the 2012 AmericasBarometer, Seligson et al. (2012) showed that intervening factors, such as occupational status, influence women's civic and political participation. Female homemakers are more engaged than female non-homemakers and men in religious organizations and parent-teacher associations, while men participate more than either group of women in community associations. Seligson et al. also showed that men and female nonhomemakers (in this order) participate more than homemakers in political campaign activities.

In general, the existing literature shows that gender gaps exist in both civic engagement and political participation, but that the gender gaps differ. In civic

engagement, associational membership appears to be horizontally segmented: men are more likely to get involved in certain civic activities and women in others. In political participation, the gender gap seems to be narrower or nonexistent in voting but remains larger in other activities.

What has not been examined in previous research is the impact of civic engagement on political participation in regard to gender gaps. Specifically, how is horizontal segmentation in associational membership related to the gender gap in political participation? Does involvement in certain types of civic activity promote participation in certain types of political activity? The present study seeks to address these questions with data from the 2012 AmericasBarometer.

METHODOLOGY

This study posed the following research questions:

- Q1. Are there significant gender gaps in civic and political participation at the individual level in Latin American countries?
- Q2. Are such gender gaps horizontally segmented in civic participation? That is, are women more likely to participate in certain types of civic organizations and men in others? Also, among those involved in civic activities, are there gender differences in the intensity of involvement?
- Q3. If gender gaps in civic engagement are horizontally segmented, how is such segmentation related to political participation? Is there a gender difference in the way civic engagement is related to political participation?

The data for this research come from the 2012 AmericasBarometer, a set of nationally representative surveys by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) of Vanderbilt University, conducted in most countries of the region every two years in the past decade. The surveys provide rich data about citizens' involvement in civic and political activities. In 2012, a total of 26 countries were surveyed in the Americas, yielding a weighted average of 1,500 respondents from each country. The present study focuses on gender gaps in 18 Latin American countries: all the Spanish-speaking countries except Cuba, which was not surveyed, and Brazil. The combined weighted dataset yielded a total of 27,000 respondents. The surveys were administered in face-to-face interviews in the homes of the respondents. The following measures were used in the analysis.

Civic engagement. The AmericasBarometer surveys included a series of questions about attending meetings of locally based civic associations. In this study, civic engagement was assessed in terms of respondents' attendance at meetings of community, economic, sports and recreational, parent-teacher, and religious associations. Respondents' answers to each attendance question were coded as 0 = never, 1 = once or twice a year, 2 = once or twice a month, and 3 = once a week.

Political participation. The surveys also included a number of questions about respondents' participation in various political activities. In this study, the following

four questions were used to measure political participation: whether the respondent voted in the last year's presidential election, attended meetings of a political party or political organization, worked for parties or candidates in the last presidential election campaigns, and participated in a demonstration or protest march in the last 12 months. Since the correlation among these four items is low (Cronbach's alpha = .35), they are not combined into an index in the analyses.

Demographic predictors. Gender was coded 1 for men and 0 for women. Based on the literature reviewed above, the following sociodemographic variables were used as controls in the analyses:

- Age, ranging from 18 to 99
- Skin color, described on an 11-point scale with 1 denoting light skin and 11 denoting dark skin
- Marital status, dummy-coded into married, single, and separated/divorced/widowed, with married serving as the reference group
- Children under 13 in the household, coded 1 = yes and 0 = no
- Current employment status, dummy-coded into employed, homemakers, and students/others, with employed serving as the reference category
- Years of education completed, ranging from 1 to 22
- Index of household wealth, comprising five quintiles based on household assets

In spite of similarities in culture and historical trajectories, the 18 Latin American countries show variance among multiple macrofactors, such as the level of human development and democratic freedom, which may also affect gender gaps in civic engagement and political participation. Two country-level variables were included in the regression analyses to reduce confounding effects: the UNDP human development index (HDI) and the political freedom assessment, which ranked each country as free or partially free (see UNDP 2013 for information on ranking methodology).

We recognize that both individual and institutional factors shape civic and political participation and that individual resources, as well as political conditions, can motivate political participation (Atkeson 2003), yet this analysis concentrates on individual-level factors, with gender as a focus. We also recognize that neither women nor men are homogenous social categories; indeed, they differ among a set of social factors. Here we examine part of this intersectionality in the relationship between civic engagement and political participation, taking into account a selected set of sociodemographic variables.

Table 1. Gender and Political Participation by Country (Percent)

	Voted in Last Presidential Election		Attended Political Organization Meetings		Participated in Protest			
	W	Gap	W	Gap	W	Gap	W	Gap
	Argentina	88.9	0.3	6.8	-3.9**	7.1	-1.2	7.9
Bolivia	81.7	-0.1	8.9	-2.3	3.6	-4.2**	16.6	-2.0
Brazil	89.4	1.8	5.9	-2.0	11.1	-1.3	3.9	-1.5
Chile	69.9	3.6	2.3	-0.3	2.0	0.1	10.2	-1.8
Colombia	65.4	3.5	14.7	-1.5	8.3	-1.9	7.5	-2.4
Costa Rica	68.2	3.4	1.9	-0.9	11.0	0.3	4.7	-0.4
Dominican Republic	70.6	0.1	28.4	-7.4**	11.7	-10.1**	6.4	-3.2*
Ecuador	89.9	2.1	4.9	-4.0**	5.4	-2.6*	6.2	-1.6
El Salvador	67.0	-2.5	8.8	-9.5**	5.0	-5.0**	2.5	-2.2*
Guatemala	75.1	-7.1**	7.3	-5.1**	6.0	-3.3*	6.2	-2.2
Honduras	50.5	0.4	9.9	-3.7*	5.7	0.3	5.7	-1.4
Mexico	68.5	1.8	9.4	-2.2	4.5	0.4	2.9	-1.9
Nicaragua	79.9	-0.4	21.5	-3.1	9.3	-3.6*	6.8	-2.8*
Panama	70.6	2.0	5.4	-4.2**	3.6	-2.4*	2.3	-2.8**
Paraguay	59.5	-2.2	16.5	-8.8**	8.6	-5.9**	10.6	-2.6
Peru	91.5	1.8	5.2	-4.6**	4.2	-1.7	10.3	-5.5**
Uruguay	91.2	2.6	6.3	-1.0	9.3	0.2	7.5	-0.3
Venezuela	81.8	-0.7	9.0	-1.3	9.1	2.3	2.9	-1.5

*p <.05; **p<.01.

N = 27,000.

Note: Gender gap is the difference between percent of women and percent of men.

RESULTS

Are there significant gender gaps in civic and political participation at the individual level in Latin American countries? To answer this question, we constructed two frequency tables assessing gender differences in these two aspects across the 18 countries.

Table 1 shows gender gaps in political participation. There was no statistically significant difference between men and women in the percentage of people who voted in the last presidential election, but significant gender gaps exist in the other three measures of political participation, showing that men were more likely than women to have attended meetings of political organizations, worked for a party or candidates in the last presidential election campaign, and participated in a demonstration or protest in the last 12 months. This pattern holds true for many of the 18 Latin American countries. Some failed to reach the .05 significance level, but the signs almost all point in the same direction.

Table 2 examines gender gaps in civic engagement that were believed to be correlated with gender disparities in political participation. The results show that there

Table 2. Gender and Civic Engagement by Country (Percent)

	Economic Association		Community Association		Sports/Recreation Association		Religious Association		Parent-Teacher Association	
	W	Gap	W	Gap	W	Gap	W	Gap	W	Gap
Argentina	4.9	-1.0	10.4	3.1*	11.2	-16.0**	37.7	12.4**	38.1	22.1**
Bolivia	22.6	-3.8*	49.3	-3.6	21.4	-30.6**	64.4	2.7	62.4	12.5**
Brazil	5.9	-5.5**	11.7	-1.3	4.3	-7.3**	67.6	9.3**	36.6	13.3**
Chile	6.0	-1.8	22.6	4.7*	9.2	-9.2**	41.9	8.1**	38.9	19.9**
Colombia	7.6	-6.3**	19.6	-2.9	12.0	-22.9**	70.1	11.8**	42.5	14.8**
Costa Rica	4.1	-3.3**	14.8	1.9	8.1	-13.0**	53.3	15.0**	31.7	18.0**
Dominican Republic	8.7	-11.1**	27.8	5.6*	13.0	-26.4**	77.3	17.4**	50.1	13.5**
Ecuador	13.4	-5.4**	25.1	-2.2	24.6	-17.2**	60.0	7.9**	54.8	10.8**
El Salvador	5.3	-8.3**	14.0	-8.0**	9.8	-21.5**	75.0	13.4**	49.5	19.7**
Guatemala	9.7	-5.2**	33.8	-14.7**	15.7	-23.6**	80.5	2.6	48.9	4.6*
Honduras	9.8	-2.9	20.0	-4.7*	15.3	-12.3**	76.3	9.6**	39.6	12.4**
Mexico	5.7	-7.8**	18.5	-5.7**	11.4	-15.7**	60.4	9.6**	44.8	20.6**
Nicaragua	7.5	-5.4**	26.6	-4.6*	6.7	-20.4**	62.3	7.4**	57.4	17.7**
Panama	3.8	-4.8**	12.0	-2.9	9.5	-15.0**	56.7	13.0**	35.1	17.2**
Paraguay	5.1	-8.4**	28.1	-4.2	11.3	-28.1**	81.3	8.7**	51.2	17.2**
Peru	15.1	-8.1**	29.6	-9.3**	17.3	-29.1**	63.9	11.0**	55.1	19.7**
Uruguay	6.8	-2.6	9.3	0.6	19.4	-7.6**	24.1	11.0**	36.7	15.0**
Venezuela	3.5	-4.5**	30.1	5.2*	8.0	-12.0**	54.1	15.6**	41.1	18.9**

p < .05; **p < .01.

N = 27,000.

Note: Gender gap is the difference between percent of women and percent of men.

Table 3. Type and Intensity of Civic Engagement by Gender

Type of Association Meetings Attended	Percent of Attendees		Frequency of Attendance (mean)	
	W	Gap	W	Gap
Economic	8.1	-5.3**	1.69	0.04
Community	22.4	-3.1**	1.65	-0.01
Sports/Recreational	12.7	-18.3**	1.95	-0.19**
Religious	61.4	10.1**	2.36	0.15**
Parent-Teacher	45.2	15.9**	1.77	0.10**

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

N = 27,000.

Note: Gender gap is the difference between percent of women (mean) and percent of men (mean).

were considerable differences between men and women in the likelihood of attending meetings of civic associations; the gender differences in this area were horizontally segmented. While women were less likely than men to attend meetings of community, economic, and sports or recreational associations, they were more likely than men to attend meetings of religious and parent-teacher associations. This pattern holds true for most of the 18 Latin American countries.

Next we examine the possibility of gender segmentation in civic participation at the aggregate level. The first two columns of table 3 reveal a horizontally segmented gender gap, indicating that men were more likely than women to attend three of the five types of associational meetings (sports/recreational, economic, and community), and women were more likely than men to attend the other two types of meetings (religious and parent-teacher). However, the last two columns of table 3 reveal that when it comes to the intensity of civic engagement measured in terms of frequency of meeting attendance, men attended meetings more frequently than women only in one of the five areas: sports/recreational meetings; women attended meetings more frequently than men in two of the five areas: religious and parent-teacher meetings; and men and women did not differ significantly in frequency of meeting attendance in economic and community organizations. This means that among those involved in associational activities, women attended meetings more often than men, or about equally, in all types of civic associations considered here, except for sports/recreational.

To find out whether horizontal gender segmentations in civic engagement persist after controlling for some related factors, we regressed the five types of associational involvement on gender and other selected sociodemographic variables, including country-level characteristics. Multilevel linear models were used to avoid the problems of aggregation bias and misestimation of standard errors in analyzing aggregated data (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002; Snijders and Bosker 1999). The results, displayed in table 4, indicate that the same gender segmentation pattern remains: men are more likely than women to attend economic, community, and

Table 4. Multilevel Models Predicting Five Types of Civic Engagement

Predictor	Economic	Community	Sports	Religious	PTA
Individual Level					
Men (Women)	.053**	.028*	.358**	-.331**	-.322**
Age	.002**	.004**	-.006**	.009**	-.001
Skin color	-.002	.009*	.007	-.019**	.005
Single (married)	.003	-.043*	.045*	-.153**	-.148**
D/S/W (married)	-.016	-.072**	.029	-.087**	-.121**
Children under 13 at home	.012	.034*	-.001	-.022	.545**
Homemaker (employed)	-.106**	-.065**	-.062**	-.003	-.055**
Student, Other (employed)	-.124**	-.032	-.008	.008	-.163**
Education	.010**	.001	.021**	.003	.005**
Household wealth	.008*	.004	.037**	.003	.004
National Level					
Human Development Index	-.710*	-1.739*	-.522	-5.906**	-1.536*
Free (partly free)	-.006	-.097	-.030	.080	-.012
Intercept	.526*	1.540**	.578	5.432**	1.799**

*p <.05; **p <.01.

N = 27,000.

Note: Entries are restricted maximum likelihood coefficients estimated using SPSS 21 mixed model.

sports meetings, whereas women are more likely than men to attend religious and parent-teacher meetings.

Finally, we examine the issue of whether gender segmentations in civic engagement are related to gender differences in political participation. We regressed each of the four types of political participation on each of the five types of associational involvement, controlling for all the selected sociodemographic variables. The resulting odds ratios for men and women, shown in table 5, reveal that in general, civic engagement has a positive effect on political participation for both men and women, but the magnitude of the effect varies by gender. Certain types of civic engagement appear to have a consistent “gender differential” in their effects on political participation. For example, while attending community meetings has a larger positive effect on men’s political participation, attending parent-teacher associational meetings has a more positive effect on women’s political participation (except for protest activities). However, the pattern of gender differential in the political impact of civic engagement in other areas of associational activities is less consistent: the positive effect of attending economic meetings is stronger for men than for women in areas of campaign and protest, but stronger for women than for men in the area of political meeting attendance. Also, while the positive effect of attending sports/recreational meetings is stronger for men than for women in political meeting attendance and campaign involvement, the positive effect on protest participation is much stronger for women than for men.

Table 5. Multilevel Models Predicting Political Participation (Odds Ratios)

Types of Civic Engagement	Types of Political Participation			
	Voting	Political Meeting	Campaign	Protest
Economic				
Male	1.814	12.781**	15.149**	27.918**
Female	1.279	42.964**	9.581**	9.077**
Community				
Male	20.146**	59.100**	36.646**	40.621**
Female	6.554**	42.625**	30.598**	36.946**
Sports/Recreational				
Male	0.994	19.939**	17.585**	3.860**
Female	0.753	14.089**	2.085	10.001**
Religious				
Male	6.964**	2.623*	0.242	1.146
Female	5.496**	5.252**	0.587	1.167
Parent–Teacher				
Male	3.866**	1.776	0.332	11.949**
Female	15.846**	4.046**	4.229**	4.109**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

N = 27,000.

Note: The above models controlled for all selected social demographic variables.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the analyses show that significant gender gaps exist in both civic and political participation at the individual level among Latin American countries. Significant gender gaps in civic participation are found in more countries than political gender gaps, and the latter are mostly found in countries with lower levels of human development. A significant gender gap in voting participation was found in only one of the 18 Latin American countries, which supports the finding of the vanishing voting gap in other comparative research (Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010; Inglehart and Norris 2000); and a significant gender gap in campaign work and participation in protests was found in less than half of the countries, which supports the vanishing gender gap in political participation found in some studies conducted in advanced democracies in previous decades (Evans 1980; Schlozman et al. 1995). It could be that civic engagement is more affected by cultural factors of gender roles while political participation is more affected by the process of political democratization that brings electoral participation and political activism to the forefront. If this is the case, then more economic development and political democratization augur well for the vanishing gender gaps in civic and political participation in Latin America.

Gender gaps in civic engagement are horizontally segmented, as earlier research has documented (Norris and Inglehart 2003). While men are more likely than women to attend meetings of community, economic, and sports and recreational

associations, women are more likely than men to attend meetings of religious and parent-teacher associations. However, the picture of gender disparity changes when we look at the intensity of civic involvement among the activists: the gender gap disappears among those who attend community and economic meetings, where women remain more active in religious and parent-teacher associations and men attend sports/recreation meetings more frequently. This finding provides empirical evidence that Latin American women have strong community ties through a variety of local organizations, as other researchers have indicated without providing empirical tests (Jaquette 1989; Molyneux 2002; Safa 1990; Waylen 1993). This also highlights the need to be aware of the type and intensity of participation, since this distinction seems to matter for gender gaps in civic participation.

In terms of the relationship between civic engagement and political participation, this analysis indicates that civic engagement, regardless of the type of association, is an important predictor of political participation, and that gender gaps in political participation may be partly attributable to gender differentials in civic engagement. In general, involvement in local associational activities is positively related to participation in various political activities, and this finding lends support to the well-known claim in the social capital literature that participation in voluntary associations increases political participation (Ayala 2000; Dekker and van den Broek 1998; Putnam 1995b, Tusalem 2007; Verba et al. 1995). However, the magnitude of the positive effects varies by gender in certain areas of political participation, suggesting that the effects of civic engagement are mediated by other factors that are gender-related. Future research needs to find out what those mediating factors are and how they interact with civic engagement in affecting political participation.

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