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## Civic Participation and Gender Beliefs: An Analysis of 46 Countries\*

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**Abstract:** Gender equality has progressed a great deal in recent decades in response to modernisation, industrialisation, and the generally rising level of education. A transformation in gender beliefs has accompanied the progress on gender equality and beliefs about gender roles have mainly changed in countries in North America and Europe, while in Muslim and Asian countries they have remained the same. The analysis in this article focuses on civic participation and investigates its relation to equalitarian gender beliefs. Multi-level regression models and data from World Values Survey (WVS) collected from 46 countries in 2005 allow depicting the relationships. The findings show that membership in civic associations covariates with equalitarian gender beliefs, but the sign of the relation depends on the gender and the type of association.

**Keywords:** Gender beliefs, civic participation, social values, instrumental variables

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Gender equality has progressed considerably over the last few decades in response to modernisation, industrialisation, and the rising general level of education [Inglehart and Norris 2003; Wilansky 2002]. A transformation in gender beliefs coincided with this progress, and beliefs about gender roles changed mainly in countries from North America and Europe. However, they have remained unchanged in Muslim and Asian countries [Rizzo, Abdel-Latif and Meyer 2007; Schulz Lee, Tufiş and Alwin 2010; Steel and Kabashima 2008]. Previous studies have attributed the variation in gender beliefs to individual characteristics, including family context, religiosity, or resources like education and income [Baxter and Kane 1995; Bolzendahl and Myers 2004; Brewster and Padavic 2000]. The

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effect of country-level variables like economic and technological development [Wilensky 2002], shifts in popular culture [Cotter, Hermsen and Vanneman 2011], and cultural change [Inglehart and Norris 2003; Inglehart, Norris and Welzel 2002] has also been tested.

This paper focuses on the connection between civic participation on one hand and values related to gender equality on the other hand. While the direction of causality between participation and values and attitudes is controversial, we do not aim to prove a causal relationship. Instead, we aim to theoretically document and empirically determine the association, and we address the causality issue using instrumental variable techniques. Various forms of political participation provide people with opportunities to organise and address gender issues. Participation in public life empowers men and women by providing them with opportunities to shape society's agenda [Alexander and Welzel 2011]. This makes the public more aware of gender discrimination and stimulates the transformation of gender beliefs because of exposure to more egalitarian values. Moreover, women involved in associations have more opportunities to become aware of their non-domestic roles, to meet women with similar opinions, and to develop new skills that can prepare them for non-domestic roles; this changes the power balance [Putnam 2000].

However, not all associations have the same outcome when considering their impact on gender values. Some might have explicitly or implicitly different agendas or their gendered structure may actually deter equalitarian values. A relevant distinction for the current research is the one between hierarchically and horizontally organised associations [Putnam 1993]. Horizontal associations are democracy-friendly, fostering reciprocity, trust, and increased communication among their members. Hierarchical associations are not always 'civic' and do not promote democracy and democratic values. Although they are highly cohesive, they reinforce exclusive identities and rather emphasise the inter-group border instead of making it more permeable. Typical examples of these associations are Hutu death squads, the Ku-Klux-Klan, and religious extremist groups [Putman 1993; Jurgensmeyer 2000]. The current work focuses on the membership in horizontal associations aimed at promoting trust, tolerance, and pro-democratic values. The choice is also limited to the available data, while large-scale surveys hardly tap membership in associations promoting 'negative social capital' such as the ones mentioned above.

To our knowledge, no other published research has investigated the connection between civic participation and gender beliefs. We contribute to the existing literature by going a step further and investigating the relationship between individual participation and gender beliefs. We fill this gap using data from the World Values Survey (WVS) collected from 46 countries in 2005. We employed multi-level models to capture the effect of individual and societal determinants on gender-equality beliefs.

The first section of this paper covers existing literature on the relationship between gender equality and civic participation. The second section introduces

the indicators and the strategy used for the analysis, while the third section comprises the data analysis. The discussion and conclusions are described in the final section.

## **A review of the literature and hypotheses**

### *Gender beliefs and participation*

Gender beliefs represent 'normative beliefs about what gender relations in society should be like, or the extent to which a person supports the norm of gender equality' [Bergh 2006: 6]. This paper focuses on general support for the norm of gender equality and its relationship to civic participation and political participation. The relationship between participation and gender beliefs occurs at two different levels: individual and country levels.

At the individual level, there are several mechanisms that help to explain the connection between participation and gender beliefs. The relationship between civic participation and individual values and attitudes is controversial. While some authors underscore the self-selection effect by pointing out that people who join civic associations already share pro-democratic attitudes [Uslaner 2002, 2003], others support the socialisation thesis explaining how membership in associations instils democratic values, such as tolerance, trust, loyalty, equality, and cooperation [Persell, Green and Gurevich 2001; Putnam 1995; van der Meer and van Ingen 2009]. Hooghe points out that the two approaches are not mutually exclusive and that 'voluntary associations are subject to a "selection and adaptation" dynamic' [2003a: 106].

Membership in associations adds new pro-democratic values and attitudes to pre-existing ones. A general mechanism of adaptation shapes the values and attitudes of an association's members, including their gender beliefs. Participation in civic associations gives people the opportunity to extend their social network, to get in touch with new people, and to know them better. Contact mechanisms [Putnam 1993] are activated and lead to increased levels of trust, tolerance, and solidarity because contact increases social capital and associated attributes. Moreover, by getting involved in associations, people learn to cooperate and develop social skills as well, since associations instil tolerance, trust, equality, and cooperation [Coffe and Geys 2007; Paxton 2002; Persell, Green and Gurevich 2001; Putnam 1995; Sullivan et al. 1981; van der Meer and van Ingen 2009; Wollebæk and Selle 2003]. Exposure to such values makes people likely to develop proegalitarian gender beliefs because changes in attitudes and beliefs do not occur in isolation but in connection with other attitudinal changes [Page and Shapiro 1992]. An ideological learning mechanism has been proven to work in the case of attitudes toward gender roles as well, linking them to values of individualism and civil libertarianism [Brooks and Bolzendahl 2004: 111]. This mechanism is involved in shaping both men's and women's gender beliefs.

For women, additional mechanisms are employed to explain the transformation of beliefs as the result of involvement in civic associations. Women's membership in voluntary associations provides them with the opportunity to be involved in non-domestic activities. They gain skills and work experience [Egerton and Mullan 2008]. Involvement in various activities, such as running meetings, writing letters, organising projects, or meeting officials, prepares them for non-traditional roles [Green and Brock 2005; Hanks 1981; Putnam 2000; van der Meer and van Ingen 2009]. This provides women with the opportunity to play non-traditional roles and to get involved in activities outside the home. A change in attitudes will follow because a control mechanism leads individuals to seek to maintain meaning and to 'adjust their attitudes to match their behavior' [Kroska and Elman 2009: 379].

As in the case of labour-force participation, membership in associations gives women the opportunity to encounter networks of women involved in non-domestic activities, which can increase feminist consciousness [Banaszak and Plutzer 1991]. Women's networks 'may sustain their shared interests through solidarity and reciprocal reinforcements' [Lin 2001: 195], enhancing women's collective identity and collective consciousness as a deprived group. Informal networks help to develop and spread their own gender ideology and may generate a transformation in gender beliefs because individuals are exposed to pro-feminist thinking [Bolzendahl and Myers 2004]. Exposure mechanisms rely on the idea that transformations in gender beliefs occur when individuals are exposed to pro-feminist thinking or to a situation that increases support for gender equality [Bolzendahl and Myers 2004]. Exposure may occur in three different contexts: education, socialisation, and personal experience. One can say that, in the case of women, inclusion in gender-homogenous organisations helps them to develop greater support for gender equality because they are exposed to feminist ideology fostered by such context.

Individuals involved in associations have the opportunity to meet different people from different backgrounds, to work together toward the common good [van der Meer and van Ingen 2009], to 'become more empathetic to the misfortunes of others' [Putnam 2000: 288], and 'to moderate their own attitudes in order to create a lasting social contact in the different settings' [Wollebæk and Selle 2003]. They cooperate with different people and share a common sense of identity as members of the same organisation. Hooghe [2003b] calls this a 'contact mechanism'. This mechanism is particularly important for men's gender beliefs, which are led in an egalitarian direction because men find themselves playing the same roles as women and have to accept an equal status. Therefore, they adapt their gender beliefs and share greater acceptance for gender equality because, in conformity with the above-described control mechanisms, they need to adjust their attitudes to match their behaviour. In the case of men's gender beliefs, a gender-heterogeneous context seems to be influential, as it exposes men to situations in which they play similar roles to women and this pushes them to accept similar roles for both genders.

As long as the gender heterogeneity versus homogeneity of an association matters for gender beliefs, one needs to take into account the type of organisation and the type of network promoted by a given association. Not all associations foster similar social networks, and Glanville [2004] showed that the composition of a social network depends on the nature of the voluntary association. Glanville pointed out that in expressive associations that often have self-fulfilment or socialisation as their purpose, members are rather homogenous and rather gender segregated. Such organisations include 'religious, recreation or sport groups, seniors' organizations, and nature or fine arts groups' [Glanville 2004: 481]. Instrumental organisations (e.g., educational organisations, professional organisations, political parties, labour unions, social welfare organisations) have rather external goals and include diverse members [Glanville 2004] in terms of gender as well. Usually, women tend to belong to smaller organisations that are more gender segregated than men.

While participation in expressive organisations provides an opportunity to meet people of a similar socio-economic status, involvement in instrumental associations makes it possible to interact with people from different social settings. Therefore, it is likely that involvement in expressive organisations is more closely connected with egalitarian gender attitudes among women because they are part of networks that include similar women, while participation in instrumental associations is more relevant for male gender beliefs.

At the country level, we assume that an ecological effect operates in the case of civic participation. One outcome of membership in civic associations resides in the equal protection of interest in public life [Schlozman, Verba and Brady 1999]. Vivid associational life in a country 'creates cross-cutting ties that bind society together' [Newton 1997: 579] and helps to promote the interests of various groups in the public sphere, regardless of whether people who belong to such groups are directly part of a given association or not [Schlozman, Verba and Brady 1999]. Civic participation creates solidarity within society [Mayer 2003] and makes those who participate speak in the names of de-privileged groups. As long as gender equality makes salient the issues connected to equality and privileged status within society, a vivid associational life will make gender issues more prominent in the public discourse and will boost support for gender equality among the general public.

Moreover, by being active in public life, people interact and signal their values to the surrounding world that generates a 'mental climate' accessible to everyone [Welzel and Deutsch 2012]. This mental climate is a 'constitutive element of a society's culture' [ibid.: 467] and shapes people's values and attitudes. In addition, freedom of association provides women with opportunities to organise and mobilise to defend their rights [Beer 2009; Paxton, Hughes and Painter 2010] and to publically address issues of gender inequality. Thus, people living in countries with higher levels of female participation in civic associations have more opportunities to encounter feminist ideas; this in turn changes general gender beliefs.

### *Hypotheses*

Three hypotheses result from the theoretical approaches referred to above and controlling for all the relevant predictors:

- (H1) Participation in civic associations is positively associated with egalitarian gender beliefs.
- (H2) Participation in expressive associations is associated most strongly with women's gender beliefs, while participation in instrumental associations relates more closely to men's gender beliefs.
- (H3) At the country level, a higher level of participation in civic associations correlates with an increase in support for gender equality.

### **Other determinants of gender beliefs**

The family context has proved to be highly significant in an individual's orientation towards gender equality. Marriage exerts a negative impact on support for gender equality because this is a traditional arrangement [Kalmijn 2003] that increases a woman's dependency on her spouse [Baxter and Kane 1995]. Unmarried cohabitation increases the preference for gender equality because traditional people are more likely to get married [Cunningham et al. 2005]. Plutzer [1991] has shown that divorce coincides with support for gender equality because it is a non-traditional family arrangement. Kane [1998] includes marriage and widowhood in the same category and considers them to have similar effects on gender beliefs. In addition, having children makes people more inclined to share traditional gender beliefs [Baxter and Kane 1995; Thornton and Young DeMacro 2001]. Having children in the household increases domestic chores, which are more often performed by women [Fan and Mooney Marini 2000; Presses 1994].

Educational institutions promote gender equality [Kalmijn 2003], while education itself shapes gender beliefs by instilling in students values such as autonomy, appreciation for merit-based achievements, and the desirability of similar roles for both sexes [Cunningham et al. 2005]. Women's employment reduces women's dependency within the family [Baxter and Kane 1995], destroys myths about women's ability to perform in the labour market [Banaszak and Plutzer 1993] and provides women with contact with non-traditional women who share modern gender beliefs [Bolzendahl and Myers 2004].

Younger generations living in European and North American societies seem much more inclined to support gender equality [Fan and Mooney Marini 2000]. Women are significantly more supportive of gender equality than men are because these attitudes support their interests [Davis 2007; Fan and Mooney Marini 2000; Lee et al. 2007]. Past studies have also reported that religiously affiliated people and those who engage more in religious practices have less egalitarian attitudes toward gender roles [Brewster and Padavic 2000; Hertel and Hughes

1987; Hofstede 1991; Inglehart and Norris 2003; Sherkat 2000; Thornton, Alwin and Comburn 1983; Wilcox and Jelen 1991].

At the macro level, according to the economic perspective, the sex-role revolution is the result of the economic development experienced by post-industrial societies in recent decades [Wilensky 2002]. Economic and technological developments have led to the expansion of the service sector and have increased the need for a qualified work force, which has led to two processes that affect gender beliefs. First, the higher demand for labour opened the labour market to many women. The second process relates to the rising level of education in advanced industrialised societies and applies equally to men and women.

Nevertheless, at the macro level, the cultural approach assumes that values are the driving force behind societal and institutional change [Inglehart et al. 2002; Inglehart and Norris 2003]. The transformation in gender beliefs is attributed to cultural change, which involves a shift towards post-materialist and self-expressive value orientations as opposed to materialist and survival values. Since cultural change is the result of increasing individual and societal welfare, the above-mentioned works point out that democratisation and the shift in gender beliefs are part of the same process.

## **Data, measurement and methods**

This study addresses mainly the issue of covariance between participation and gender beliefs. However, one may assume a causality from participation to gender beliefs. The argument that is based on exposure to a pro-equalitarian environment would go in this direction. Ideally, panel data would be useful to test the direction of the relation. Otherwise, one could also argue that there is a reversed causation resulting from self-selection processes: more egalitarian values would trigger participation in general. Alternatively, one may find it possible that both civic participation and equalitarian gender values are determined by common causes or are manifestations of a common latent concept. To prove a directional relation, one needs longitudinal observations. Such a data source should simultaneously respect two conditions. First, it should include questions about gender beliefs and civic participation. Second, to control for contextual effects, the information has to be collected from samples in a wide range of countries. Unfortunately, we are not aware of such panel data. Therefore, we considered cross-sectional data and tested mainly association. In addition, to deal with potential causation, we also have to make use of different techniques to avoid endogeneity, as is explained below in this section.

The analysis employs the WVS 2005 dataset collected in 52 countries between 2005 and 2009.<sup>1</sup> We use data on only the 46 countries listed in Table 2, and for

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<sup>1</sup> Detailed information about the WVS is available at [www.worldvaluessurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org).

which we have information for all the variables considered here. All the national samples are probability samples. The total number of cases is of 66 563 cases. The questionnaire contains items on attitudes and value orientations in a wide range of areas in life, including gender beliefs. It also measures membership in associations.

### *The dependent variable*

The dependent variable, 'gender beliefs', was built as an average score of the following items: 'On the whole, men make better political leaders than women', 'A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl', and 'On the whole, men make better business executives than women'. The original response scale ranged from 1 ('strongly agree') to 4 ('strongly disagree'). We rescaled the resulting mean indicator so that the higher values indicated greater support for gender equality in the public space. Country-specific reliability analyses showed that for all the countries, the scale provided an acceptably reliable measure for the dependent variable. Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.641 in France to 0.925 in Spain; the average reliability was 0.747. A CFA model shows that the three-variable index is full-scalar invariant across countries. After adding the fourth indicator included in the 2005 wave of the WVS ('Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay'), it was not possible to reach invariance. We therefore preferred the indicator based on the three variables that we have described here.

### *Independent variables: individual level*

Participation in civic associations was tapped by eight dummy variables, which stand for memberships in eight types of associations, depending on their purposes: church or religious organisations; sporting or recreational organisations; art, music, or educational organisations; labour unions; environmental organisations; professional associations; humanitarian or charitable organisations; consumer organisations.

Several control variables were considered. *Age* was measured in years, while *education* was estimated by the highest level of completed education (nine categories). *Gender* was a dummy variable (female = 1). Two types of indicators captured the effect of family context. The first indicated whether the respondent was *married*, *divorced*, *widowed*, or *cohabitates* (dummy variables, reference category: single), while the second showed parental status (dummy variable: 1 if the respondent had *children*; 0 means childless). Two dummy variables indicate *employment status*: the respondent had a paid job (working either as employed or self-employed) or was *unemployed*. To measure the post-materialist value orientation, the classic materialism/post-materialism scale was computed [Inglehart 1997] and a dummy variable was built and given a value of 1 if the respondent

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics of individual level variables**

Dependent variable		Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
	Support for gender equality	1	4	2.9	0.7
Membership in associations	Religious and church related	0	1	0.46	0.50
	Sport and recreation	0	1	0.30	0.46
	Art, music, education	0	1	0.22	0.42
	Labor unions	0	1	0.19	0.39
	Environmental	0	1	0.15	0.36
	Professional organisations	0	1	0.18	0.38
	Charity and philanthropic	0	1	0.20	0.40
	Consumer organisations	0	1	0.11	0.32
	How important is god in your life	1	10	7.6	3.0
	Monthly church attendance	0	1	0.46	0.50
	Post-materialist	0	1	0.12	0.33
	Gender (woman = 1)	0	1	0.51	0.50
	Age (years)	15	97	42	16.8
	Highest educational level	1	9	5.3	2.4
Having children	0	1	0.71	0.46	
Marital status	Married	0	1	0.54	0.50
	Cohabitation	0	1	0.09	0.28
	Divorced	0	1	0.06	0.24
	Widow	0	1	0.06	0.25
Job	Employed	0	1	0.53	0.50
	Unemployed	0	1	0.10	0.31
	Life Satisfaction	1	10	6.9	2.2
Instruments	Confidence in church	1	4	2.81	0.95
	Confidence in labour unions	1	4	2.26	0.85
	Confidence in environmental movement	1	4	2.65	0.81
	Confidence in charities	1	4	2.75	0.83
	Subjective health (feeling healthy)	1	4	2.85	0.86
	Supervises people at work	0	1	0.20	0.40
	Does not intend to vote in elections	0	1	0.03	0.18
	Speaks the language of the country at home	0	1	0.96	0.19

was classified as *post-materialist*. *Religious practice* was measured as church attendance at least once a month. *Religiosity* was measured on a 10-point scale indicating how important God is in one’s life. *Life satisfaction* (10-point scale) stands as a proxy for perceived wealth.

*Independent variables: country level*

Participation in civic associations is an aggregate index representing the average number of types of associations in which a person is a member in each country.

Country-level economic development was gauged by *GDP per capita*, with data from the World Bank’s World Development Indicators (2005). The characteristics of the labour market were captured in the *rate of female labour-force participation* based on the International Labor Organization’s ‘Key Indicators of the

**Table 2. Country averages—first part**

	Gender equality	Associations	Civic liberty	Ln(GDP/c)	Women labour particip./10
Argentina	3.0	1.4	6.0	9.4	4.9
Australia	3.1	2.2	7.0	10.2	5.7
<i>Brazil</i>	2.9	1.7	5.0	8.9	5.4
Britain	3.1	2.1	7.0	10.3	5.9
Bulgaria	2.9	0.2	6.0	8.9	4.8
Burkina Faso	2.3	1.2	4.0	7.0	7.4
Canada	3.2	2.4	7.0	10.3	6.2
Chile	2.8	1.8	7.0	9.2	3.8
China	2.7	1.1	2.0	8.6	6.7
<b><i>Colombia</i></b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>5.6</b>
Cyprus	3.0	1.0	7.0	9.9	5.3
Ethiopia	3.2	3.0	3.0	6.8	7.4
Finland	3.1	2.4	7.0	10.2	6.0
France	3.4	1.2	7.0	10.2	5.3
Germany	3.2	1.2	7.0	10.2	5.5
Ghana	2.4	2.7	6.0	7.7	7.3
India	2.3	5.7	5.0	8.0	3.3
Indonesia	2.6	2.4	4.0	8.1	4.8

Table 2. Country averages—second part

	Gender equality	Associations	Civic liberty	Ln(GDP/c)	Women labour particip./10
Iran	2.2	1.5	2.0	8.8	2.8
Italy	3.1	1.3	7.0	10.1	4.2
<i>Japan</i>	2.7	0.9	6.0	10.2	5.3
<b>Malaysia</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>4.1</b>
Mali	2.0	3.1	6.0	6.8	3.4
Mexico	2.9	2.1	6.0	9.1	3.9
Moldova	2.7	1.2	4.0	7.5	4.8
Morocco	2.5	.5	4.0	8.3	2.4
Netherlands	3.2	1.8	7.0	10.3	5.8
Poland	2.8	1.0	7.0	9.4	4.9
Romania	2.8	0.3	6.0	9.0	4.9
Russia	2.5	0.8	3.0	9.1	5.7
Rwanda	2.6	2.5	3.0	6.9	8.2
S Africa	2.8	2.6	6.0	9.2	4.4
<i>S Korea</i>	2.7	1.5	6.0	9.8	4.9
Serbia	2.9	0.7	6.0	9.2	5.3
Slovenia	3.0	1.4	7.0	9.9	5.5
Spain	3.3	.8	7.0	10.1	4.7
Sweden	3.4	2.8	7.0	10.2	6.4
<i>Switzerland</i>	3.3	2.4	7.0	10.4	6.3
Thailand	2.6	1.7	5.0	8.9	6.4
Trinidad & Tobago	3.1	2.4	5.0	9.4	5.0
Turkey	2.7	0.2	5.0	8.9	2.4
Ukraine	2.6	0.8	5.0	8.7	5.4
<i>Uruguay</i>	3.1	0.8	7.0	9.0	6.0
<b>USA</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>5.5</b>
Vietnam	2.7	0.9	2.0	7.8	6.6
Zambia	2.7	3.0	4.0	6.8	6.2

Note: GDP per capita (GDP/c) is expressed in PPP. We divided GDP/c by 1000 and women's labour-force participation by 10 to facilitate interpretation of the regression results. Italics indicate a lack of information for the instrumental variables. Bold indicates missingness for other independent variables.

Labor Market' [2005]. For the *democratisation at the country level*, we used Freedom House's Civil Liberty Index (2005 data). The original index ranges from 1 to 7, where 1 indicates that the country ensures freedom of civil liberties, and 7 means a lack of such liberties. We reversed the scale to simplify the interpretation of results.

### *Method*

We produced several multi-level regression models using MPlus 7. The multi-level approach allows both individual independent variables and country-level variables to be tested simultaneously. In addition, it accounts for the variance that can be attributed to individual characteristics and the variance that can be attributed to contextual/group-level features.

MPlus combines structural equation models (SEM) with multilevel modeling (MLM). Therefore, we can control for potential covariances between independent variables. At the individual level, we modelled a latent factor to explain involvement in the eight types of associations. At the country level, we specified covariances between all the variables except for women's employment. We also allowed the index of civil liberties to covariate with the latent indicator of civic participation.

To go beyond mere covariance, one needs various strategies to avoid endogeneity. First, one can compare separate models for men and women. If at least for some types of associations there are differences in the findings when considering the sign of the relation between membership in associations and gender beliefs, this might be an indication of causality.

Instrumental variables are used as further measures to prevent reversed causality [Wooldridge 2012]. In the same SEM/MLM environment, we fitted eight more equations, one for each independent variable of membership. Eight instruments were used to ensure an exactly identified system (that is, the number of instruments is equal to the one of instrumented predictors): confidence in church, confidence in labour unions, confidence in environmental movement, and confidence in charity organisations stand as the instruments for the corresponding associations. Subjective health determines enrolment in sporting associations, and supervising people at work determines participation in professional associations. Two other instruments predict all eight independent variables: intending not to vote in elections (the indicator for non-participative behaviours), and speaking one of the official or widespread languages of the country of residence at home (indicator of the ability to communicate with association-peers). The eight indicators are valid: there is theoretical support for predicting membership in corresponding associations, which was proved empirically through significant bivariate correlations; they have at most loose correlations with the dependent variable (gender beliefs), which are typically ten times lower than

the ones with the instrumented variables, and correspond to theoretical expectations. When fitting the equations, in all the tested models the eight instruments continue to behave in the same way as in the case of bivariate relations. At least one significant instrument stands for each independent variable, in such a way that one can distinguish eight non-repetitive pairs of instruments and indicators of membership in associations. Therefore, the instrumental variables approach removes endogeneity, providing a better indication of the impact of membership in associations on gender beliefs. However, because some values were missing when it came to the instrumental variables, six countries were dropped from the sample (they did not ask the question on the language spoken at home).

In the dataset, 46 countries provide information both for the dependent variable and for participation in various civic organisations. Table 2 lists them, while Table 1 displays the basic statistics for individual-level variables. The sample includes 58 383 respondents with valid information for most of the variables considered here. However, in some countries they did not measure all the predictors considered here, and as mentioned above, we lost six countries when we began using the instrumental variables. Three other countries do not include information about the number of children (the United States and Colombia) and about going to church (Malaysia), as indicated in Table 2.

In all models, we employed the listwise deletion of missing values. A weight variable is used in all the individual-level analyses so that all samples are the same size ( $N = 1000$ ).

To maximise the use of available information, we ran the models in four scenarios. First, we used all the cases with valid information for all the variables except the instruments. This resulted in a sample of 43 countries. Second, the models were repeated for the same cases, but excluding the number of children and religious practice from the list of predictors. By doing so, we increased the number of countries to maximum, by including the United States, Malaysia, and Colombia. Third, we excluded two countries with outlier behaviour (India and Mali), as explained in the next section. Fourth, as a further robustness check, we also excluded seven countries for which the influence statistics (Influence and Cook's D in MPlus) have larger values: Ghana, Ethiopia, Finland, Indonesia, Sweden, Turkey, and Zambia.

The models were also repeated using other two criteria. On one hand, we repeated all the models by including a dependency of attitudes towards gender equality on the latent orientation toward participation. To ensure convergence, we needed to constrain the variance of gender equality at 1. The reason for controlling civic participation is to remove its general effect and be able to distinguish the clean impact of involvement in specific associations. On the other hand, we also repeated all these models employing the instrumental variables approach, as explained. Finally, we repeated the analysis, controlling for the impact of our interest variable depending on the participation context. In other words, we added cross-level interaction effects between membership in different types of

associations, at the individual level, and the cultures of participation at the country level.

In the next section, we do not explicitly discuss all models for the sake of limited space. However, all are implicitly taken into consideration. As a rule, a relation is considered significant when it is retrieved in all the models.

## **Results**

Table 2 presents the country-level statistics for the variables of interest. In the entire sample, women are more egalitarian—the mean of the women's gender beliefs indicator is significantly larger ( $p < 0.005$ ) than the mean recorded for men (2.99 compared to 2.71). Support for gender equality is higher in more developed countries, particularly in Europe and Australia. The average number of types of membership associations ranges in our sample from 0.2–0.3 per person registered in Eastern Europe (Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania) to 6.0 in India. India is atypical within the sample, with its score being almost double that of Mali, which also displays an unexpectedly high average of 3.4 types of membership associations. The bivariate relationship between associationalism and egalitarian gender beliefs at the country level is negative. Excluding India and Mali, the sign of the correlation reverses and a slight positive influence may be noticed ( $R^2 = 3\%$ ).

The robustness of the findings was tested first on a subsample excluding these countries, then, as already explained, on a more reduced sample to also exclude countries that might have been influential. Table 3 displays the results for various sets of models that we have run. Tables A1, A2, and A3 complete the picture. We comment mainly on the results common for all models, and we refer the differences when they may change the interpretation.

When fitting a two-level intercept null model for the sample that includes both men and women, the value of the interclass correlation coefficient indicates that 16% of the total variation is located between countries. The corresponding figure is 16% for models run only on women and 18% for men. Similar results are found in all the models. Consequently, individual characteristics count for most of the differences among cases. Significant chi-square values indicate that contextual characteristics should explain part of the variance and legitimate the multilevel approach.

Table 3 shows the results of the multilevel models and focuses on the estimates of the civic participation effects. The models that were run for the whole sample (men and women together) reduce the level 1 variance by almost 10 percent from 0.444 to 0.408 and level 2 variance by about two thirds, from 0.102 to 0.037. At the country level, similar reductions occur when considering only women or only men. The individual-level variance decreases by only 6% in the case of women, while for men the corresponding figure is 4%. Overall, the  $R^2$ s indicate that 4 to 10% of the level 1 variance and over 50% of the between-country variance is explained by the models.

At the individual level, all the models include controls for age, education, religious practice, religiosity, marital status, having children, employment status, post-materialism, and life satisfaction. For the country level, we controlled for the civil liberty index, (logarithmic) GDP per capita, and women's participation in the labour force. When appropriate, we also controlled for gender. For both men and women, the support for gender equality significantly decreases with age and religious practice, but it is boosted by education, being employed, having higher life satisfaction, and sharing post-materialist values. Compared to being single, being married or cohabitating decreases women's tendency to adopt egalitarian values, but it has the opposite effect for men. In the case of women, widowhood has negative effects, while having a job increases the propensity to support gender equality. In the models that include the whole sample irrespective of gender, being female increases the value of the dependent variable with a point estimate of 0.3. Among country-level controls, GDP/capita and women's participation in the labour force have a positive significant impact on men's egalitarian gender beliefs.

To fully describe the models, in all models the latent variable of civic participation is strongly related to the indicators. All factor loadings are larger than 0.4. In addition, all included covariances between predictors are significant and point in the expected direction, at the individual and aggregate levels.

Now, we can start inspecting the relationships of immediate interest for this paper.

The findings show that men involved in religious and sport associations are less likely to develop equalitarian gender beliefs. Exposure and ideological mechanisms explain this relationship. In male sport associations, all members are usually athletes and rarely interact with the women; therefore, they are not exposed to common actions with women and are less likely to share pro-equalitarian gender values. If one participates in a religious organisation, two mechanisms are likely to be in place. On one hand, s/he will have ideological incentives to reduce gender egalitarian values. On the other hand, there is the hampering effect of exposure to traditional values.

As stated in (H1.1), for women, the ease of aggregating common interests is higher in expressive associations, such as sporting associations, and tends to reduce the negative covariance that we have noticed, making it insignificant (the left columns of Table 3). When the interactions between participative cultures at the country level and personal involvement in associations are considered, several effects become significant (Table A3). For women, being members of a sporting association boosts their propensity towards gender equality. This happens only when the culture of participation is low, with the average number of types of associations one joins being lower than 2. Otherwise, the impact cancels out with the interaction effect. In fact, the value of 2 is only the point estimate. Considering the confidence intervals, it is possible to observe that the effect becomes insignificant even for very low levels of participative culture. This actually means that we observe no impact of belonging to sporting associations on support for gender equality among women.

**Table 3. Unstandardised estimates of the impact of civic participation on gender beliefs (models without instrumental variables)—first part**

	43 countries, all predictors			All countries but India & Mali		
	Total pop.	Women	Men	Total pop.	Women	Men
Individual level						
Type of association						
Religious	-0.033 *	-0.023	-0.043 **	-0.032 *	-0.022	-0.042 **
Sport	-0.015 *	0.000	-0.022 *	-0.016 *	-0.002	-0.022 *
Art & education	0.018 †	0.019 †	0.013	0.022 *	0.022 *	0.017
Lab. unions	0.006	0.010	0.001	0.007	0.012	0.001
Environment	-0.009	-0.034 **	0.015	-0.004	-0.027 *	0.019 *
Professional	0.007	0.016 †	-0.005	0.007	0.015 †	-0.005
Charity	0.025 ***	0.022 ***	0.032 ***	0.025 ***	0.022 ***	0.030 ***
Consumer	-0.012	-0.014	-0.008	-0.014 †	-0.019 †	-0.008
Country level						
Mbship. in assoc.	0.027	-0.012	0.067	0.200	0.183	0.205
R-square						
L1	9%	7%	4%	9%	7%	4%
L2	51%	51%	51%	46%	47%	45%
Number of cases						
N1	52 878	27 289	25 589	50 580	26 232	24 348
N2	43	43	43	41	41	41
ICC	16%	16%	18%	14%	14%	17%

\*\*\*p < 0.005; \*\*p < 0.01; \*p < 0.05; †p < 0.10. The models include the controls mentioned in text.  
 Note: Samples: (1) all countries, but US, Columbia & Myanmar (with missing information for some predictors); (2) all countries but US, CO, MY and India & Mali (outliers); (3) all

When the effects of religious practice are ignored (the right columns of Table 3), the relation between equalitarian gender beliefs and religious associations becomes negative for women as well. The same happens with the instrumental variables approach (Table A1), or when the impact of latent orientation toward participation is removed (Table A2). The remaining negative impact of participating in religious associations is likely to reflect the influence of ideology and exposure mechanisms, overcoming the contrary tendency determined by joining expressive associations.

In the case of membership in (expressive) art and educational organisations, we expected a positive effect based on the larger diversity of people that

**Table 3. Unstandardised estimates of the impact of civic participation on gender beliefs (models without instrumental variables)—second part**

	US, CO, MY included			Reduced sample		
	Total pop.	Women	Men	Total pop.	Women	Men
Individual level						
Type of association						
Religious	-0.043 ***	-0.034 *	-0.054 ***	-0.058 ***	-0.044 *	-0.071 ***
Sport	-0.017 *	-0.003	-0.023 *	-0.024 †	-0.002	-0.032 *
Art & education	0.017 †	0.020 *	0.010	0.023 †	0.022	0.014
Lab. unions	0.006	0.009	0.002	0.018	0.021	0.010
Environment	-0.008	-0.030 *	0.014	-0.009	-0.060 *	0.041 †
Professional	0.007	0.013	-0.002	0.004	0.027	-0.024
Charity	0.021 ***	0.016 *	0.029 ***	0.046 ***	0.034 *	0.061 ***
Consumer	-0.008	-0.009	-0.005	-0.043 *	-0.027	-0.061 **
Country level						
Mbship. in assoc.	0.002	-0.036	0.042	-0.003	-0.026	0.023
R-square						
L1	8%	6%	4%	9%	7%	4%
L2	52%	53%	52%	56%	59%	55%
Number of cases						
N1	58983	30312	28671	42478	22292	20186
N2	46	46	46	35	35	35
ICC	17%	17%	20%	15%	16%	18%

countries, including US, CO, MY, but excluding religious practice and number of children as predictors; (4) all, including US, CO, MY, but excluding India & Mali, and Sweden, Finland, Ethiopia, Ghana, Zambia, Indonesia, and Turkey (with higher influence statistics).

a person can meet and may cooperate with in such associations, and on the fact that art organisations are an expressive kind of association. As explained above, this effect should be more noticeable for women. The results do not fully confirm our expectations. Although its sign is positive, the coefficient is not significant for men. For women, there are significant effects when no instrumental variables are used (Table 3 and A2). However, when causality is considered, the effect disappears. The fact that this happens may be due to the effect of reducing the number of cases or changing the sample, but it is possible to say with certainty that an effect actually is present.

Consequently, we found no irrefutable evidence of positive covariance be-

tween involvement in expressive associations and gender beliefs. Since there is no significant relation with associations related to art and education, the negative sign in the case of religious associations should be due to ideological mechanisms, while in the case of sport associations it may derive from exposure mechanisms.

Labour unions, professional organisations, and consumer organisations do not seem to relate to gender values. For women, positive covariance is present in the case of professional organisations. Its effect size is comparable with other relationships, as we discuss below, but the significance level ( $p < .10$ ) is not very convincing. In addition, after controlling for instrumental variables, the effect is no longer significantly different from zero, even at  $p < .10$ .

A similar story can be told about consumer organisations, but the conclusion seems to change when the contextual dependency is taken into account (Table A3). With controls for cross-level interactions, involvement in consumer organisations decreases the support for gender equality in countries where the culture of participation is lower. Computing the level of zero impact, a value around 2.5 is the resulting point estimate for the average number of types of associations a person joins. This is higher than the actual level for most countries in the sample (Table 2). Taking into account the standard errors of the estimates, at a 95% confidence level, values of participative culture as low as 0.1 are required to render null the impact of joining consumer associations. In other words, considering the given sample of countries, there is no evidence that involvement in consumer organisations influences or is associated with specific levels of gender beliefs.

Instead, a significant relationship is more likely to occur in the case of charities and environmental organisations. Involvement in charity activities involves close cooperation with others and the assumption of non-traditional active public roles for women. It also involves exposure to an environment in which women's work is valued, in which the basic ideology is related to empowerment, and there is a relatively egalitarian division of tasks and cooperation with the opposite gender. As pointed out, all these lead to the positive effect that our analysis validates. For this type of instrumental association, the relation is stronger for men than women: the estimated confidence intervals do not overlap, which supports our second hypothesis (H2).

The expected positive impact of environmental organisations appears in several models, but only in the case of men. More, it is significant only when more cases are considered on the second level and the effect of the latent orientation toward civic participation is controlled. For women, the analysis shows an unexpected negative effect. Despite a lack of conceptual support for these surprising findings, they are useful in the sense that they may offer an indication that reversed causality (i.e. specific gender beliefs that trigger involvement in associations) is unlikely to be supported by empirical evidences. Our findings show that men involved in environmental associations may be likely to share beliefs that are more in the direction of gender equality. If their gender beliefs lead men

to join such associations or there is a common cause for the joining of associations and gender beliefs, the same should be true of women as well. Environmental voluntary organisations seem to be the perfect setting for women who support gender equality. For women, the partial correlation between being involved in environmental associations and the gender beliefs indicator should be positive or at least non-significant. On the contrary, the data show a negative significant relation. This may work as a partial argument in favour of potential causality.

As argued, differences between men and women are also observed in religious and sporting associations, although they are not as sharp as in the case of environmental organisations. Therefore, one may at least hypothesize that membership in associations should exert at least some influence on gender beliefs.

The size of each significant effect is comparable. For men, for instance, the experience of being a member of a charity cancels out the covariance between gender beliefs and participating in a sport association or a religious and church-related organisation. The association between memberships in associations and changing gender beliefs is not very high. For both men and women, being a member in any type of association changes the dependent variable by 1–2% of the mean of the dependent variable for the corresponding group. Even if not high, this is comparable in size (in fact, almost identical) to the effect caused by achieving a one-point higher level of education, by being employed, or by attending church on a monthly basis.

The third hypothesis discusses contextual influences. The results are not particularly encouraging in this respect. A rich associative life at the societal level seems to change nothing in terms of the gender beliefs of people living in such a society. This may be due to the presence of the outliers identified during the bivariate country-level analysis. We excluded India, then Mali, and then the other five countries with unexpectedly high levels of membership in associations. Later, we eliminated all the countries with higher influence statistics (the 'reduced sample' in Table 3 and Table A1). For both genders, the sign of the coefficient for membership in associations immediately changes, and then it increases without becoming significant. Therefore, we found no support for the third hypothesis. The participative context given by voluntary associations is not important when controlling for other country-level variables and individual characteristics.

When adding the instrumental variables (Table A1), the new confidence intervals for the effects of interest intersect with those in Table 3. This indicates no significant difference from the previous findings. More, the signs of all coefficients remain in the same direction as in Table 3. In the case of few effects, the point estimates of the effects increase their significance, and some decrease it. In the case of men, the significance of the point estimates for membership in sport and environmental associations drops below 0.10 (although their confidence intervals indicate no difference from Table 3). For women, the effect of involvement in religious associations becomes significant at  $p < 0.05$ . In the same time, actual petition signing by women and attending demonstrations for men lead to signifi-

cant differences compared to the mere intention to join such movements. At the country level, nothing changes. Overall, using instrumental variables, although reducing the number of cases, confirms the results, and, by controlling endogeneity, gives supplementary reasons to trust the findings that we have observed. The gender differences are slightly blurred, but they remain in the same direction as in Table 3.

The inclusion of the general orientation toward civic participation, in Table A2, does not substantially change the results. However, it allows a better and more direct testing of (H1). Civic participation proves to be positively related to attitudes of supporting gender equality. This is independent of the types of association a person is involved in and does not change the specific impact of these associative participations. The size of the effect is not very clear in Table A2 and in Table A3. When considering the standardised effects, which is necessary given the different range and variation for the considered predictors, the covariation between the gender beliefs and the latent orientation toward participation proves quite high. It is surpassed only by the impact of education and highly exceeds the coefficients referring to all other predictors, including the ones for the types of associations. In other words, the general tendency to take part in associations is strongly related to support for gender equality. Considering the models with instrumented effects, the impact of each type of association adds to the one given by the latent participative values.

Adding the cross-level interactions (Table A3), as already discussed, does not change the results related to our variables of interest.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

This paper investigated the relationship between civic participation and gender beliefs in forty-six countries, controlling for individual as well as contextual factors. Three hypotheses were considered. First, the paper explored the covariations between individual involvement in civic associations and gender beliefs. We have assumed that mechanisms such as exposure, ideological contagion, and processes specific to the type of association shape the studied relationship. Second, the focus was on analysing whether living in a country with higher levels of female civic participation is associated with gender beliefs.

The data partially support our hypotheses. Membership in civic associations is associated with support for gender equality only for some associations, but not for all, and the relationship is not always positive. While participation in charity organisations is positively associated with greater support for gender equality, as expected, engagement in religious organisations has the opposite effect for both genders. A possible explanation for this finding resides in the hierarchical structure of most religious associations that, according to Putnam [1993], create exclusive identities and do not always promote cooperation and tolerance. Overall, the data do not provide empirical support for the distinctive association

between gender beliefs and membership in expressive versus instrumental associations. The hypothesis regarding the social norms of civic engagement is not supported by the data. Membership in civic associations operates only as an individual mechanism, not as a societal one. Personal participation is more important than general involvement in civic associations.

The current research considered the covariance between civic participation and gender beliefs, but it also made small steps to test causality. However, the endogeneity of this relationship remains open to debate. To address the issue, one needs to disentangle the causality between the main independent variables (membership in associations) on the one hand, and gender beliefs on the other. A similar case may be also found in the relation between membership in associations and other values, such as social trust. Studies using panel data show that participation in associations is determined by, but it is not a determinant of social trust [Bekkers 2011]. Other studies based on panel data found no necessary social trust prerequisite for membership in associations but limited support for the opposite causal relation [Claibourn and Martin 2000]. In the same way, one may question whether gender beliefs determine participation in associations or participation determines gender beliefs. Although we do not pretend to disentangle this relationship, we controlled for potential endogeneity effects using an instrumental variable approach. The results remained unchanged after this treatment. This suggests that causality may occur, but panel data are needed to address the endogeneity issue more fully. Further research should consider such an approach, even if it were to be applied only to one country or a limited group of countries.

Future research should look also into a longitudinal analysis dedicated to the dynamics of gender beliefs in the context of changing the nature of political activism. Modernisation theory predicts a change in the type of political actions in postmodern societies [Inglehart 1990]. Further research could investigate whether and how long-term civic participation shapes gender beliefs in advanced industrial societies in Western Europe and North America and whether similar developments occur in younger democracies.

It may also be the case that other forms of civic participation, including joining protest actions, have effects on gender beliefs. Preliminary results suggest that for both genders, participation in protest activities, particularly attending lawful demonstrations and signing petitions, increases opportunities for common activities in the public space, stimulates exposure to egalitarian ideology, and is associated with greater support for gender equality. The relation seems to hold true at the country level. A social context in which participation in protest actions is more frequent provides an environment where more equalitarian gender values exist. An in-depth examination of this side of participation should be on the agenda for future research. Our paper limits its scope to noting that the relation between joining associations and gender beliefs strongly depends on the type of association, although there is a general trend towards the orientation towards participation covarying positively with equalitarian gender values.

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