

Good Girls Go to the Polling Booth,
Bad Boys Go Everywhere:
Gender Differences
in Anticipated Political Participation
Among American Fourteen-Year-Olds

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ABSTRACT. Participation research routinely reveals a gender gap with regard to most forms of political engagement. In the recent literature, differences in the availability of resources and civic skills are usually invoked as an explanation for this pattern. This theory focuses primarily on adult behavior and has not as yet been investigated among young people, for whom we can assume that resources are distributed more equally. In this article, we examine gender differences in the anticipation of political participation among American fourteen-year-olds, building on the 1999 International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement study (n = 2,811). First, the results show that girls at this age mention even more actions they intend to engage in than do boys, so clearly the gender gap with regard to the *level* of participation has not yet emerged at that age. Second, we observe distinct patterns with regard to the *kinds* of actions favored, with girls being drawn more towards social movement-related forms of participation than boys, and with boys favoring radical and confrontational action repertoires as compared to girls. The results are important for the reconceptualization of the concept of political participation as well as for theories that explain the gender gap. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2004 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

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Gender differences with regard to political participation have proven to be remarkably persistent. In most liberal democracies, women participate less intensively in political life, they profess to be less politically interested, and, with a few major exceptions (the Scandinavian countries, for example) they are dramatically underrepresented at the parliamentary and executive level (Atkeson and Rapoport 2003; Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Burns 2002; Carroll 2003; van Deth 2000; Inglehart and Norris 2003). While some of the earlier studies on this topic operated under the assumption that these gender differences will gradually disappear as women catch up with men in the fields of education, professional careers, and income, recent evidence suggests that the difference is still highly significant. Moreover, even where this gap has decreased, it has done so at a very slow pace (Bennett and Bennett 1989; for a review see Inglehart and Norris 2003).

By now, it has become generally accepted that the persistence of this gender gap cannot be attributed to one single factor, but rather should be seen as the result of an interplay of various elements (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001: 358-9). On the one hand, some authors stress the fact that women have fewer resources available than men with regard to income, education, and time as well as civic skills. Because of child-rearing responsibilities, for example, women have less discretionary time or resources available to spend on political participation and other forms of voluntary engagement (Okin 1989; Phillips 1991). Other authors focus on the role of institutions, and claim that the male-dominated culture of associations and political parties (especially at the elite level) actually inhibits women from gaining full access to the political realm (Lowndes 2000; Norris 1997). Still others highlight that marriage, motherhood and homemaking might socialize women out of politics (Andersen 1975; Burns 2002: 480; Jennings and Niemi 1981).

A major limitation of these empirical studies, however, is that they include only adult respondents. This focus on a population above the voting age has major consequences. First, it is altogether likely that we are missing part of the story, given our knowledge that gender roles take root quite early in the life cycle, and certainly well before the age of eighteen (Brown and Gilligan 1992; Maccoby 1998; Maccoby and Jacklin 1974). The inclusion of younger respondents, therefore, might inform us about the way gender roles and expectations actually affect political involvement early on.

Second, the study of young respondents allows us to test the validity of the claim that the availability of resources might determine differences in participation behavior (Sigel 1996; Verba, Schlozman, and

Brady 1995). We can assume that for fourteen-year-old adolescents, there is not yet a systematic difference with regard to the availability of resources such as time, money, cognitive skills, and so on. If differences in resources are the fundamental barriers to adult women's participation, as is often suggested, then adolescents, who presumably have smaller resource gaps between gender groups, should have more equal political engagement levels. Therefore, if we do not find any gender differences in anticipated political participation at age fourteen, this strengthens explanations that rely on resource arguments to explain gender differences in political participation levels.¹

On the other hand, if we would find gender differences with regard to political participation among fourteen-year-olds, the theoretical consequences to be drawn are less clear. Such a finding would not necessarily invalidate the resource explanation since we can still argue that even young girls anticipate their future gender roles, within which they will have fewer resources at their disposal to devote to politics. In addition, it seems likely that a gendered socialization has already affected gender roles in earlier ages through media, school, and peer influences, which also affects intentions of political participation (Thorne 1993). Nevertheless, the finding of significant gender differences at the age of fourteen would imply that research should not be limited to the availability of resources, but that it should also take into account cultural or socialization explanations. More specifically, in this scenario more attention should be paid to the way societies transmit gender roles to new cohorts. An exploration of the political expectations held by fourteen-year-old girls and boys, therefore, is interesting not just in and of itself, but also because it can shed new light on the general study of gender and political participation.

The inclusion of young people in the study of gender and political participation is therefore highly relevant, both on theoretical and empirical grounds. In this article we rely on a survey that was conducted in 1999 among 2,811 eighth-graders across the United States, and can be considered as representative for this age group (NCES 2001). Since fourteen-year-olds do not yet have the right to vote and they cannot yet join political parties, most of the relevant questions in this survey deal with the nature of political behavior respondents envision for themselves once they become enfranchised. Earlier research has shown that this mode of prospective questioning is highly informative about the likelihood of future political participation (Torney-Purta et al. 2001).

In this regard, it is equally important not to limit this study to a purely quantitative analysis. The question is not only whether girls intend to be

more or less active than boys; it has been shown that, among adults, women and men do not differ just in the *level* of participation, but also with regard to the kinds of activities they prefer (Lowndes 2000; Stolle and Micheletti, forthcoming). Women have been shown to engage more in small-scale, less formal, and caring forms of activity, whereas men seem to prefer formal, politicized, and hierarchical organizations (Elia-soph 1998; Katzenstein 1998). Here too, the question is whether these gendered differences exist already at age fourteen, or if they emerge only later on in the life-cycle.

In this article, we first offer a brief review of the available literature on gender and participation before moving on to the presentation of our dataset. Subsequently, we examine the forms and level of political behavior that girls and boys anticipate for themselves in the future, and ascertain the factors responsible for their views. In our conclusion, we argue that participation research should pay more attention to political acts preferred by women, and to the way adolescent girls and boys anticipate gender role expectations.

LITERATURE

The gender gap with respect to political participation and civic engagement is well established; indeed, this difference can be considered as one of the most stable findings in participation research (Sapiro 1983; Conway 2000). The gender gap holds for both conventional and unconventional forms of participation (Barnes and Kaase 1979; Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978), while it also has been found in various subgroups of the population (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001).

However, there is little consensus about how these gender differences can be explained. We will not develop a lengthy review of the literature here, since the research findings on gender and political participation are expertly reviewed and summarized in a number of recent publications (Burns 2002; Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Carroll 2003; Inglehart and Norris 2003). For a clear understanding of our data analysis, however, it is necessary to provide the reader with a brief summary of the various factors that might be responsible for the lower participation levels of women, at least in most societies, and with regard to some forms of participation.

In the 1970s, the distinction between explanations based on apathy and inhibition offered the main paradigm for the study of gender differences in participation (Ackelsberg and Diamond 1987; Verba, Nie, and

Kim 1978). While the apathy thesis held that women simply participate less intensively because of an innately reduced interest in politics, the inhibition thesis assumes that women “care about politics but are inhibited from participating because of external restraints or self-restraints” (Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978: 237). These inhibitions can be both external (such as rules barring women from the right to vote or to participate in politics), or internal (such as the interiorization of gender roles that limit women’s access to the public sphere).

Since the 1970s, feminist scholars have been building mainly on the inhibition thesis, highlighting the fact that private inequalities (with regard to household division of labor and power) have a strong effect on the opportunities available to women wishing to engage in political action: “women are prevented from participating in public life because of the way their private lives are run. The division of labor between women and men constitutes for most women a double burden of work” (Phillips 1991: 96). Other authors claim that political institutions inevitably operate in a gender-biased manner, as elites proclaim allegedly neutral rules and evaluation criteria that systemically downplay the role played by women (Young 1990).

More recent research, however, indicates that it would be erroneous to pinpoint the observed gender difference to just one specific cause—rather, a subtle interplay of various elements seems to be at work. Burns (2002) offers four possible elements to explain the gender gap with regard to political activity. First, women tend to have fewer civic skills, e.g., with regard to speaking in public, writing texts and leaflets or chairing meetings (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Enduring segregation of the job market means that fewer women hold professional positions that would allow them to cultivate this kind of civic skills. Second, family life tends to reduce the time women have at their disposal to engage in civic action. In this respect, not just the actual division of labor within the family can have an effect, but also the way spouses interact and share gender role expectations (Hochschild 1989; Schlozman, Burns, and Verba 1994). Third, childrearing responsibilities might have a detrimental effect on women’s participation, most notably when children are very young and require almost constant attention and care. A fourth explanation focuses on the way gender roles limit the options available to women to engage in various forms of political action. These gender roles are at play both at the level of the individual (if they are interiorized) and on the level of organizations that are portrayed as being less open to female participation.

In the Political Activism study, a massive participation project conducted by Verba and associates in the early 1990s, not all of these hypotheses could be confirmed empirically. Burns, Schlozman, and Verba (2001: 359) do not find any support for either the child-rearing or the leisure time hypotheses. Inequalities with regard to family life and differences in socioeconomic resources because of job inequality, on the other hand, were proven to be significant explanatory variables. In their conclusion, Burns, Schlozman, and Verba stress the role job inequalities play: “when other relevant variables are taken into account, men are more likely than women to get the kinds of jobs that develop civic skills and to gain positions of lay leadership in their churches—with potential consequences for their portfolio of participatory resources” (2001: 360). This study also demonstrates that, because media attention is biased towards male politicians and decision makers, women’s interest in politics and their intention to participate in the political process is muted.

Thus far we have treated political participation in a rather general manner, lumping together various forms of participation. It is important to acknowledge, however, that differences between female and male participation patterns and preferences are not just quantitative but also distinctly qualitative. Men, in other words, tend to prefer other forms of participation than women (Ackelsberg 2003; Ferree and Martin 1995; Lowndes 2000). In general, women favor smaller-scale and less conflict-oriented forms of engagement (Eliasoph 1998), with fewer formal institutions and hierarchies (Arnold 1995). Women tend to choose forms of political involvement that connect politics with their daily lives and needs more than men do. In a number of instances, women’s participation is also concentrated in gender-segregated networks within larger institutions, a phenomenon that is hardly captured in survey research on participation (Katzenstein 1998). In other words, instead of making the general claim that women participate less than men, a distinction should be made according to specific forms of engagement.

While gender differences tend to persist with regard to campaigning and membership, the gender gap in voter turnout has been reversed, with women voting more often than men at least in some countries and some groups of the population (Conway, Steuernagel, and Ahern 1997). As a result, it can be estimated that during the 1997 general election in Britain, approximately two million more women turned out to vote than men (Evans and Norris 1999). With regard to some policy issues there are also clear differences, as women tend to pay more attention to issues like education, child care, or abortion rights and often hold different positions on the military, poverty, and the use of firearms (CAWP 1997).

While some earlier studies demonstrated gender differences with regard to unconventional or protest activities (Barnes and Kaase 1979), in more recent studies this gender gap seems to have dissipated, as women are now equally active in these forms compared to men (Norris 2002).

It is self-evident that this brief review of the literature cannot offer a full summary of the research findings on gender and political participation (see Inglehart and Norris 2003). It is important to remember, however, that research has shown that gender differences have been persistent, especially with regard to more formal forms of political participation. Furthermore, there is no single “magic bullet” explanation for gender inequalities with regard to political participation. Socioeconomic and structural inequalities, bias with regard to access, differential mobilization patterns, and cultural variables all seem to play a role.

However, recently, the focus has been sharpened on the importance of various resources for women to participate in politics equally. In this context, the study of young adolescents is extremely relevant. Various explanations that are often invoked to explain the lower level of female participation cannot have a *direct* impact on fourteen-year-olds. At this age, differences in resources, especially with regard to income, job position, work related skills or household responsibilities have yet to come into play.² The experiences of children and marriage can also be safely ruled out at this age. Young adolescents, therefore, offer us a very interesting testing ground; if gender differences can be detected at this age, a number of the routine “culprits” for the gender gap can be eliminated, pointing strongly into the possibility that cultural and socialization explanations might be at work. If these differences cannot be detected, this strengthens the case for the resource explanations.

DATA AND METHODS

Our effort to ascertain whether gender differences in repertoires of political participation are already present at age fourteen is based on the secondary analysis of a survey conducted among 2,811 eighth graders in the United States. This study was part of a larger International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) sponsored research effort with surveys being conducted in 28 countries (Torney-Purta et al. 2001). IEA is devoted to the comparative study of the effectiveness and the performance of education and school systems, and in general, IEA studies enjoy a good reputation in the field of education evaluation research. Thus far, however, only the American data file has

been released for secondary analysis, while the data for the other 27 countries should be released in the near future (NCES 2002). In the United States, the survey was conducted among eighth graders in 124 schools across the country. These schools were selected with attention to geographical diversity, number of pupils, public or private character, and the ethnic composition of the student body. In the schools, 2,811 pupils actually participated and delivered a full questionnaire. Of these pupils 1,392 were girls, 1,375 were boys and 44 did not report any gender. The sample contained 15 percent Hispanics, 5 percent Native Americans, 6 percent Asians, 18 percent African Americans and 64 percent whites. A complete technical report about sampling procedures and characteristics of the test population can be found in Ogle (2002). The primary purpose of this survey was to assess the effectiveness of various civic education efforts in schools. The questionnaire therefore is focused on school-related variables, while other possible determinants of civic attitudes and behaviors receive less attention. Nevertheless, this dataset contains sufficient information to test a number of assumptions in the current literature on political participation.

At first sight, eighth graders seem an unlikely group to test political participation theories. It is indeed plausible that youngsters at this age have not formulated meaningful political opinions; here too, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Our results will determine whether fourteen-year-olds reply randomly to political questions, or whether clear patterns emerge indicating that “tomorrow’s citizens” are already quite aware of the possibilities and the likelihood of their future political engagement. Based on the available literature on youth socialization we expect that young people already know what they perceive as unfair in society; moreover, we also expect that they have developed ideas about whether they are able to bring about change in social arrangements, and, if so, how they will pursue this goal. To put this in terms of development psychology, they already have some conception of what their future role in society will be (Youniss 1982). Longitudinal research, furthermore, suggests that experiences of socialization at a young age, such as participation in youth associations or certain forms of civic education, can have a lasting impact on adult political ideas and behavior patterns (Hooghe and Stolle 2003; Hooghe, Stolle and Stouthuysen 2004; Yates and Youniss 1999). We therefore assume that the political conceptions and expectations of fourteen-year-olds can be studied in a meaningful and informative way. We test this proposition with our data.

FUTURE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

In this analysis, we are mainly interested in the kind of political and civic engagement that fourteen-year-olds envision for themselves when they become adults. In the survey, pupils were offered a list of 12 forms of engagement, and for each form they could indicate how likely it was that they would engage in it. For activities linked to the electoral process, the question was phrased as the likelihood to engage once “you are an adult.” For the other activities, the question referred to “the next few years.” For each of these activities, the respondents were offered four answering categories, ranging from “I will certainly not do this” to “I will certainly do this.” The results of this question are represented in Table 1.

The results in Table 1 show that for seven activities girls outnumber boys, as they indicate a higher inclination to participate in this kind of action. While girls on average report 4.55 acts, boys mention on average 4.00 acts. This finding is interesting because it shows that girls at least anticipate that they will participate in politics more than boys do, at least within the framework of the proposed options of involvement. And yet the adult findings show a reversed effect: in the Political Activism Study, women reported they had engaged in 1.96 political acts on average, whereas for men this number was 2.27 (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001: 1).

The difference between these two findings cannot be easily explained, but four scenarios stand out. To start with, the Activism study is based on reported behavior, while the IEA study probes *intentions* to participate. It might be that girls are more eager to appear to conform to the image of concerned citizens, an image widely promoted in schools in general and more specifically in civics classes. This would imply that among girls the distance between intention and behavior is larger than among boys, which by itself would be an interesting finding. Second, our measurement scale incorporates a larger diversity of engagement indicators, including various volunteering and campaign activities. In the Political Activism study, an eight item measurement scale was used that focused more strongly on electoral activities; this turns out to be one of the major exceptions in the data noted above, as fourteen-year-old girls score lower than boys. This would imply that the measurement scales that are used most often in this kind of research are biased in favor of activities that are apparently preferred by men. A third possible explanation might be that we are indeed witnessing the gradual emergence of gender differences during the transition from youth to adulthood. At the age of fourteen, girls are at least just as strongly interested

TABLE 1. Anticipation of Future Political Behavior				
Likelihood of future behavior		All	Girls	Boys
	rank			
Will vote in national elections	1	79.2	<u>83.8</u>	75.0
Will collect information on candidates in elections	2	74.5	<u>79.1</u>	70.1
Will volunteer	3	65.9	<u>78.6</u>	52.8
Will collect money	4	52.2	<u>60.5</u>	43.3
Will collect signatures	5	43.5	<u>48.2</u>	38.5
Will protest peacefully	6	33.9	<u>35.8</u>	31.7
Will join political party	7	25.7	<u>25.2</u>	<u>26.2</u>
Will write to newspaper	8	24.9	<u>28.0</u>	21.5
Will be candidate for office	9	15.9	14.5	<u>16.9</u>
Will paint slogans	10	13.5	8.3	<u>19.0</u>
Will occupy buildings	11	12.9	10.0	<u>15.6</u>
Will block traffic	12	11.6	7.1	<u>16.3</u>
Activities mentioned		4.26	4.55	4.00

Entries in columns 3-5 are percentages of those who mentioned these activities as something they would do in the near future or as an adult (probably or certainly do this). Source: IEA study, USA 1999. Percentages are weighted by population weights.

in civic engagement as boys. Ten years later, however, the roles would be reversed and women do not engage in as many political acts as they had originally planned. This explanation, of course, is compatible with the previously discussed resource theory and also with the thesis that focuses on women's family responsibilities as a source of gender differences. Over the following decades, most of the girls interviewed in this survey will enter a family relationship and the labor market, which might lead them to face obstacles when transforming their intention to participate into real participation. A fourth explanation might be that the girls interviewed in 1999 belong to a generation that has already overcome the main gender gaps in participation, whereas these differences are still persistent in the current adult population. Only future research can show which of the four scenarios is at work here. The overall point, though, is that in terms of frequency of intended participation, we do not find the typical gender differences exhibited among adults.

DIMENSIONS OF PARTICIPATION

Thus far we have only discussed the differences between girls and boys with regard to their anticipated level of participation; now, we turn

to differences in the kinds of activity they prefer. This distinction is most pronounced with respect to volunteering, where the number of respondents willing to engage in this form of action is 25 percent higher among girls than it is among boys. However, also with regard to voting and collecting money and signatures, girls mention they would be more involved. The five activities where the boys score higher, however, are rather telling; boys indicate more often the wish to become party members and/or seek office, and they are also overwhelmingly interested in radical or even violent forms of participation.

It is striking to observe that girls intend to engage in various forms of engagement and activism, but less so in political parties, or in running for office. This is a relevant finding since a lot of the research on political participation focuses almost exclusively on this category of election-related participatory acts. Yet participation in the electoral arena represents one of the few categories where women (and girls) are less represented (Milbrath and Goel 1977). Given our results, the gender gap in electoral and party participation should not be generalized toward the entire spectrum of participation acts. In fact, our findings suggest that the expansion of the definition of political participation beyond strictly electoral acts closes much of the gender gap, at least at age fourteen.

Second, the gap with regard to running for office is small, but it could have dramatic consequences. Earlier research has shown that women are more motivated to participate in election campaigns if one of the leading candidates is also a woman. In addition, they pay more attention to political news if female politicians are running for office (Burns, Schlozman, and Brady 2001; Hansen 1997). The fact that even fourteen-year-old girls already seem to refrain from this specific kind of electoral activity, therefore, could imply that in the future too there will still be a relative shortage of female role models as successful politicians.

The percentage of boys indicating that they want to participate in some form of radical political action is almost twice as high as the percentage among girls. Typical activities here include spraying slogans or blocking traffic. It is clear that girls are less attracted to these forms of confrontational and even violent participation. Perhaps gender role expectations strengthen the perception that this kind of physical activity is predominantly male-oriented. We know that even from an early age, boys are more prone to engage in violent action and dominant behavior than girls are (Sidanius and Pratto 1999; Whiting and Edwards 1988). This finding could also reflect the fact that girls and perhaps women generally prefer less adversarial political action. Our findings also reflect the results from the Barnes and Kaase (1979) study, which de-

picted a large difference between the participation of women and men in these unconventional forms of political action. They are equally consistent with the findings from the 2001 World Values Survey, which showed that men have engaged in confrontational political action more often than women (Inglehart and Norris 2003). It seems as if girls are more eager to participate in socially accepted forms of civic engagement, while boys additionally employ acts that are generally not encouraged among young adults.

A factor analysis revealed in Table 2 supports the assertion that these various acts of participation tap three distinct dimensions of participation and engagement (Torney-Purta et al. 2001). The most obvious factor reflects the radical action repertoire, including confrontational or even illegal acts. The second factor encompasses conventional electoral participation, with items such as voting or joining a political party. A third factor depicts volunteering and social movement-related activities, like collecting money and signatures, or other forms of volunteering. It is important to note here that these three dimensions are found among the boys as well as the girls, with the major exception that among boys, voting loads only poorly on the conventional factor.

EXPLAINING THE INTENTION TO PARTICIPATE

Given the results of the factor analysis, it is self-evident that we should not just try to explain the overall level of anticipated future behavior. It is equally important to ascertain whether girls and boys differ with regard to the kind of political engagement they envision. This implies that for the next step in our analysis, three different dependent variables will be used. Three sum scales (based on the results of the factor analysis) will be employed distinguishing whether respondents say they are likely to engage in conventional, radical or social movement forms of activism.

Our main purpose here is to construct a multivariate model that allows us to ascertain whether or not gender differences are present with respect to various forms of participation, even when taking into account a number of control variables that are likely to determine participation behavior. We rely on independent variables from the literature on political participation and youth political socialization (for a review see Galston 2001; Jennings 2002; Yates and Youniss 1999). Given that we examine secondary data collected for other purposes, we are forced to use the variables employed in the original study. Furthermore, it should be re-

TABLE 2. Dimensions of Anticipated Political Behavior

Likelihood of future behavior	Factors I radical – II new social movement – III conventional								
	All			Girls			Boys		
	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
Will vote in national elections			.525			.647			.383
Will collect information on candidates in elections			.598			.643			.533
Will volunteer		.761			.745			.766	
Will collect money		.799			.786			.805	
Will collect signatures		.742			.703			.734	
Will protest peacefully		.617			.558			.643	
Will join political party			.811			.772			.827
Will write to newspaper			.719			.670			.759
Will be candidate for office			.659			.543			.739
Will spray slogans	.849			.850			.854		
Will occupy buildings	.857			.848			.850		
Will block traffic	.889			.884			.885		
Eigenvalue (Rotation Sum of Squares)	2.7	2.4	2.4	2.7	2.4	2.2	2.7	2.6	2.4
Explained variance	22.6	20.5	20.3	22.4	20.0	18.6	22.6	21.5	20.0
Factor loadings from a Factor analysis (Principal component) with Varimax rotation.									

membered that this is a rather homogeneous sample, and consequently a number of possible variables could not be used. Almost all respondents are fourteen years old, with a mean age of 14.40 (and a standard deviation of 0.64), and all are pupils in the eighth grade. No information on religion was available, as it was considered unethical to ask such questions of juveniles in a school context. Information on ethnic background, on the other hand, is available and depicts an almost two-thirds majority of white pupils in the sample. It is a robust finding in participation research that ethnic minorities participate less intensively than members of the dominant group in society (Schlozman 2002; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

In general, education can be considered one of the most important determinants of participation levels, as almost every study conducted on this subject has demonstrated that highly educated citizens participate more intensively than people with less educational credentials (Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry 1996). However, little is known about what exactly in the education process helps to instill civic responsibility and commitment. Research conducted on civic education has documented that its completion increases the likelihood that pupils will participate in politics later on; the extensiveness of civic education can play an especially important role in this respect (Niemi and Junn 1998). Therefore, we included a sum scale of the number of topics that were discussed in civic education classes.³ Other studies on the effects of schooling, however, claim that not just the formal curriculum is important, but also the informal curriculum: are pupils, in other words, encouraged to speak out and to discuss among themselves and with their teachers? Torney, Oppenheim, and Farnen (1975) have labeled this an “open classroom climate,” and this too was included in the survey in the form of questions on the perceived openness of schools and classroom settings.

The length of education is a typical measure of the availability of educational resources at the adult level; evidently, though, there is no variation yet in this respect in a sample of fourteen-year-olds. However, previous research has shown that the inquiring of adolescents as to the number of years they expect to stay in school has a strong predictive value (Torney-Purta 2001). Those who feel happy at school and experience less trouble following courses on average see a longer educational future ahead of them. Another variable probing into their relation with school asks about the number of school days they missed last year. While these absences might be due to various idiosyncratic reasons, in general longer and more frequent absences point toward a more detached attitude toward the school; this, in turn, has been shown to have a negative

effect on political interest and willingness to engage in political life (John, Halpern, and Morris 2002).

Not just the school environment, however, has an effect on the way young people think about politics (Adler and Adler 1986; Youniss, McLellan, and Yates 1997). Those who are already active in youth associations and volunteering will be more likely to participate later on in their lives (Hooghe 2003). Therefore, we also included the number of associations that respondents are actively engaged in as an independent variable. We would like to have included more information about the socioeconomic status of the parents of the pupils, since we can safely assume this will have an impact on the participation aspirations of these youngsters (Jennings and Niemi 1981). Given the emphasis on resources as a source of explanation, it is also important to know whether there are any systematic differences in the resources available at the children's home. This kind of information, however, could not be obtained by means of a youth survey, for methodological and ethical reasons, and therefore the research team responsible for the IEA survey decided to settle for a proxy variable: an estimation of the number of books at home. It is a very reasonable and well-tested assumption that the number of books reflects the education level and income of the parents (Torney-Purta et al. 2001).

In Table 3 we present regression results explaining the three types of intended participation using *WesVar* (<http://www.westat.com/wesvar>). We use a linear regression model, with sample weights applied. The complex sampling design for the IEA survey requires special estimation techniques. The first stage sampling is at the school level with the sampling of two schools in each primary sampling unit (PSU). The second stage involves probability selection of the students within a school. When the data are from complex samples, modifications of the standard estimation methods must be employed to reflect the effects of clustering, stratification, or other features of the sample design (Steenbergen and Jones 2002). The modelling in *WesVar* accomplishes this by applying jackknife repeated replication (JRR) techniques to estimate the sampling errors of the model parameters.

The most striking feature of the regression analysis depicted in Table 3 is that the various forms of participation are explained very differently. Clearly, radical political acts stand out with explanatory variables often indicating reverse effects. At the individual level, for example, the number of years one expects to be in the education process positively correlates with conventional acts, but it is the other way around with radical acts. Children who belong to associations are also disproportionately anticipating some form of participation in conventional and

movement acts, but the membership does not influence the anticipation of radical acts whatsoever.

Looking at school-related factors, one observes that while the number of topics discussed in civics classes has a strong positive effect on conventional and social movement participation, it has a *negative* effect on radical participation. Similarly, the open classroom climate is an important facilitative factor for conventional and social movement related political acts, but the perception of a closed classroom climate seems to be fostering the willingness to engage in radical acts. This pattern can be seen as a confirmation of our initial assumption that one should be careful about making sweeping statements about overall participation levels, without going into specific kinds of participation.

Although at first we found that girls and boys do not exhibit the typical gender gap with the political acts they intend, it is clear that girls are more likely to engage in various forms of social movement related activities, and this relation holds even after including all the control variables. On the other hand, girls are less likely to engage in radical political actions. The different results when parceling out distinct political action repertoires show that it is imperative in future research on political participation to distinguish between various forms of participation. Only such an analysis can reveal that certain participation acts are apparently preferred by women and girls—perhaps these are repertoires that warrant closer attention by political scientists—whereas others are disproportionately rejected.

It is obvious that at this age, gender roles and expectations figure strongly in one's determination of the participation profile girls and boys envision for themselves. Girls tend to mention activities that are considered socially beneficial; for boys, on the other hand, adversarial (and sometimes even illegal) forms of action are more appealing. Given what we know about the way girls and boys at a young age interact with the school environment, it is very likely that this is more than just a superficial conformation process, but rather that it reflects interiorized gender roles. At this age, gender differences with regard to educational attainment are already clearly present, and they can largely be explained by the fact that girls tend to behave in a more conformist, non-adversarial, and school-oriented fashion, while a greater proportion of the boys rebel against the school environment, eventually even leading to their dropping out entirely (Gorard, Rees, and Salisbury 2001). That a certain number of boys mention radical participation acts fits into this pattern. The results of the analysis show that these radical acts are in no way related to what they learn at school, while other political acts are

	Conventional		Radical		Social Movement	
	B (SE B)	β	B (SE B)	β	B (SE B)	β
Cte.	.06 (.03)		.43 (.04)		.27 (.03)	
Gender (0 = male, 1 = female)	.00 (.008)	.01	-.08 (.012)	-.17***	.05 (.009)	fourteen***
Ethnicity/Race - Black	-.01 (.009)	-.02	.05 (.016)	.06**	.04 (.012)	.07***
- Ethnic Minorities (†)	-.01 (.009)	-.01	.03 (.013)	.05*	.04 (.008)	.07***
Topics in Civic Education	.09 (.010)	.25***	-.03 (.012)	-.07**	.01 (.010)	.25***
Open Classroom Climate	.12 (.024)	.13***	-.10 (.032)	-.08**	.09 (.028)	.09**
Years of Education Ahead	.02 (.004)	.10***	-.03 (.005)	-.12***	.010 (.004)	.05
Days Absent from School	-.01 (.005)	-.04	.03 (.006)	.13***	-.00 (.006)	-.02
Number of Associations	.01 (.001)	.16***	.00 (.002)	.01	.02 (.002)	.23***
Books at Home	.02 (.003)	.13***	.00 (.005)	.01	.00 (.004)	.02
r ²	.22		.11		.24	
n	2,189		2,188		2,187	

Entries are unstandardized coefficients, standard errors, and standardized coefficients from an ordinary least squares regression, using a WesVar design. †: Includes Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander and Native American.
*** = $p < .001$; ** = $p < .01$; * = $p < .05$

positively related with the presence of an open classroom climate, the number of topics discussed in civic education classes, and the number of expected years of further education. An even more obvious indication of the notion that the boys who prefer radical actions are not necessarily school-oriented is the fact that they miss significantly more school days. Radical action, in a way, is very much a manifestation of “bad boy” behavior, in that it is not something that is encouraged or stimulated by school institutions. Civic education apparently is more successful in promoting the “good,” “kind,” and to some extent non-adversarial and non-threatening forms of participation (John, Halpern, and Morris 2002).

CONCLUSION

Our initial question for this study was to examine whether the gender differences that are typically found in research on adult political participation are already present among young people. Research among adolescents can shed new light on the oft-invoked explanation that women have fewer resources available to engage in public and political life (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001).

The answer to this question is inevitably twofold. With regard to the *level* of participation, a first-cut test reveals that there is no difference between girls and boys. In fact, girls mention more acts than boys. When speculating on what this finding means for the study of adult participation, some caution is in order. To start with, there is a measurement problem: the fact that girls even outperform boys in this study might be due to the fact that the IEA study included a substantial number of social movement related forms of action. As far as we know, this questionnaire has never been used for research among adults, and so we cannot be sure that similar levels of engagement might be provoked by asking adults about a wider variety of political acts. Second, there is the question whether this result will last: implicitly, we compare adult women and young girls at the same moment of time. What we really want to know, of course, is how the political action repertoire of these girls will develop over time; what we would ideally want to know is how these young women will participate ten years from now. It is possible that by then gender differences among adults indeed will have disappeared, although the fact that these differences are remarkably consistent in any research effort from the 1950s on does not lead to a strong feeling of optimism on this front.

Despite these two caveats, our finding offers new insights on how we can explain the observed differences in the participation level of women and men. At an age where there are most likely no strong gender differences with regard to the availability of resources, girls and boys intend to participate equally. In adulthood, however, these differences do become apparent, and this strengthens the case for the resources-explanation of the gender gap. Therefore, the basic question in research on women and political participation should not be: “Why do women participate less?” but rather “Why do adult women stop doing the things they intended to do when they were adolescent girls?” Sigel (1996) invokes a process of “accommodation,” where girls accommodate and adapt to gender roles when they mature into adulthood, and this kind of theoretical insight is a good starting point if we want to study what exactly changes between the ages of fourteen and, let us say, twenty-four. Apparently, women change their political and social ambitions once they engage themselves in relations and enter the job market, where they are confronted with segregation and gender inequalities.

It is equally important, however, to pay more attention to the kind of participatory acts favored by each gender. While girls and boys do not differ significantly with regard to the level of anticipated participation, they do intend to engage in different forms of political action. It is quite telling to observe that most of the current research on political participation tends to focus on exactly those forms of participation where boys excel. On one side there is an ongoing stream of electoral and party-related participation research, and on the other side radical forms of engagement and activism are being studied as unconventional political acts. The activities preferred by girls, to the contrary, tend to be neglected in participation research, or they are sometimes dismissed as not being strictly political. An unbiased and meaningful study of participation patterns, therefore, should include social movement-oriented forms of activism, such as volunteering or collecting signatures and money for political or social purposes, and give them equal weighting compared to electoral or radical participation acts.

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Both authors contributed equally to this article.

NOTES

1. An alternative explanation for the potential lack of gender differences could be that the cohort of fourteen-year-olds in 1999 (born in 1985) exhibits fewer gender differences than all of their predecessors. Given the remarkable persistence of the gender gap in political behavior, not only this is rather unlikely, but it is also an argument that we can test only within a few decades time, when this cohort will have progressed into middle age.

2. The only exception could be that girls at this age are expected to contribute more to household chores than their male counterparts are. The survey unfortunately did not include any information on this topic. In general, however, it can be expected that household requirements at this age will remain rather limited, and will impose a limited time burden, compared to the time adults spend on household and child rearing responsibilities. A time budget study conducted in Belgium showed that sixteen-year-old girls on average report 3.5 hours of household work a week, while boys report 3.0 hours. This difference, however, is negligible compared to the household workload of people in their twenties that have left the home of their parents: 20 hours per week for women and 6 hours per week for men (Koelet 2002). At this moment, we do not know, however, whether these Belgian findings can be generalized to US teenagers.

3. We rely on the pupil's report about the number of topics discussed, so it could be that in reality, various other topics were discussed too, but that the pupil failed to remember this. The same caveat holds for the variable on an open classroom climate, but in this respect it that can be argued that if pupils themselves perceive the classroom climate as not being "open," there certainly is a problem, no matter the intentions of the teacher and the school.

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