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THE POLITICAL GENDER GAP IN AFRICA: SIMILAR ATTITUDES, DIFFERENT BEHAVIORS

by Carolyn Logan and Michael Bratton

A comparative series of national public attitude surveys on democracy, markets and civil society in Africa.

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by Carolyn Logan and Michael Bratton.

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The Political Gender Gap in Africa: Similar Attitudes, Different Behaviors

Abstract

Differences in political values, attitudes and behaviors between women and men have long been the subject of scrutiny in Western societies. Gender differences in family, work, and community roles and experiences have been seen as key factors contributing to an observed "gender gap" in these societies. Traditionally, the "gender gap" has been characterized as a tendency toward greater conservatism among women than men in ideology, electoral preferences, and political attitudes. Recent analysis, however, challenges the notion, or at least the endurance, of this "traditional gender gap." This research suggests that existing models of partisan loyalty and policy preference based on gender, in which women are assumed to be held back by discriminatory traditions, may not apply well in non-Western developing nations, including those in Africa. Our own analysis draws on public opinion data gathered in Round 2 of the Afrobarometer (2002-2003) to explore differences in values, attitudes, and behaviors between men and women in 15 African countries.[1] We find that African women differ relatively little from men with regard to their preferences for political and economic regimes and in performance evaluations. Where they do differ, it is not because women stake out a fundamentally different position from men, but rather, usually because women are more ambivalent; they consistently offer more "don't know" or other null or neutral responses. We see a real, qualitative difference between men and women on only one issue: women seem to be less convinced of the need for multiparty competition within a democracy, expressing greater concerns about the potential divisiveness of party competition, and a greater tolerance for one-party systems.

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[1] Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

The Political Gender Gap in Africa: Similar Attitudes, Different Behaviors

Differences in political values, attitudes and behaviors between women and men have long been the subject of scrutiny in Western societies. Gender differences in family, work, and community roles and experiences have been seen as key factors contributing to an observed "gender gap" in these societies. Traditionally, the "gender gap" has been characterized as a tendency toward greater conservatism among women than men in ideology, electoral preferences, and political attitudes. Recent analysis by Inglehart and Norris (2003), however, challenges the notion, or at least the endurance, of this "traditional gender gap." In particular, they find that in industrial and post-industrial societies women are gradually (by generation) shifting from being more conservative than men (the "traditional gender gap") to being more liberal (the "modern gender gap"). Moreover, contrary to expectations, they also find that in the current cohort of pre-industrial (or "agrarian") societies, women of all ages already place themselves slightly to the left of men. This suggests that existing models of partisan loyalty and policy preference based on gender, in which women are assumed to be held back by discriminatory traditions, may not apply well in non-Western developing nations, including those in Africa (86-88).

Our own analysis draws on public opinion data gathered in Round 2 of the Afrobarometer (2002-2003) to explore differences in values, attitudes, and behaviors between men and women in 15 African countries.[2] Expanding somewhat on the conventional definition of a political "gender gap," which emphasizes ideological and attitudinal differences, we will look for gender gaps in four key areas:

1) *political regime preferences* – Are women "conservative" relative to men, showing greater attachment to the authoritarian systems of the past?

2) *economic policy preferences* – In the great debate over the respective roles of state and market in economic development, are women more pro-state than men (the closest equivalent to "to the left of" men[3])?

3) *performance evaluations* – Is there a gender gap in how women and men rate the performance of political institutions? Are women in traditionally patriarchal African societies more deferential to, or less critical of, male leaders?

4) *political behavior* – Do African women adhere to the pattern commonly observed elsewhere, engaging less than men in the political arena?

To anticipate results, we find that African women differ relatively little from men with regard to their preferences for political and economic regimes and in performance evaluations. Where they do differ, it is not because women stake out a fundamentally different position from men, but rather, usually because women are more ambivalent; they consistently offer more "don't know" or other null or neutral responses. We see a real, qualitative difference between men and women on only one issue: women seem to be less convinced of the need for multiparty competition within a democracy, expressing greater concerns about the potential divisiveness of party competition, and a greater tolerance for one-party systems. As for economic policy preferences, our findings do not support those of Ingelhart and Norris; in the agrarian societies included in this study, women do not tend to be consistently more pro-state than men (i.e., "to the left of" men). It is also important to note that, while aggregate results show relatively

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[2] Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

[3] The common policy terminology of "left vs. right" or "liberal vs. conservative" used, for example, by Inglehart and Norris, is problematic in the African context. Pro-state versus pro-market preferences are the closest equivalents.

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small gender gaps, country-level variations are often substantial, and within specific countries we often find exceptions to the patterns just described.

With regard to political behavior, however, we find that, like their counterparts elsewhere, women in Africa appear to be less active than men, at least in relation to formal categories of political participation. Men are far more likely to say that they discuss politics, join with others to address problems, attend community meetings, and contact their leaders.

We use multivariate regression analysis to probe both the determinants of participation generally, and the roots of this "gender gap" more specifically. Testing structural, cognitive, cultural and agency explanations, as well as country effects, we achieve some success in accounting for participatory behavior. We find especially strong agency and cultural effects. While part of the "gender gap" in participation can be explained by women's lower levels of interest in politics, disadvantage in access to education, and a disinclination to affiliate with a political party, a gender gap in political participation remains even after controlling for a range of explanatory factors.

Overview of the Data
This analysis draws on the results of 23,197 face-to-face interviews conducted between 2002 and 2003 during Round 2 of the Afrobarometer. The data are pooled from 15 separate country surveys, all of which used a standard survey instrument. Each country is represented by a national probability sample in which every adult citizen had an equal chance of inclusion. Sample sizes ranged from 1198 to 2428 respondents per country, although in the descriptive statistics reported here the data are weighted to represent each country equally (n=1200). Given the size of the pooled sample, point estimates have a margin of error of +/-1 percent at a 99 percent confidence level; the margin of sampling error for country statistics ranges from +/-2 to 3 percent at a 95 percent level of confidence.[4] It is important to note, however, that Afrobarometer surveys are concentrated in countries that have undergone at least some degree of political and economic liberalization in the last decade. As such, the results represent the continent's most open societies and cannot be taken as representative of sub-Saharan Africa as a whole.

In Afrobarometer surveys, each interviewer alternates interviews between men and women, so women represent 50 percent of all respondents. (Almost half (48 percent) of the interviewers in Afrobarometer Round 2 surveys were themselves female, in a range from 13 percent in Lesotho to 66 percent in South Africa. Forty-three percent of all interviews with women were conducted by female interviewers.) In our sample, female respondents are, on average, slightly younger than males, with a mean age of 35, compared to 38 for men. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of the sample live in rural households, evenly distributed between men and women, while the remaining 36 percent live in urban locations. Male respondents are far more likely to describe themselves as the "head of the household," at 65 percent, compared to 35 percent of women. Not surprisingly, male respondents are also, on average, better educated than their female counterparts: 45 percent of men, but only 37 percent of women, have reached secondary school or beyond in their education. At the bottom end of the educational spectrum, 56 percent of males have either no formal schooling or at most a primary school education, compared to 63 percent of women.

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[4] The large size of the pooled sample means that it is particularly easy for measures of association to qualify as significant at conventional levels of 0.05 or even 0.01. We will therefore use a more rigorous standard for the pooled data by reporting significance only at the 0.001 level of probability. We will continue to use the conventional approach (*<=0.05, **<=0.01, ***<=0.001), however, when testing for significance in country-level results. Unless otherwise indicated, all differences in the pooled data reported in this paper are significant at p<=0.001, and those in country-level data are significant at p<=0.05.

Afrobarometer surveys use a lengthy, diverse and detailed survey instrument that includes questions about the respondent's preferred economic system, the meaning of democracy, or an individual's ability to influence the political system. Before delving into the detailed survey results, it is worth asking whether African women are likely to respond in the same way to an interview of this sort as men. Given traditional gender roles in these often-patriarchal societies, whereby men are typically the leaders of households and communities, women are frequently expected to take a secondary role. In practice, are women willing to openly express their opinions, or are they deferential, either to the interviewer, or to others who might be present during the interview? And do they have the same familiarity with the political and economic issues of the day as men? Or are they less informed, less interested, or more ambivalent?

These concerns will be addressed in the course of analysis. But, in short, we find that women often appear to be less informed and more ambivalent than men. Interviewers report that 39 percent of women had trouble answering "some," "most" or "all" of the questions in the survey, compared to 29 percent of men. It is possible, however, that this difference does not reflect real knowledge differences between men and women. It may instead reveal a gap in willingness to concede political ignorance. Mondak and Anderson (2004) find that women are consistently more likely to choose a "don't know" option than men, who would often prefer to guess at an answer than admit they don't know. Alternatively, it could be the result of biases – for example, towards formal aspects of political participation – implicit in the survey itself (Berinsky, 2004).

We must be sure, however, that women are not modifying or disguising their opinions out of deference, fear, impatience, or some other motivation. To unravel these possibilities, we use information about the presence and influence of other people and the respondent's own attitude during the interview. While interviewers aim to conduct interviews on a one-to-one basis, this is often impossible given local social environments and cultural norms. The concern when others are present at an interview is that they will influence the respondent's answers. Of particular concern are occasional anecdotal accounts of men refusing to allow their wives to be interviewed in private. Data about the interview setting recorded by our fieldworkers indicate that men are indeed more likely to be interviewed alone than women: 54 percent versus 46 percent. But the biggest difference arises not because of the presence of spouses in women's interviews (7 percent for women, compared to 9 percent for men), but the presence of children (24 percent for women, versus 13 percent for men), who are less likely to act as censors. Moreover, women were only slightly more likely to check with other people present for help in answering questions, or (according to our interviewers) to be influenced by others when responding: just 7 percent of men did either, compared to 10 percent of women.

Other observations about the atmosphere of the interview reflect slightly greater openness and interest among men than women, as well as greater patience with the sometimes-lengthy interview process. In particular, when asked whether respondents seemed patient or impatient, honest or dishonest, etc., interviewers recorded slight differences between the gender sets, as recorded in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents' Demeanor During Interview

Characteristic	Men	Women
Friendly (vs. Hostile)	87	86
Interested (vs. Bored)	78	72
Cooperative (vs. Uncooperative)	83	79
Patient (vs. Impatient)	77	73
At ease (vs. Suspicious)	74	70
Honest (vs. Misleading)	76	73

(percent)

Given women's extensive household responsibilities – and the frequent presence of children during interviews – it is not surprising to find that women are somewhat less patient than men. Our data indicate, however, that despite possible distractions and the greater difficulty women had in answering questions, average interview length for women was approximately equal with men, at just over one hour. Thus, while women may be somewhat less forthcoming, open and cooperative than men when responding to a survey, gender differences in this regard are quite small, particularly considering the gulf between gender roles in many African societies.

Political Regime Preferences
Turning to substantive results, we first explore whether men and women prefer different forms of political regime. The Africans we interviewed express relatively high levels of overt support for democracy compared to other regions of the world (Afrobarometer Network, 2002: 10), although this support may be relatively shallow, and perhaps relatively fragile as well (Afrobarometer Network, 2004; Bratton, 2002). But are men and women equally supportive of a democratic system? Or are women more conservative, more supportive of the status quo, or more reluctant to discard the vestiges of the previous authoritarian, "big man" systems of government? Are they more wary of the uncertainty and tensions inherent in both political transitions and the practice of democratic politics? Or are they, perhaps, even more eager for change, given the failure of previous regimes to adequately provide for such key needs as the education and health care of their children?

In nine new democracies in formerly communist Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer (1998) found that men and women diverged little in support for a democratic regime (3 percentage points), and the effect of gender was not significant in multivariate analysis. When it came to rejection of undemocratic forms of government, the gap was slightly larger (6 points), and multivariate analysis confirmed that women were more attached to previous regimes. But Communist societies espoused the rhetoric of gender equality, and women were often well integrated into the workforce and supported by state provision of childcare and other services. By contrast, the formerly authoritarian systems of Africa produced little in the way social welfare benefits for women in either rhetoric or reality.

To begin comparing the political regime preferences of men and women in Africa, we start with a direct question about overt support for democracy that has been used in surveys around the world. It asks respondents to select among three statements: "A) Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government; B) In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable; or C) For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have." As shown in Table 2, 68 percent of men agree that democracy is preferable, compared to 61 percent of women. However, the difference arises not because women are more likely to prefer non-democratic alternatives (where there is just a one point difference, with women again falling below men), but because fully one-quarter (26 percent) of all women say that the system of government "doesn't matter," or that they "don't know" which system they prefer. Fewer than one in five men (19 percent) feel similarly ambivalent.

Table 2: Support for Democracy

	Men	**Women**
A: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.	68	61
B. In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.	14	13
C. For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.	10	12
Don't know	9	14

Which of the following three statements is closest to your own view? (percent)

Table 3 looks at support for democracy on a country-by-country basis, showing in each column the political gender gaps, measured as the *percentage among women minus the percentage among men*. A positive sign indicates that women are *more* supportive than men of a substantive position.[5]

The same general pattern holds across most countries: men are slightly more supportive of democracy than women. This gender gap ranges widely, from +3 percentage points in Botswana (where support is actually higher among women than men[6]) to –14 points in Mali and Senegal. However, these differences reflect higher levels of "don't know" or "doesn't matter" responses among women. Men are more likely than women both to prefer a democracy and to tolerate an authoritarian system in all but 5 countries. Yet only in Malawi, where women are 4 points more likely than men to tolerate a non-democratic system, does the difference exceed the margin of sampling error for gender sub-samples within a country. Did Malawian women perhaps feel politically included under former Life President Hastings Kamuzu Banda, leaving them more nostalgic for the pre-democracy era? This appears to be especially the case for women from Banda's home region of Central Province, where the gender gap in tolerating a non-democratic system soars to 15 points. Apparently it is women with ethnic and regional ties to the former President who continue to long for what they consider to be "the good old days."

Table 3: Gender Gaps in Support for Democracy, by Country *(percent among women minus percent among men)*

	Democracy Preferred	Non-Democratic OK	Don't Know/ Doesn't Matter
Botswana	+3	-2	-2
Cape Verde	-10	-3	+13
Ghana	-1	0	+1
Kenya	-9	+2	+8
Lesotho	-10	+1	+9
Malawi	-10	**+4**	+6
Mali	-14	+2	+12
Mozambique	-8	-4	+12
Namibia	-2	-1	+3
Nigeria	-3	-2	+5
Senegal	-14	-2	+16
South Africa	-3	-3	+6
Tanzania	-7	-1	+8
Uganda	-8	-1	+10
Zambia	-9	0	+0
TOTAL	**-7**	**-1**	**+8**

To further test the depth of regime commitments, the Afrobarometer asks whether people approve or disapprove of various forms of government familiar from the recent past in most states: a one-party state, military rule, and one-man dictatorial rule. As a whole, respondents strongly reject all three forms of

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[5] Given that the margin of sampling error for the country samples is +/-2.8 points, we will only treat differences of +/-4 points or more as meaningful for gender comparisons within countries. . These figures appear in bold type in the tables. For pooled data, with a gross margin of sampling error of +/-1 point, a difference of two points is meaningful for comparing gender sub-samples. Note that statistical significance is reported separately.

[6] Note, however, that the difference between men's and women's views in Botswana, as well as in Ghana and Namibia, is not statistically significant, and that the difference is less than the margin of sampling error as well.

government. But as shown in Table 4, men are more likely to reject authoritarian alternatives than women. The difference is just 4 points for both one-man and military rule, but rises to 8 points for a one-party state. For military and one-man rule, however, differences are again due mostly to greater numbers of non-committal responses ("neither approve nor disapprove," and "don't know") among women.

When it comes to the one-party state, however, we find that women are not only less likely to reject the one-party state (63 versus 71 percent), but also to show higher levels of approval for this system of government (28 percent versus 23 percent).

Table 4: Tolerance for Authoritarian Systems of Government

	One-Party State		Military Rule		One-man Rule	
	Men	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**
Disapprove	71	63	79	75	78	74
Neither/Don't know	6	9	9	11	11	14
Approve	23	28	13	14	12	12

A breakdown of results reveals that women show higher levels of approval for the one-party state in 13 out of 15 countries (Table 5). While in some countries the margin is very narrow, in eight countries – Cape Verde, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia – the margin is 5 points or more. All of these countries experienced lengthy interludes of one-party rule during the post-colonial period, or its functional equivalent over the last 20 years in Uganda. Does this constitute evidence that women are indeed more conservative, preferring the status quo, and fearing change or transition?

Table 5: Support for the One-Party State, by Country (percent among women minus percent among men)

	Disapprove	**Approve**	**Neither/Don't Know**	**Parties are Divisive**
Botswana	-3	+2	0	+2
Cape Verde	-12	**+5**	+6	**+8**
Ghana	0	0	0	**+5**
Kenya	-12	**+10**	+3	**+10**
Lesotho	-6	**+5**	0	**+4**
Malawi	-15	**+14**	+1	**+16**
Mali	-11	**+5**	+6	-6
Mozambique	-5	-2	+7	+3
Namibia	-4	+1	+4	0
Nigeria	-3	0	+3	-1
Senegal	-10	+3	+6	-7
South Africa	-4	+3	+1	-2
Tanzania	-12	**+9**	+4	**+7**
Uganda	-13	**+12**	+1	**+10**
Zambia	-8	**+7**	+1	**+4**
TOTAL	**-8**	**+5**	**+3**	**+4**

We interpret this result to mean that women are adverse to the uncertainty that comes with change; they tend to fear the potential for conflict and divisiveness along ethnic and other lines that might come if the political system is opened up. In short, women are more worried than men that competition among political parties will harm society.

African leaders have actively promoted this popular perspective. Until recently in Uganda, for example, President Museveni actively sold the notion that multiparty politics was directly – and causally – linked to the country's bitter legacy of conflict. The long-time president of Kenya, Daniel Arap Moi, likewise sought to convince the public that a transition to multipartyism could open a Pandora's box of inter-group conflict. And Kenneth Kaunda, former President of Zambia, famously likened multipartyism to a return to "stone age politics."

Their efforts appear to have paid off. Survey respondents were asked to choose between two statements: "Political parties create division and confusion; it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in [this country]," or "Many political parties are needed to make sure that [citizens of this country] have real choices in who governs them." On the whole, women are only slightly more likely than men to agree that parties are divisive and therefore unnecessary (41 percent for women, 38 percent for men). But when these results are broken down, we can see that, for the most part , women are significantly more inclined to support a one-party state in countries where they are concerned about parties causing division.[7] The relationship among women between fear of divisive political conflict and approval of one-party rule is particularly clear in Malawi, Kenya and Uganda. Only Ghana and Mali are exceptions. In these countries, recent positive experiences with democracy, including alternations of ruling parties in national elections, appear to outweigh the anti-competitive legacy of previous one-party and military governments.

Differences between men and women are much smaller on the subject of whether party competition *actually* causes conflict. Some 54 percent of *both* men and women say it does so often or always. And at the country level, gender differences are generally quite small: 2 points or less in Kenya, Malawi, Uganda and Zambia. Only in Tanzania (7 point difference) are women significantly more likely than men to link party competition with conflict. Thus, we think that women's hesitancy to embrace political party competition arises less from direct experience with political conflict than from ready acceptance of the dire warnings about the dangers of multipartyism disseminated by previous one-party leaders. Thus it appears that the one-party state – and in particular, its propaganda machine – leaves behind a strong institutional legacy.

Economic Policy Preferences
Much of the "gender gap" literature focuses on political ideology and the varying policy preferences that may result. The focus is commonly on differences between men and women along the left-right or liberal-conservative spectrum. But a discussion about policy preferences in these terms is problematic in the African context for a couple of reasons. First, the terminology of "left" and "right" is not common parlance in much of Africa, so a survey respondent's self-placement on a left-right scale is unlikely to be accurate. Second, in a context where political parties have weak policy platforms (Norris and Mattes, 2003: 15), party affiliation does not serve to place individuals on this scale.

Moreover, statist rhetoric (albeit often unmatched by reality) has blurred the distinction between "liberal" and "conservative." Although safety nets and state services have never become well established in Africa, many previous authoritarian regimes at least paid lip service to socialist precepts. Moreover, state ownership of industries and provision of jobs (often making the state the largest employer), price controls, and other government interventions in the economy were commonplace even in countries that did not align themselves with the socialist bloc. In this context, being a pro-change policy "liberal" in fact means supporting the adoption of what has traditionally been deemed a "conservative" policy agenda, i.e., minimization of state intervention in the economy. Conversely, if an African is conservative in the

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[7] Pearson's R =0.249 with significance p<=0.01 for individuals , and 0.673 with significance p<=0.01 for the countries.

broader sense of being simply "pro-status quo" or "anti-reform," he or she would actually support a relatively leftist policy agenda.

We will thus shape our discussion of economic policy preferences in terms of state versus market. The Afrobarometer surveys ask about general preferences for a government-run or market-based economy, as well as about specific reform policies, including fees-for-service, retrenchment of civil service positions, and reduction of the government's role in the economy.

Our findings differ substantially from those reported for agrarian societies in Inglehart and Norris. While they found that women are generally to the left of men (i.e., they espouse more pro-state views), our data reveal very few notable differences between African men and women (see Tables 6, 7 and 8).

As reported by Logan, *et al.* (2003: 26-38), all of the Africans we interviewed evince a certain degree of either uncertainty or ambivalence on questions of economic policy reform. To begin with, although a plurality prefers a market-led economy, over one-third expresses an explicit preference for a government-run economy, while about one in five has no opinion on the matter (Table 6). When respondents are then asked whether they desire an economic system in which the government plans the production and distribution of goods – a pro-state position – a sizeable majority agrees. But on the very next question, an even larger majority adopts the pro-market attitude, supporting a system in which individuals make the important economic decisions.

Table 6: Management of the Economy

Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion?	Men	Women
A. A free market economy is preferable to an economy run by the government.[8]	38	36
B. A government-run economy is preferable to a free market economy.	45	43
C. For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of economic system we have.	12	13
Don't know	5	8
There are many ways to manage an economy. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives? (percent approve)		
The government plans the production and distribution of all goods and services.	59	58
Individuals decide for themselves what to produce, and what to buy and sell.	69	69

Thus, many Africans seem to be unclear about the distinctions between different systems of economic management. Further inconsistencies are evident in questions on the specifics of reform (Table 7). Sizeable majorities want pro-state policies – e.g., public employment in a large civil service (no job retrenchment), tariffs to protect local producers, and government involvement in marketing of agricultural products. At the same time, however, other majorities favor the payment of school fees in return for higher quality education, and the protection of property rights against uncompensated seizure by the state.

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[8] The interviewer could offer the following prompt, if necessary: "In a free market economy, individuals decide for themselves what to produce, and what to buy and sell. In a government-run economy, the government decides these things.

Table 7: Attitudes Toward Economic Reform Policies

Which of the following statements is closest to your view. Choose Statement A or Statement B	Men	Women
A. It is better to have free schooling for our children, even if the quality of education is low.	36	38
B. It is better to raise educational standards, even if we have to pay school fees.	59	58
Neither/Don't know	5	4
A. It is better for private traders to handle agricultural marketing, even if some farmers get left out.	32	32
B. It is better for government to buy and sell crops, even if some farmers are served late.	58	57
Neither/Don't know	9	11
A. The government must abide by the law in acquiring any property, including paying the owner.	82	81
B. In order to develop the country, the government should have the power to seize property without compensation.	12	12
Neither/Don't know	6	8
A. All civil servants should keep their jobs, even if paying their salaries is costly to the country.	68	71
B. The government cannot afford so many public employees and should lay some of them off.	25	21
Neither/Don't know	7	8
A. It is a good idea to import affordable goods from other countries, even if some of our own producers are forced out of business.	28	29
B. We must protect producers within our own country by imposing tariffs that make imported goods more expensive.	65	63
Neither/Don't know	6	9

Most tellingly, despite expressing concern that economic reforms have hurt more people than they've helped, people nonetheless accept, by a two-to-one margin, that reforms should continue and hardships should be endured in order for the economy to improve in future (Table 8). Overall, these results suggest less that our African respondents have strong leanings toward either the state or the market, but rather, that they prefer policies that work. And, instead of making an either-or choice between state and market, they seem to opt for a mixed economy that will combine the best of both worlds.

Table 8: Attitudes Toward Government's Economic Reform Program

Which of the following statements is closest to your view. Choose Statement A or Statement B	Men	Women
A. The government's economic policies have helped most people; only a few have suffered.	32	30
B. The government's economic policies have hurt most people and only benefited a few.	61	60
Neither/Don't know	8	10
A. The costs of reforming the economy are too high; the government should therefore abandon its current economic policies.	32	31
B. In order for the economy to get better in the future, it is necessary for us to accept some hardships now.	58	56
Neither/Don't know	10	14

The "mixed-economy" position is captured in responses to a question about responsibility for popular wellbeing. Does this responsibility rest with the state or with individuals? Among both men and women, respondents are split evenly on this question: 49 percent of men and 48 percent of women allocate responsibility to the government, while 48 percent of men and 49 percent of women believe individuals must take responsibility for their own lives.

We do, however, find variation across countries (Table 9). Consistent with the findings of Inglehart and Norris (2003), Ugandan women appear to be more pro-state than Ugandan men; they show a pattern of stronger alignment with the government and its policies, and an apparent concern that they will stand at a disadvantage in a free market system. In Ghana (and Mali), however, women are considerably more supportive of a free market approach than men. The prominent role and experience of West African women as traders appears to have convinced them that they can make their own economic decisions and thrive in open markets. Again consistent with Inglehart and Norris, we find few differences between men and women in Nigeria and South Africa, with the exception that once again, women are more inclined to avoid taking any position. The same applies in Cape Verde, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, and Tanzania.

Table 9: Management of the Economy, by Country

	Prefer Government-run vs. Free Market Economy			Approve of Government Making Economic Decisions	Approve of Individuals Making Economic Decisions
	Government run	Free Market	Don't know/ Doesn't matter		
Botswana	**+4**	-5	+1	-1	**+6**
Cape Verde	-4	-8	+12	-1	-4
Ghana	-2	**+6**	-3	+2	**+7**
Kenya	-2	-1	+3	+1	-1
Lesotho	+3	-8	+5	-4	-4
Malawi	-2	-1	+3	0	0
Mali	-11	+3	+9	-1	**+4**
Mozambique	-1	-5	+6	-13	-3
Namibia	-4	-1	+4	-2	0
Nigeria	-6	+1	+5	-3	+1
Senegal	-4	+1	+2	+1	-3
South Africa	-4	0	+4	+1	+1
Tanzania	-1	-7	+8	+1	-2
Uganda	**+4**	-7	+3	**+5**	-2
Zambia	+1	-5	+4	**+4**	-2
TOTAL	**-2**	**-2**	**+4**	-1	0

Performance Evaluations
Do women and men arrive at different evaluations of political regimes and government leaders? If so, is any divergence in performance evaluations based on gender-specific values or priorities? Given a context of patriarchy, for example, are females more deferential to authority and less critical in appraising a predominantly male leadership?

Regime performance is assessed by two indicators: one measures respondents' perceptions of the extent of democracy in their country, the other their level of satisfaction with the way democracy functions. With regard to the perceived extent of democracy, we find only a few small differences between men and women. Fifty-five percent of men rate their country as either "a full democracy" or "a democracy with minor problems," while 36 percent see it as either a "democracy with major problems," or "not a democracy at all." The comparable figures for women are 51 and 33 percent, respectively. Once more, women are less able or less willing than men to adopt any position: 16 percent "don't know" or "don't understand" the question, compared to 9 percent among men.

This small aggregate gender gap masks larger fissures in individual countries, and several instances where women adopt substantive views markedly different from men. Take Table 10, where a *positive* sign again indicates that more women than men adopted a given attitude. Women in Cape Verde, for example, offer more negative evaluations than men about the extent of democracy (by 6 points). By contrast, Ugandan women are more inclined than their male compatriots to offer a positive evaluation of the extent of democracy in their country (by 5 points). Perhaps women are giving credit to the Museveni government for their own sizeable social and political advances since the National Resistance Movement took power in 1986. Tripp observes that the women's movement has become one of the strongest and most mobilized forces in the country (2000: 23). Women have benefited from official quotas for representation at all levels of government and from the ten-year tenure of Specioza Kazibwe as national vice-president.

Most other countries, however, are characterized by women's greater tendency simply to offer ambivalent responses, with the gender difference in this category reaching -16 points in Senegal.

Table 10: Extent of Democracy, by Country (percent among women minus percent among men)

	Negative Evaluation	Positive Evaluation	Don't Know/ Don't Understand
Botswana	-2	+1	+1
Cape Verde	**+6**	-14	+9
Ghana	+1	0	-1
Kenya	0	-6	+7
Lesotho	-5	-4	+8
Malawi	-2	-2	+5
Mali	-2	-9	+10
Mozambique	-4	-10	+14
Namibia	+1	-3	+2
Nigeria	-3	0	+3
Senegal	-8	-9	+16
South Africa	-2	-5	+7
Tanzania	-2	-5	+7
Uganda	-14	**+5**	+9
Zambia	+2	-8	+7
TOTAL	**-2**	**-5**	**+6**

Another indicator of regime performance is popular satisfaction with the way democracy works in each country. As shown in Table 11, women are again less satisfied (by 4 points), but also less dissatisfied (by 1 point); in short they are, again, more unsure about what they think (by 5 points).

Table 11: Satisfaction with Democracy

	Men	Women
Fairly/Very Satisfied	56	52
Not at all/Not very satisfied, or Country is not a democracy	37	36
Don't know	7	12

Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [your country]?

According to Table 12, women express lower levels of satisfaction than men in all countries except Uganda (again) and Nigeria (barely[9]), with the gap reaching -11 points in Mali. But seldom do women actually express much more dissatisfaction: by 4 points in Cape Verde, 5 in Malawi, and 7 in Mali.

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[9] The difference of 1 point in Nigeria is much less than the margin of sampling error, so the difference is not meaningful.

Table 12: Satisfaction with Democracy, by Country *(percent among women minus percent among men)*

	Negative Evaluation	Positive Evaluation	Don't Know/ Don't Understand
Botswana	+1	-2	+2
Cape Verde	**+4**	-9	+5
Ghana	+2	-3	0
Kenya	0	-4	+5
Lesotho	-1	-4	+5
Malawi	**+5**	-7	+2
Mali	**+7**	-11	+4
Mozambique	-4	-6	+10
Namibia	0	-2	+2
Nigeria	-2	+1	+2
Senegal	-4	-9	+12
South Africa	-2	-2	+4
Tanzania	-6	-1	+6
Uganda	-13	**+4**	+8
Zambia	+1	-7	+6
TOTAL	**-1**	**-4**	**+5**

How do women and men evaluate the government officials who lead them? In patriarchal societies, most leaders are men; men speak and are listened to, and women are expected to respect fathers or husbands. Under these circumstances, we might expect women to be more deferential towards authority, to express higher levels of trust, to rate the performance of leaders more highly, or to observe unethical leadership behavior with a less critical eye. These expectations would only hold, of course, *if* women willingly accept such social and cultural limitations on their lives. Alternatively, if women rebel against traditional norms, we might find the opposite, that is, less deference, and greater criticism.

In fact, as shown in Table 13, male and female ratings of leadership performance do not differ substantially. In all cases, women's ratings of leadership performance are slightly lower than those of their male counterparts, thus suggesting possible support for the second, assertive thesis offered above. Note, however, that some of these small differences could be due to sampling error alone. If so, women do not have significantly different attitudes towards authority or a fundamentally different foundation or set of values on which they base their performance evaluations.

Table 13: Ratings of Leadership

	Men	Women
Leadership performance (percent "approve" or "strongly approve")**		
President	71	70
Member of Parliament	52	51
Corruption (percent "none" or "some" only)***		
Officials in the President's office	57	55
Elected leaders	57	54
Government officials	52	50
Police	43	43
Judges and magistrates	52	50

**"Do you approve or disapprove of the way the following people have performed their jobs over the past 12 months, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?" Response options: Strongly disapprove / Disapprove / Approve / Strongly approve / Don't know or Haven't heard enough.
***How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? Response options: None / Some of them / Most of them / All of them / Don't know or Haven't heard enough.

Political Behavior

The links between gender and political participation have been understudied. The work on this topic in Africa and elsewhere has focused on elite women, such as those who participate in national women's organizations, or who serve as elected or appointed representatives in national political institutions (Lindberg, 2004; Hirschmann, 1991). Inglehart and Norris (2003) present one of the first detailed analyses of differences in mass participation between men and women. They find that, "the gender gap [in political activism] is usually modest, but also consistent and ubiquitous across many major dimensions of civic life, even in postindustrial societies" (102).

Hurdles to women's participation may be particularly high in Africa. Tripp (2001) finds that even among elite women in Uganda, cultural norms inhibit participation:

> …the 1996 presidential election was marred by numerous incidents of intimidation and harassment of women at the hands of husbands who had differing political opinions. Throughout the country, there were reports of politically active women voters who were threatened with the withdrawal of family support or had their voters' cards stolen or destroyed. Some were beaten, thrown out of their homes, or even killed.(153)[10]

If the most politically sophisticated women were treated this way, how much more intimidation might be suffered by a poorly educated and poorly informed rural woman? In addition to discouraging independent thought and action, some African cultures have prohibitions on women speaking out in public, a fact that may not only keep women from expressing themselves, but also from being heard when they do dare to break the norm. These hurdles may combine with lack of education and awareness, household demands, and other factors to leave women on the outskirts of the political arena.

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[10] Aili Mari Tripp (personal communication, December 2005) notes, however, that in the next election this kind of harassment did not occur. In fact, the electoral commission was very adamant in warning against such abuses, and conducted a great deal of civic education addressing this issue. So, she observes, cultural norms can be overridden. She reports that there may, however, have been some backtracking on this issue during the 2006 elections.

Afrobarometer data bear this out. While we have encountered only small gender gaps – or none at all – in terms of political regime preferences, economic policy preferences, and performance evaluations, when it comes to political behavior, the story is considerably different. Consistent with other studies, we find that African women in our 15 survey countries are markedly less likely than men to participate in the political process.

According to Verba, *et al.*, (1978), political participation entails "legal activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and the actions they take." (46). In this analysis, we focus on inter-electoral modes of participation, rather than on voting and campaign-related behavior. The engagement of citizens in the political process in the quiet interludes outside of the electoral cycle may be especially revealing of their understanding of and commitment to the democratic process and its underpinnings.

We also use an inclusive definition of "political" participation appropriate to the informality of African politics and its patrimonial roots (Hyden, 2006). In societies with an oral heritage, where personal contacts and connections mean everything, "getting things done" often entails gathering and speaking with others. These roots mean that a visit to a religious leader, a community elder, or a businessman can be just as "political" as a visit to an elected politician or a government official.[11]

Table 14 reports men and women's participation in ten types of political behavior measured in Afrobarometer Round 2. As mentioned, there is an evident gap, extending across all types of participation. Women are much less inclined to discuss politics (-16 points compared to men), to attend community meetings (-9 points) or to join with others to raise an issue (-11 points). They are also less likely to contact leaders – especially political leaders, but even religious leaders – for assistance (-3 to -9 points). And in Afrobarometer Round 1, we found that women were also less likely to go to the polls than men (-5 points).

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[11] See Bratton, *et al.*, (2005), chapter 5.

Table 14: Political Participation

During the past year, how often:*	Men	Women	Difference
Discuss politics (percent yes, several times/often)	51	36	-16
Attend community meeting (percent yes, several times/often)	51	42	-9
Join others to raise an issue (percent yes, several times/often)	38	27	-11
Contact community leader (percent yes)**			
Local government representative (NA for some)	31	22	-9
MP	14	9	-5
Official of government ministry	17	11	-6
Political party representative	22	14	-8
Religious leader	47	44	-3
Traditional leader	35	29	-6
Some other influential person	29	23	-6
Voted in last election (percent yes)[12]	**73**	**68**	**-5**

"Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year. If not, would you do this if you had the chance:
> *-Discuss politics with friends and neighbors.*
> *-Attend a community meeting.*
> *-Get together with others to raise an issue."*

Response options: No, would never do this / No, but would do this if had the chance / Yes, once or twice / Yes, several times / Yes, often

***During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons for help to solve a problem or to give them your views?" Response options: Never / Only once / A few times / Often*

Factor analysis shows that all ten of the political behaviors studied in Afrobarometer Round 2 (i.e., excluding voting) are closely linked, collectively forming a coherent whole. We therefore construct an overall *Index of Political Participation*[13] by averaging responses to all types of participation, after converting responses to common 5-point scales.[14] The index ranges from a low of 0, representing no participation, to 4, representing the highest observed level of participation. Across all respondents, the Index has a mean score of 1.11, with a standard deviation of 0.74. Mean scores for men and women are 1.23 and 0.98, respectively.[15]

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[12] The data on this question comes from 12 countries (the same as those included in Round 2 with the addition of Zimbabwe and the subtraction of Cape Verde, Kenya, Mozambique and Senegal) included in Round 1 of the Afrobarometer, from 1999-2001. The question was not asked in Round 2.

[13] Factor analysis shows that the 10 items form a single scale, explaining 33 percent of variance, and reliable with Cronbach's alpha = .754.

[14] Responses for both sets of questions were coded on a 5-point scale, from 0 to 4. For the first three behaviors in Table 17, response options were coded as follows:
> 0 = No, would never do this
> 1 = No, but would if had the chance
> 2 = Yes, once or twice
> 3 = Yes, several times
> 4 = Often

For contacting, a blank item was inserted in the original response scale to make it comparable to the above scale, as follows:
> 0 = No
> 1 = Blank
> 2 = Yes, only once
> 3 = Yes, a few times
> 4 = Yes, often

[15] Significant at p<=0.001.

As Table 15 shows, country variations are once again substantial. In Ghana, there are *no* differences between men and women in terms of political participation, while in Mali the gap is –0.51, double the 15-country mean of -0.25. But Ghanaian women match men at quite low levels of total participation; only South Africans, Mozambicans, and Malians participate less.[16] The mean participation score is more than 50 percent higher in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Lesotho. Women in these countries may participate less than their male compatriots, but they are considerably more active than both men and women in Ghana. Why have Ghanaian women "caught up" with men, even as the country as a whole lags well behind others? And why are the publics in the East African trio of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda so mobilized overall, while men and women remain so unequal in their engagement? Are there regional cultural differences that explain the generally low levels of participation in Southern African countries, and high levels in East Africa? Or do cross-country differences in educational achievements – and male-female gaps – help explain these patterns? Clearly, interpretation of political participation in these countries is complex and multi-layered. We will thus turn to more advanced tools in order to unravel these findings further.
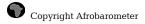
Table 15: Mean Index of Political Participation, by Country

	All	Men	Women	Difference
Ghana	0.91	0.91	0.91	0.00
Namibia	0.99	1.04	0.95	-0.09
Botswana	1.03	1.09	0.96	-0.12
South Africa	0.78	0.84	0.71	-0.13
Cape Verde	0.99	1.08	0.90	-0.18
Mozambique	0.86	0.95	0.77	-0.18
Lesotho	1.46	1.57	1.36	-0.21
Zambia	1.13	1.25	0.99	-0.26
Malawi	1.27	1.43	1.11	-0.32
Tanzania	1.40	1.56	1.25	-0.32
Uganda	1.45	1.63	1.27	-0.35
Senegal	1.13	1.31	0.95	-0.36
Nigeria	1.03	1.22	0.84	-0.37
Kenya	1.36	1.54	1.17	-0.38
Mali	0.85	1.10	0.60	-0.51
15-Country MEAN	**1.11**	**1.23**	**0.98**	**-0.25**

Explaining Participatory Behavior: Does the Gender Gap Persist?
What explains the sizeable gender gap in participation? Can this gap be explained with reference to factors other than gender, such as educational attainments, time availability, or cultural attitudes? To tackle these issues, we undertake a multivariate analysis of political participation using ordinary least squares regression techniques. The purpose is to identify the key factors that explain participation. In so doing, we will be interested to discover whether alternative explanations reduce the impact of gender on political participation. If so, then the apparent gender gap may actually be a manifestation of underlying social, cultural, or cognitive differences between men and women. On the other hand, if a gender gap in participation persists even after other plausible explanations are taken into account, then something essential remains that is attributable to gender itself.

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[16] International IDEA (2002) ranks Mali at the bottom for voter turnout in Africa, and this disengagement from the political system appears to be disproportionately concentrated among women (78-79).

Inglehart and Norris identify three predominant explanations for the gender gap in participation: *structural* differences in men's and women's endowments of skills and resources; *cultural* differences in levels of motivation and interest in politics; and *agency* explanations that focus on the mobilizing role of the social networks and organizations to which men typically have greater access and exposure. Bratton, *et al.*, likewise explored the roots of participation using Afrobarometer Round 1 data. They tested the impact of social structure, institutional influences, cognitive awareness, performance evaluations, and cultural values on several types of participatory behavior. They found that gender had a significant effect on "communing and contacting," but not on voting and protest behavior. But overall, their models gave primacy to institutional influences and other aspects of social structure as factors explaining political participation.

Using our Index of Participation as the dependent variable, we combine the above approaches to test four explanations in addition to gender: structure, cognition, culture, and agency. In addition, given observed cross-country variations, we will also test for fixed country effects. Each set of prospective explanatory factors is outlined in more detail below.

Structural Factors

Structural factors affect the resources – such as time, money, and skills – available to would-be political participants.[17] The inclusion of age as a structural factor can help us to test contentions that the gender gap is in part generational; we expect that younger and more modernized cohorts will exhibit a smaller gender gap in participation. A simple cross-tabulation does in fact suggest some generational effect, as shown in Table 16: the gender gap in participation is smallest for the youngest cohort, suggesting that such gaps may be waning as a result of generational replacement.

Table 16: Mean Index of Participation, by Age Cohort

Age group	Men	Women	Difference
18-30 years	1.13	0.93	-0.20
31-45 years	1.31	1.03	-0.28
46-60 years	1.36	1.07	-0.29
61 and over	1.21	0.92	-0.29

We also include rural versus urban habitation, on the assumption that urbanites are more likely to be presented with opportunities to participate, and to have the know-how and wherewithal to act. Another potentially significant indicator of resource allocation is work status – specifically, whether or not the respondent earns an income. In our sample, men are considerably more likely (38 percent) than women (27 percent) to do so.

Time is another key resource. Obviously, political participation takes time, and the conventional wisdom is that those who spend more time on household tasks or working for pay will have less time to engage in political activities. The Afrobarometer asks respondents to estimate the time they typically spend each day on a variety of activities, ranging from working to earn money, to growing food, taking care of one's children, or caring for sick family members.[18] Even though these estimates may be rough, factor analysis shows that six of these household tasks are mutually associated, all loading on one dimension, and can

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[17] Note that gender itself would be considered a structural factor, but for obvious reasons, it is separated out as a unique "set" for the purposes of this analysis.

[18] "On an average day, roughly how much time do you usually spend on the following activities: a) working to earn money; b) growing your own food; c) doing household work; d) caring for your own family's children; e) caring for orphaned children; f) caring for sick household members; g) taking care of your own illness?" Response categories: Spend no time / Less than 1 hour / 1-2 hours / 3-5 hours / more than 5 hours / don't know.

thus be combined into a single Index of Household Time (see Table 17).[19] The Index is an average of the time spent on each of the six household tasks. Time spent to earn money, however, does not load on the same dimension, and remains a separate variable.

Table 17: Time Availability (mean score)

Time spent:	Men	Women
Working to earn money	2.35	1.90
Growing your own food	2.05	1.99
Doing household work	1.77	2.59
Caring for your own family's children	1.74	2.40
Caring for orphaned children	0.79	0.94
Caring for sick household members	1.49	1.71
Taking care of your own illness	1.87	1.99
Index of Household Time (average of last 6 items)	1.62	1.93

Scale: 0=Spend no time; 1=Less than 1 hour; 2=1-2 hours; 3=3-5 hours; 4=more than 5 hours

Cognitive Factors

The cognitive capabilities of individuals depend on education – widely cited as perhaps *the* most influential factor affecting participation – and exposure to mass media (radio, TV, newspapers). Bratton, *et al.*, find that while cognitive factors do not have a large effect on voting, they are strongly linked to collective action and contacting leaders, and to an individual's inclination to defend democracy. Inglehart and Norris find that education falls behind only the level of democratization in determining protest activism.

There is a sizeable difference between African men and women in the mean level of education achieved. Table 18 breaks the education gap down by country, and shows the comparison to the participation gap discussed in Table 15. In fact the two are highly correlated.[20] Men and women have attained nearly equal access to the critical resource of education in Botswana, Ghana and Namibia, and these are the same three countries that have the smallest gender gaps in participation. This offers further support for the hypothesis that education will in fact play a major role in explaining the gender gap in political activism. Unfortunately, educational equality remains a distant objective for most of the other West African states in our sample, as well as in Kenya, Uganda, Mozambique and Malawi. Mozambique, however, presents an interesting exception, in that the participation gap in Mozambique is below the average despite a very high education gap. Perhaps the experiences of Mozambican women as they fought alongside men in the frontlines of the civil war have generated a sense of equality and engagement among them that overcomes a large education gap.

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[19] The factor explains 27 percent of variance, and is reliable with Cronbach's alpha=.747.
[20] Pearson's R between Index of Participation and Education is .146 with significance level of $p=0.01$ at the individual level. Pearson's R between the education gap and the participation gap across 15 countries is 0.611 at a significance level of $p=0.05$.

Table 18: The Education Gap

	Education Gap*	Participation Gap**
Namibia	-0.02	-0.09
Botswana	-0.04	-0.12
Ghana	-0.08	0.00
South Africa	-0.14	-0.13
Tanzania	-0.14	-0.32
Lesotho	0.32	-0.21
Cape Verde	-0.36	-0.18
Mali	-0.47	-0.51
Zambia	-0.48	-0.26
Kenya	-0.61	-0.38
Malawi	-0.63	-0.32
Uganda	-0.63	-0.35
Mozambique	-0.65	-0.18
Nigeria	-0.69	-0.37
Senegal	-0.78	-0.36
TOTAL	**-0.36**	**-0.25**

*Difference between mean education level for women and men, on a scale from 0=No formal
education to 9=Post-graduate education (mean for women minus mean for men)
**Gender Gap in Mean Index of Participation, from Table 15 (mean for women minus mean for men).*

As shown in Table 19, men and women also differ with regard to exposure to various news media. Given the likely importance of these factors in explaining participation and the evident gender differences in endowments of each, we anticipate that cognitive factors will play a central role not only in explaining participation, but in reducing the apparent gender gap between men and women.

Table 19: Media Exposure

How often do you get news from the following sources (percent a few times per week / every day)	Men	Women
Radio	85	78
TV	41	36
Newspapers	33	25

Cultural Factors
As defined by Inglehart and Norris, cultural factors are those that affect an individual's "motivation and interest to become active in public affairs." (2003: 120) Not surprisingly, this definition encompasses a diverse range of possible factors that can have profound influences on individual decisions.

For the purposes of this analysis, we measure cultural factors in terms of political interest and efficacy, a respondent's religion, and modern identities and attitudes. Political interest is one of the most common predictors of participation, and another variable for which "there is evidence of a long-standing gender gap" (ibid., 107). Our own data do indeed show a sizeable gap, with 48 percent of men saying they are "very interested" in public affairs, compared to 36 percent of women (and 21 percent of women "not interested," compared to 15 percent of men). We interpret this gap to mean that many Africans continue to see politics as a male sphere of endeavor.

We might also expect participation to be linked closely to an individual's sense of political efficacy: those who feel more able to wield influence in the political arena are more likely to become politically active. And for reasons already discussed, we might expect men to express a greater sense of efficacy than women. Surprisingly, however, we find that men and women display only small differences on several variables measuring political efficacy (Table 20). Thus, while efficacy may help explain participation overall, it is unlikely at face value to account for the gender gap in participation.

Table 20: Political Efficacy

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements (percent agree / strongly agree)	Men	Women
Politics and government sometimes seem so complicated that you can't really understand what is going on.	70	72
As far as politics are concerned, friends and neighbors do not listen to you.	46	47
If you had to, you would be able to get together with others to make elected representatives listen to your concerns.	75	73

Within our sample, some 68 percent of respondents identified themselves as Christians, 22 percent as Muslims, and 9 percent as having some other religious orientation (e.g., Hindus, agnostics, and adherents of traditional religions). Common perception would suggest that Muslim women's political participation might be even more circumscribed by cultural roles and expectations than among other groups, including Muslim men, or Christian women. Table 21 presents supportive evidence: while there is no participation gap between Christian men and Muslim men, the gap between Muslim men and women is nearly double that between the two groups of Christians. But multivariate analysis is needed to determine whether these differences might be attributed to the effects of education levels or economic standing.

Table 21: Religious Affiliation and Participation

	Men	Women	Difference
Christian	1.27	1.05	-0.22
Muslim	1.26	0.86	-0.40
Other	0.98	0.77	-0.21

Mean value of Index of Political Participation for each sub-group.

Does a "modern" identity incline an individual to participate in a democratic political system? And are modernized women more likely to engage in politics, producing a smaller gap with their male counterparts? We measure modern versus traditional orientations in two ways. First, respondents were asked to identify themselves according to "which specific group you feel you belong to first and foremost." Responses to this question were categorized according to whether the identity group named was "modern" (e.g., class, gender, occupation) or "traditional" (e.g., language/ethnicity, region, religion). The gender differences in this case are quite small, with 57 percent of men and 55 percent of women electing a "modern" identity. The second question concerns the role and treatment of women in society, asking whether a respondent believes that "Women have always been subject to traditional laws and customs, and should remain so," or that "In our country, women should have equal rights and receive the same treatment that men do." On this issue, the gap is larger, and, not surprisingly, reversed: 72 percent of women, compared to 65 percent of men, adopt the more "modern" attitude.

Importantly, however, cultural norms may also have universal effects across and beyond individuals, discouraging women's participation broadly. If so, these norms may be embedded in country effects. Or, if cultural norms are widespread enough (i.e., existing across many or most of the countries in the

Afrobarometer sample), they may be part of any unexplained residual gender gap that remains after other variables have been taken into account.

Agency Factors
Finally, we examine an individual's exposure to the mobilizing effects of social networks and organizations. In particular, we test the effects of membership in civic organizations, affiliation with political parties, and religiosity (or the intensity of religious involvement).

In general, women are less likely than men to engage in associational life. As shown in Table 22, women are less likely to feel close to a political party (-8 points compared to men) or to join trade unions, farmers' organizations, or professional groups. Even with respect to community development or self-help organizations – often considered focal points for women's engagement – women say they are somewhat less likely than men to join in (-3 points). In the arena of religious practice, however, women are more likely than men to associate with others, both by belonging to religious organizations (+4 points) and attending religious services (+4 points compared to men).[21]

Overall, we would expect strong agency effects on participation, because organized collective mobilization is hypothesized to increase the motivation and capacity of individuals to engage politically. Given the crosscutting influence of on associational life, however, the direction of agency effects on the gender gap is difficult to predict.

Table 22: Associational Life

	Men	Women	Difference
Close to a party (percent close)*	63	55	-8
Membership (percent active/leader)**			
Religious organization	50	54	+4
Trade union / Farmers' organization	17	12	-5
Professional or business organization	9	7	-2
Community development / Self help organization	20	17	-3
Attend religious services (percent once/wk or more)***	58	62	+4

"Do you feel close to any particular political party?"
**"Now I am going to read out a list of groups that people join or attend. For each one, could you please tell me whether you are an official leader, an active member, an inactive member, or not a member."*
***"Excluding weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?"*

Results
Table 23 shows the results of multivariate regression, with the Index of Participation as the dependent variable. Model 1 considers the impact of gender alone. Model 2 displays the full array of explanatory variables previously discussed, with gender inserted as the last block.

The coefficients at the bottom of Model 1 show that, as expected, being female has a negative effect on political participation and that this effect is statistically significant. But the effect is substantively small since gender alone explains only about 3 percent of the overall variance in political participation

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[21] Aili Mari Tripp (personal communication, December 2005) argues that these findings may significantly under-represent women's actual participation in religious and community development or self-help organizations. In Uganda, she has found that women are overwhelmingly more involved than men in these groups – a finding that squares with conventional wisdom on the topic. But for reasons that are not clear, women seem to be quite reticent when it comes to reporting these activities, and only revealed the extent of their engagement to her after extensive questioning and follow-up.

(Adjusted R^2 = 0.031). Model 2, which is more comprehensive, does a much better overall job of explaining political participation since it accounts for about one-third of the observed variance (Adjusted R^2 = 0.326).

But how does a "gender gap" explanation of political participation compare with alternative explanations? When the five alternative theories – of structure, cognition, culture, agency and country – are considered collectively, a gender-based approach does not fare well. Every block of variables that comprise these theories explains more variance in political participation than gender alone. The cognition block explains twice as much variance as gender (Adjusted R^2 = 0.062), while the agency block explains more than five times as much (Adjusted R^2 = 0.161). These results suggest that, viewed from a broad perspective, gender is only one factor among many that determines political participation in Africa's new democracies.

Moreover, the five alternative explanations act as "controls" that reduce gender's impact on political participation. Between Model 1 and Model 2, the standardized regression coefficient (beta) for gender declines from -0.175 to -0.114. Similarly, once controlled for other factors, gender only contributes an additional one percent of explained variance to an overall explanation of political participation (in cumulative Adjusted R^2 column: 0.326 minus 0.314 = 0.012).

In other words, while we may be tempted to attribute the difference between men and women on political participation to a "gender gap," it is actually due in large part to other influences. The interesting question therefore becomes: which other influences? Table 24 offers some answers. It compares the separate effects of each alternative block of factors on the explanatory power of gender. The unit of measurement is gender's standardized regression coefficient (beta): the size of any reduction in beta signifies how much each alternative set of factors – whether structure, cognition, culture, agency or country – "steals" from the explanatory power of gender.

Table 23: Impact of Gender and Other Factors on Index of Participation

	Model 1: Gender only			Model 2: Full Model		
	Beta	Adj R² (Block)	Adj. R² (cummul.)	Beta	Adj R² (Block)	Adj. R² (cummul.)
Structure					0.073	0.075
Rural Location (1/0, urban excluded)				0.074***		
Age				0.084***		
Cash Income				--		
Time to earn Money				0.039***		
Index, Time Spent on Household Tasks				0.097***		
Cognition					0.062	0.144
Education				0.092***		
Radio news				0.049***		
Television news				--		
Newspaper news				0.091***		
Culture					0.116	0.214
Interest in politics				0.144***		
Efficacy 1 (politics too complicated)				0.031***		
Efficacy 2 (others don't listen)				0.030***		
Efficacy 3 (make representatives listen)				0.077***		
Women's equality				--		
Modern identity				--		
Muslim (1/0, Christian excluded)				--		
Other religion (1/0, Christian excluded)				--		
Agency					0.161	0.282
Close to a political party				0.128***		
Member, religious group				0.083***		
Member, trade union or farmers org.				0.086***		
Member, professional or business group				0.028***		
Member, community development org.				0.145***		
Religisity				0.056***		
Country (1/0, Ghana excluded)					0.098	0.314
Botswana				0.029***		
Cape Verde				0.079***		
Kenya				0.096***		
Lesotho				0.131***		
Malawi				0.039***		
Mali				--		
Mozambique				--		
Namibia				0.042***		
Nigeria				0.056***		
Senegal				0.084***		
South Africa				--		
Tanzania				0.089***		
Uganda				0.178***		
Zambia				0.051***		
Gender		0.031	0.031		0.031	0.326
Gender (Female =1)	-.175***			-0.114***		
Constant	1.501***			-0.173***		
Full Model			0.031			0.326

Table 24 shows that three alternative explanations – agency, cognition and culture – reduce gender's impact on participation. In other words, part of the apparent gender gap is actually due to these factors. On the other hand, two other explanations – country and social structure – tend to slightly increase gender's impact on political participation. In other words, these factors fail to displace the gender gap.

Let us first discuss the latter results, starting with "country." When country effects are considered alone, gender's impact on participation actually rises incrementally. We cannot therefore claim that gender differences in participation are really due to variations across African countries. Stated positively, this result indicates that Model 2 in Table 23 is a good approximation of the extent of the gender gap for a range of countries. To be sure, there are significant differences in participation across African countries (compared to Ghana, the reference category), but these do not invalidate the argument that there is also a gender gap. The model fits least well, however, for Uganda and Lesotho, where distinctive local considerations are more influential in explaining participation than the gender gap. Despite his restrictions on political party activity, Museveni's aggressive promotion of community engagement with the multi-tiered system of local government (with 30 percent of positions reserved for women) appears to have produced a more active and engaged populace.

Table 24: Analyzing the Gender Gap

	Beta for Gender	Change in Beta for Gender
Gender only	-0.175	--
Gender and Country	-0.178	+0.003
Gender with Structure	-0.182	+0.007
Gender and Agency	-0.152	-0.023
Gender and Cognition	-0.148	-0.027
Gender and Culture	-0.142	-0.033

The "structure" of society also tends to reinforce, rather than undercut, the gender gap. When social position and available resources are considered, gender's impact on participation again rises slightly. Thus, we cannot explain away differences in political participation between African men and women using other social characteristics that we have measured (e.g., age, income, and rural residence). Instead, the gender gap can be found among people of various ages, incomes and habitats. This result holds steady even while older people and rural residents participate more actively in politics than their younger, urban counterparts.

The real surprise here is the impact of time constraints on political participation. We had assumed that people (especially women) who have greater demands on their time due to household responsibilities would be *less* able to indulge in the "luxury" of political participation. But the opposite proves to be true: the *more* demands on a person's time, the greater his or her participation in the formal processes of politics. This result suggests that African adults (especially women) are used to having to "do it all" for their families. From this perspective, joining with others to tackle problems or contacting leaders to solve problems may seem less like separate, overtly political acts than just one among the myriad of tasks that people must perform each day to ensure their family's survival.

We turn now to the alternative explanations that *reduce* the impact of the gender gap on political participation. As such these factors help to infuse content into the abstract notion of the "gender gap" by indicating not only that men and women differ in their levels of political participation, but also *how* and *why* they differ. To repeat, these alternative explanations call upon considerations of agency, cognition and, most of all, culture.

First, we note that part of the observed gender gap in participation is due to differences in the way that men and women relate to *external agencies*. An individual's relations with political parties, voluntary associations, and organized religions attenuate the impact of gender (change in beta = -0.023). On one hand, men are more likely to participate in politics *because* they identify with political parties and *because* they belong to community development organizations. On the other hand, the gender gap in participation would be wider than it actually is if women were not more inclined to belong to religious organizations and more devout than men in regularly attending religious services. In other words, the "gender gap" is partly a gap in affiliations with external agencies, but the effect works in both directions. Men's more extensive relations with political parties and voluntary associations tend to widen differences in participation, while women's relations with organized religion tend to close such differences.

Second, the observed gender gap in participation also partly rests on differences in the mental maps with which men and women understand the political world. These *cognitive attributes*, which are shaped by access to education and mass media, are another core component of the gender gap. Indeed, compared to agency effects, they attenuate the influence of gender *per se* to a slightly larger degree (change in beta = -0.027). Within the battery of cognitive influences, education is the most important, but with regular readership of newspapers almost equally so. The advantages that men enjoy in access to both education and the print media (and to a lesser extent to news on the radio) go part way toward explaining why they are cognitively better prepared to engage in political life. In other words, this part of the gender gap has nothing to do with innate differences in cognitive ability between men and women, and everything to do with differential access to opportunities to become a politically aware and well-informed citizen.

Third, we consider the effects of *cultural orientation*, at least insofar as it has proved possible to capture the arena of "culture" in this study. We contend that an individual's positions on key cultural issues constitute a final central element in the observed gender gap in political participation. These orientations reduce the observed gender gap by the largest margin so far seen (change in beta = -0.033). Interestingly, the salient dimensions of culture are not broad social values derived from religion or tradition, none of which are significant in explaining political participation in Model 2. Even progressive attitudes to women's equality apparently do not motivate mass participation. Instead, the key dimension is *political* culture, as measured by the psychological attributes of interest in politics and a sense of self-confidence to take political action (political efficacy). We have already noted that, compared to women, men are only slightly more confident that they can have an impact in the political realm (see Table 21). The critical factor seems to be men's much more significant interest in politics, which not only helps to drive political participation, but which also clearly distinguishes them from women. In other words, a final element in the gender gap is a cultural tendency for men to be attracted to, and to take an interest in, political life.

To repeat, we take this finding as evidence of the persistence of the idea that, in Africa, politics is a realm of action reserved for men.

Taken together, alternative explanations of political participation reduce the observed gender gap by about one-third (from beta = -0.175 to -0.114). We can only conclude that this proportion of the gap between men and women's political participation should not be attributed to "gender." Instead, it is better understood – in ascending order of importance – as the effects of agency, cognition and culture.

And yet, the other two-thirds of the gender gap in political participation remains resilient. Even when gender is considered alongside a wide range of alternative explanations (see Model 2), it remains statistically significant. Despite rigorous efforts, we have been unable to fully "explain away" a gender effect. In other words, a residual gap persists in political behavior between African men and women that we do not fully comprehend. For want of a better term – or until we find better ways of capturing concepts like "culture" and understanding country specificities – we can only conclude that this is a genuine "gender gap" in political participation.

Conclusion
Given the patriarchal roots of their societies, African women have always faced challenges when it comes to making themselves heard and having their actions felt. Even as they bear the heaviest burden for ensuring their families' survival and success, they have often faced social, structural, economic and cultural constraints that have kept them from speaking their minds and acting to meet their needs as freely as men.

But the 15 African nations included in this study are anything but static. Afrobarometer data gives us a chance to explore what African women think and act today. We therefore set out to search for gender gaps between men and women in liberalizing African societies with respect to political regime preferences, economic policy preferences, performance evaluations, and political behavior.

We find, firstly, that consistent with findings elsewhere, the African women we studied differ little from men with respect to many key values, attitudes, and evaluations. Moreover, those differences that are evident are largely attributable to women's greater ambivalence, or perhaps simply to their greater willingness to admit ignorance. An important result concerns women's worries about the divisiveness of political competition, which results in their greater tolerance for a one-party state. The residual popular nostalgia for this form of government, which is most prevalent in East and Southern Africa, is attributable in good part to women's preferences for the national unity and political stability they tend to associate (correctly or not) with one-party rule. But while aggregate differences are small, country variations are important; small gender differences in the pooled data can sometimes mask quite sizeable gaps within individual countries.

There is, in contrast, a sizeable gender gap with respect to political participation, as well as considerable cross-country variation in our ten-item *Index of Political Participation*. Multivariate analysis sheds some light on the underlying causes both of political participation generally, and of the gender gap in participation specifically.

In short, gender has observable and persistent effects on participation. Other explanatory factors reduce, but do not eliminate, the effects of gender; other things being equal, a significant gender effect remains. Nonetheless, the gender effects are substantively small. Structural, cognitive, cultural, agency and country factors all offer greater explanatory power than gender. Viewed from a broad perspective, gender is thus only one factor among many that determines political participation in Africa's new democracies.

In addition, three of these alternative explanations – agency, cognition, and especially culture – reduce gender's apparent impact on political participation. Specifically, an individual's relations with political parties, voluntary associations, and religions serve to motivate and facilitate participation. Men and women's differential involvement in these organizations thus accounts for part of the gender gap in participation. Second, as expected, the education gap between men and women, along with other cognitive factors, also explains away a portion of the gender gap. Finally, political culture has a role to play as well. At the individual level, culturally-influenced factors such as one's interest in politics – much higher among men than women – plays the largest part in displacing gender as an explanation.

But what about the remaining two-thirds of the gender gap that we cannot explain with this model? Understanding the sources of the residual gender gap that remains after these other factors are accounted for remains a task for further research. One possible avenue for such analysis is investigation of the effects of political culture at the aggregate level. It is worth keeping in mind Tripp's descriptions of the cultural impediments to full political engagement faced even by elite women. Such a broad cultural factor is likely to have its effects at the country – or even the continental – level. Until women across Africa can speak without fear, be heard when they speak, and organize freely for political action, we are likely to continue to observe reluctance on the part of women to enter the political arena.

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