



Disinterested or discouraged? The gender gap in political interest.

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Abstract

This dissertation examines gender differences in political interest. It draws from scholarship in political science, sociology and communication, amongst other disciplines, to explore the drivers of such pervading differences. The key argument of this thesis is that gender differences (or gender gaps), both regarding political orientations and political participation, are the product of gendered social norms and differences in men and women's socio-economic status. Despite advances in gender equality in Western societies in the last decades, women remain the primary care-providers while men focus on the provision of resources.

The thesis consists of three empirical chapters, each addressing a distinct puzzle regarding the object of difference, their development over the lifespan and the context in which they develop. In the first paper (chapter 2), I argue that men and women relate differently to politics, and this is reflected in their interest not as a matter of level (how interested they are) but of the object of interest (women are interested in other issues). In the second paper (chapter 3) I argue that socialization is at the heart of the existence of a substantial gender gap in political interest from an early age. These gender differences in the political realm are further amplified during the transition to adulthood. The third paper (chapter 4) turns to contextual factors, precisely that the absence of women in media as agents of the news contributes to hindering women's interest in politics as they lack figures to identify with. Despite the limited attention of the scholarship to media, it is a relevant contextual factor that vehiculates many citizens' interactions with the political realm (but also with financial affairs or other social events), so the events reported and how they are framed are crucial for the political formation of citizens.



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Bio

Irene Sánchez-Vitores is a Ph.D. researcher in the Department of Political and Social Science at the European University Institute. She completed her BA in Law and political science and her MA at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. Her research focuses on political behavior, political attitudes, mainly political involvement, and how gender and social roles shape those attitudes. She has published her research in journals such as Social Politics, REIS or Political Psychology.