Portugal at the Polls

In 2002

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Portugal has gone through a remarkable transformation in the last three decades. Even before the revolution took place in 1974 the country’s modernization had been deep and incredibly fast (Barreto 2002: 311). The rapid improvements in Portugal’s societal development, economy, and levels of democracy have allowed it to approach convergence with European standards in a number of areas. However, like elsewhere in Southern Europe, convergence has typically been uneven, partial, and incomplete (Machado and Costa 2000). This unevenness is particularly true in regards to Portugal’s relative levels of gender equality, and we argue that this remains an important handicap for the quality of its young democracy. After a brief reflection about why the gender gap matters, we conduct an overview of the situation of women in Portugal, reporting some of the most important achievements in gender equality. Then, we look at gender differences in political participation. The two main goals of this paper are, firstly, to test whether there is still a gender gap in political participation. In order to do that, we measure the amplitude and test the significance of the gender gap in various dimensions of participation. Secondly, if there is still a gender gap, then which of the theoretical accounts best explain it? If we take for granted that it is not a result of different chromosomes, then what drives this gender gap?

**Why the Gender Gap Matters**

Women make up more than 50 percent of the world’s population, yet they only represent about 15 percent of the world’s parliamentarians, about 10 percent of the world’s cabinet ministers, and only about 5 percent of the world’s heads of
state or government (Inglehart and Norris 2003; IPU). At the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, 189 governments agreed that this was a serious problem for democracy, and committed themselves to taking steps to achieve greater parity between men and women in politics. But the percentage of women legislators worldwide has increased less than 0.5 percent a year since 1987 (IPU). At that rate, it would take another seventy-five years to reach an equal gender balance. The European Union (EU), the United Nations (UN), numerous international nongovernmental organizations, and many scholars of democratization have therefore developed specific policy recommendations that seek to speed up this glacial progress on the gender gap.

Within the EU, this has led the European Commission (EC) to adopt a series of Action Programs that have fostered pilot projects and the exchange of best practices in areas such as child care and the political representation of women, as well as in the creation of networks of experts and advocates in women's rights issues (Mazey 1995). Whereas the first two Action Programs were primarily focused on promoting equal work opportunities, the Fourth (1996-2000) and Fifth Programs have specifically focused on efforts to achieve greater parity in political representation (European Database 2000). Since the ratification of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1999, the concept of gender mainstreaming has been applied to all areas of EU decision-making, and strategies of “positive discrimination” have been explicitly encouraged to correct for historic patterns of discrimination against women. Several EU countries, including Portugal, have subsequently wrestled with the question of gender quotas as a strategy for achieving a more balanced distribution of decision-making positions in politics (Viegas and Faria 2001).

But theoretically speaking, why should having more women in decision-making positions necessarily improve the quality of a country’s democracy? After all, there are plenty of examples of female leaders who, once in power, did little to further policies that could be seen as progressive, from a feminist perspective. One argument, advanced by feminist theorists such as Carole Pateman (1970) and Anne Phillips (1991; 1995), argues that despite the universal, formal principle of political equality between men and women, politics in liberal democratic societies is overwhelmingly dominated by men and thus, on balance, tends to privilege masculine values and norms. Thus, from this perspective it is not surprising that male-dominated public decision-making bodies tend to produce public policy outputs that remain relatively insensitive to biological, caregiver, and “double-duty” issues that have disproportionately impacted women (Phillips 1998).

Another line of reasoning is the more common justice argument, which simply posits that the absence of women in politics is the result of discrimination and the lack of equal opportunities. This argument does not rely on the notion of women representing women or on women making a substantive difference in public policy outputs. It merely assumes that talent is not the purview of one gender, and that the absence of women from political decision-making positions is the result of direct or indirect forms of discrimination (Sawer 2002: 5).

Sawer (2002: 6-7) also reminds us that justice arguments frequently slide into various sorts of symbolic arguments about the importance of women in politics. Namely, that 1) the presence of women in positions of political authority increases respect for women in the larger society; 2) that it provides role models for younger women to believe that “girls can do anything”; 3) that it improves the legitimacy of the political system by bringing in previously under-represented groups in society; and 4) that increased visibility for political women changes societal perceptions of women’s traditional caregiver and domestic roles. Finally, utility arguments make a different case. They suggest that democracies are richer when the pool of talent is doubled, and that, furthermore, political parties are likely to benefit electorally when they include more women among their list of candidates (Lovenduski and Norris 1993).

For these reasons and more, our theoretical assumption in this paper is that Portuguese democracy is weaker at all levels when women remain relatively absent from political decision-making bodies. Furthermore, we assume that large gaps in levels of political participation, political involvement, and feelings of personal political efficacy between any of the major social groups in a modern democracy are potentially damaging to the health of the political system. While we are cognizant of the fact that “critical mass” theories (Norris and Inglehart 2001) have yet to demonstrate an unambiguous link between more women in parliament and more progressive legislation on “women’s concerns,” we nevertheless tend to agree with the position of Jane Jacquette (2001: 111). She suggests that women’s political behavior, their degree of representation at all levels of government, and their continuing activism in civil society will affect the quality of democratic leadership, the priorities of policy making, the building of democratic political cultures, and the responsiveness, transparency, and sustainability of democratic institutions.

The Paradoxes of Women’s Status in Portugal

Several theories have been offered to account for the continuing lack of women in political leadership: structural or resource factors, including levels of socioeconomic development, the proportion of women in professional and managerial occupations, among others; the impact of political institutions, such as the impact of democratization and the choice of electoral systems; and cultural factors, like the predominance of traditional attitudes toward gender roles (Norris and Inglehart 2001). If we broaden our focus to political participation writ large, most analyses of the gender gap have suggested that gender differences in resources (education, income, civic skills, marital status and the like) and political culture attitudes (interest in politics, personal efficacy, cognitive mobilization, trust, etc.) explain male-female differences in political participation rates (Welch 1977; Togeby 1994; Schlozman et al. 1995).
Structurally, one of the most important phenomena that preceded (but was later accelerated by) Portugal’s democratic revolution was the large-scale entrance of women into the formal labor market. As everywhere else in the world, this led to associated changes in gender roles and family life that have fundamentally reshaped Portuguese society ever since (Barreto 2002: 313). Worldwide, there is a clear link between a country’s level of socioeconomic development and the proportion of women in its legislature. Scholars have suggested a two-phase causal model whereby industrialization first brings women into the paid workforce and thus dramatically reduces fertility rates. During this stage, women make substantial gains in educational opportunities and literacy. These resources are understood to be crucial for political participation. As they earn the formal right to vote they begin to participate in representative government, but they still have far less power than men. The second, post-industrial phase is thought to usher in a shift toward greater gender equality as more progressive attitudes about gender roles take root in the electorate. This attitudinal change is both a cause and an effect of women moving into higher-status economic positions and as they gain greater political influence within elected and appointed bodies (Norris and Inglehart 2001: 129; Inglehart and Norris 2003). However, as we discuss below, improvements in women’s political representation in Portugal have been uneven, frequently lagging behind women’s socioeconomic improvements. In fact, politics is probably nowadays the one field where the imbalance between men and women can be most felt (Gorjão 2002: 273).

Institutionally, Portugal’s revolutionary democratic transition introduced, if only partially and somewhat briefly, a radical reordering of women’s daily lives. At the risk of over generalization, take for example two snapshots before and after the 1974 revolution. Until the late 1960s, when women in other western industrialized countries were already pushing for full equality with men, Portuguese women still needed their husband’s permission for employment, to leave the country, and were prohibited from serving as judges or in the diplomatic corps (Vicente 1993). Many Portuguese women’s public roles, especially in the rural areas, more closely resembled those of women from certain Islamic or Asian societies (Cutileiro 1971).

Despite these obstacles, less than ten years later, from 1974-76, working-class women throughout the country were often at the forefront of the social revolution that swept through Portugal. Their activities ranged from grassroots neighborhood organizing, to occupying and managing their own workplaces (Bermoe 1983; Hammond 1981; 1988; Downs 1989; Tavares 2000), to being elected by their peers (men included) as local trade union and party leaders. However, as is typical of most revolutions, many of these radically participatory gains proved to be ephemeral (see, for example Brinton 1938; and for rural Portugal, Baum 1997a). The only significant feminist legacy of that period was Portugal’s exceptionally progressive (for its time) constitution passed in 1976. It finally provided legal guarantees for the exercise of women’s full political and economic rights, but it was largely a product of a male-dominated Constituent Assembly and not the product of a strong feminist movement in Portuguese civil society (Ferreira 1998).

Nevertheless, partially as a result of democratization, European integration, and partially as a result of changes already occurring since the 1960s, the political and economic status of women in Portugal has improved considerably in a number of areas. In what concerns the national parliament, while in 1976 not even 5 percent of parliamentarians were women, by 1995 that figure had risen to 12 percent (Viegas and Faria 2001: 28) and by 2002 it was 20 percent. This last value ranked Portugal slightly above not only the EU average of about 16 percent, but also the world and non-Nordic European averages of 15 percent as well. However, it is still well below the levels of the European Nordic countries, where on average 38.8 percent of lower house members are women (Norris and Inglehart 2001: 121; Viegas and Faria 2001: 1PU). Clearly, the decision by Portugal’s constitutional designers to opt for a proportional electoral system with closed party lists has had fortuitous consequences for women’s parliamentary representation.4

What about at the highest levels of representation? Has women’s access to parliamentary positions been associated with a similar increase at the highest echelons of power? In terms of cabinet-level government positions, women’s representation in Portugal has been relatively robust. For example, whereas worldwide the percentage of women at this level of government doubled between 1987 (3.4 percent) and 1996 (6.8 percent), in Portugal it went from 5.8 percent in 1987 (1 cabinet member out of 17) under a center-right Social Democratic Party (PSD—Partido Social Democrático) government, to 11.5 percent in 1996 under António Guterres’s Socialist Party (PS—Partido Socialista) leadership (GRP; UNDAW 1996). This rate was still below the 1996 average of 18.3 percent for cabinets in Western Europe (N=21), and 16.2 percent for North America (N=3), but it was well ahead of the east European average of only 4.9 percent (N=19).3 However, within its closer cultural and political neighborhood, only Spain (16.7 percent) outpaced Portugal in 1996, with Italy (3.6 percent) and Greece (0 percent) well behind (UNDAW 1996). Moreover, from 1996 until 2004 the figures for Portugal continued to rise. Thanks to some resignations in the center-right Social Democratic Party-Social and Democratic Center-Popular Party (PSD—CDS-PP) coalition government elected in 2002, the number of women cabinet ministers rose to five out of twenty (25 percent) in 2003.6 So at this level, it appears that progress is being made; however glacial it may be.

However, one of the paradoxes of this relatively positive performance at the highest levels of political power is that representation at the sub-national level is substantially lower. This is somewhat surprising, since comparative research suggests that women tend to be represented in greater numbers the lower the level of government considered (Darcy et al. 1994; European Database 2000). Despite one of the world’s most advanced constitutions (in terms of legal protections
regarding equality in all spheres of life), only 10.4 percent of the members of Portugal’s various municipal governance structures were women in 1997, and the percentage of women mayors (the highest level of representation at the local level) was only about 5 percent in 2002. These percentages varied significantly by region and thus may be related to strong north/south and rural/urban ideological and cultural cleavages that are filtered through Portugal’s national party system.

Alongside this mixed picture for political representation, Portuguese women occupy an equally uneven position in regards to their economic situation. On the one hand, Portugal has one of the world’s highest rates of female employment, and very high rates of female university graduates. In 1995, 63 percent of university graduates under the age of thirty were women, and they were a majority in all courses except the technical/scientific fields, where they averaged in the 30-40 percent range (Ferreira 1999). Such figures would normally suggest relatively high levels of gender equity and thus bode well for the quality of the country’s democracy.

Numerous studies have suggested that as women gain access to education and the work force, they gain access to resources that are crucial for political participation (Togby 1994; Burns et al. 2001; Conway 2001; Inglehart and Norris 2003). The problem however, as Ferreira and others have been quick to point out, is that these gains in Portugal have occurred primarily for the younger generations of women. The other side of the equation is the terrible legacy of nearly fifty years of an intensely patriarchal dictatorship. When we look at the statistics for all Portuguese women, average levels of educational and material resources are still extremely low. Portugal has the lowest percentage in the EU of women aged twenty-five to fifty-nine having completed at least upper secondary education, 23.5 percent compared to the EU average of 58.7 percent (Eurostat 2001) and the highest female illiteracy rate in Europe—11 percent of those aged fifteen and above in 1998 (UNDP 2001). This discrepancy in mean educational resources may also explain the slow progress women have made in the top echelons of the business world. Only 5 percent of Portugal’s top one hundred companies have at least one woman as a member of their board of directors, compared to 87 percent with at least one woman in the top five hundred companies in the United States (Diário de Noticias, July 7, 2002: 9).

Other measures continue to illustrate the uneven nature of women’s economic advancement in Portugal. Despite their relatively high activity rates, the workday is also longer in Portugal than in any other EU country, and part-time employment for women is mostly concentrated in the poorly-paid agricultural and precarious informal sectors (Ferreira 1999: 203). Furthermore, despite the existence of highly successful “alibi women” as Ferreira describes them,8 the salary ratio between women and men has widened slightly in recent years. For example, in a recent study by Eurostat that focused on the gender gap in earnings in the industrial and service sectors, Portugal’s gender gap was the largest of all the EU member states, with women earning only 67 percent of male earnings. The EU average was 75 percent (Clarke and Eurostat, 2001). Moreover, Portugal was one of the only states that saw the gender gap in earnings actually widen from 1990 to 1998.

Thus, given Portugal’s incomplete modernization, we should not be surprised to find contradictions, unevenness, and paradoxes in women’s access to economic resources that facilitate political participation, in the life experiences which influence women’s voting behavior, and in the varying rates of female representation at different levels of the Portuguese political system. Our review of the literature does suggest, however, some likely hypotheses.

Generally speaking, the gender gap in conventional forms of political participation has been shown to be in decline in most developed democracies.9 For example, Beckwith (1980) and Topf (1995a; 1995b) find that women now equal or surpass men in voter turnout in most industrialized Western nations. In terms of citizen activity, Andersen (1975), Christy (1987), Clark and Clark (1986), Schlozman et al. (1995) and Conway (2000) have found weak differences between the two sexes. Thus, we hypothesize that there will be no significant male-female differences in conventional forms of political participation in Portugal.

However, merely comparing all men to all women can obscure some important variations and effects in electoral behavior for different subgroups of citizens. Scholars of British politics, for example, have discussed the emerging importance of an interactive effect between gender and age in terms of voting behavior. This gender-generation gap has grown since at least the mid-1960s, such that older women now tend to vote in significantly larger numbers for the Conservative Party than older men, whereas younger women tend to be more pro-Labour than younger men (Lovenduski 1997; Norris 1997).10 We hypothesize that a similar gender-generation gap may also exist in Portugal, given the radically different socialization experiences of the younger generations and their greater probability of access to economic resources, which are known to facilitate political participation. Thus, we expect that younger women exhibit significantly different patterns of political behavior compared to older women. More specifically, we predict that younger women possess higher rates of political participation (in its various modes) and greater support for parties of the left than older women. This is because we expect younger women to find a closer fit between their values and priorities and the party platforms and ideologies of Portugal’s leftist parties. A number of studies in the United States and United Kingdom have shown support for feminism to be a critical independent predictor of political behavior (Conover 1988; Cook and Clyde 1991; Hayes 1997). Unfortunately, the opinion survey we are using for this paper had very little data available to test this hypothesis in the Portuguese case.11 Below we turn to an empirical analysis of the individual-level data as evidenced by responses to the 2002 Portuguese Electoral Behavior Survey.
The Gender Gap in Political Participation in Portugal: Individual-level Analysis

Besides electoral turnout (which is about average in comparative terms), the level of political participation is quite low among the Portuguese. On the one hand, as happens in many Western democracies, voting turnout is decreasing. But, on the other hand, the Portuguese population does not seem to fit the syndrome presented by Inglehart, which states that in post-industrial societies, the masses tend to develop more autonomous forms of political participation (Freire 2003). The results of the 2002 Portuguese post-election survey tend to confirm this assessment. Actually, except for voting, all the other forms of participation (included in the survey) are far from being exercised by the majority of the Portuguese.

But let us go straight to our point: are there any significant differences between men and women in what concerns political participation? As we can see from Table 8.1, based upon simple comparisons of means or comparisons of frequencies we see that there are. In order to explore these differences more easily, we have aggregated the different forms of political participation into three separate categories of dependent variables: electoral participation and party choice (in the three elections included in the survey: 1999 legislative elections; 2001 local elections; and 2002 legislative elections), conventional participation,

**Table 8.1:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political participation: dependent variables</th>
<th>Women (%)</th>
<th>Men (%)</th>
<th>Chi Sq *Sig.</th>
<th>Valid N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voted in 1999 legislative elections</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>78.8</td>
<td>Ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted in 2002 legislative elections</td>
<td>73.1</td>
<td>77.2</td>
<td>Ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted in 2001 local elections</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>Ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral participation</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>Ns</td>
<td>1240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(alpha = 0.86; SCALE: 0-3; mean)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacted a member of parliament in any way</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>5.5*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacted a politician or government official</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>Ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tried to persuade people on vote</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>Ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showed support for party, by attending a meeting, etc.</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional participation, except voting</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>Ns</td>
<td>1260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(alpha = 0.56; SCALE: 0-4; mean)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has signed a petition</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>Ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has written a letter to a newspaper</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>9.2*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has participated in actions or opinion movements in defense of human rights</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>14.8**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has taken part in a protest, march, or demonstration</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.3*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has put up posters and distributed leaflets</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>7.8*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has blocked a road or railroad</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>Ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has taken part in unofficial strike action</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>9.4*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has occupied buildings or factories</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>Ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconventional participation</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>12.6**</td>
<td>1134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(alpha = 0.67; SCALE: 0-8; mean)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

* 0 ≤ p ≤ 0.05, ** 0 ≤ p ≤ 0.01, *** p ≤ 0.001, Ns = not significant
Significance indicators in bold are Chi-Square statistics for the cross-tabular analysis.
Statistical significance numbers for the scale indices reflect one-way ANOVA tests for means differences.

Our decision to focus on these different modes of political participation follows the well-known distinction between conventional and "unconventional" forms of political participation found in the political science literature (Tilly 1978; Kaase and Marsh 1979; Opp et al. 1981; Taylor and Judice 1983; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba et al. 1993; Brady et al. 1995). Traditionally, scholars of political participation focused on conventional (legal) forms of participation, especially voting, contacting public officials, and engaging in campaign and community activities that were aimed at influencing public officials (Verba and Nie 1972; Milbraith and Goel 1977). However, since at least Kaase and Marsh's (1979: 27-56) seminal study, political scientists have significantly expanded their definitions of participation to include both conventional and unconventional repertoires of political action. The latter, at least in most post-industrial democracies, includes the use of "protest tactics" like petitions, demonstrations, boycotts, rent or tax strikes, unofficial industrial strikes, the occupation of buildings, blocking of traffic, damage to property, and at times, personal violence (Kaase and Marsh, 1979: 59-60).

Electoral Participation and Party Vote

As has been suggested by other studies of voter turnout in western industrialized nations (Burns et al. 2001; Conway 2001; Franklin 2001), Portuguese women are no less likely to go to the polls than men—see Table 8.1. Therefore, we may conclude that there is no male-female gender gap at all in what concerns turnout.

But what about party vote? Do women's vote preferences differ systematically from men's in Portugal, as has often been the case elsewhere? We tested for gender differences in the 1999 and 2002 legislative elections and found no statistically significant differences (Pearson Chi Sq: 7.5, Asymp. Sig: 0.272; and 5.2/0.389 respectively). Due to the more complicated nature of party coalitions at the local level, we kept the analysis on party vote just to the 1999 and 2002 legislative contests. But other studies of the United Kingdom electorate have shown that age can often have an interactive effect in predicting party choice for the two genders. Thus, Figures 8.1 and 8.2 display box plots for the 1999 and 2002 legislative elections in Portugal.

Except for the Left Bloc's (BE—Bloco de Esquerda) electorate, which clearly stands out as a young-person's party, no significant differences or interaction effects can be detected for these two electoral contests. The boxes in the plots show the median age of each party's voter, as well as the age distribution of the seventy-fifth and twenty-fifth percentiles. The whiskers represent the ages of each party's outliers in our sample. Besides confirming popular perceptions about
the BE, we can also see that the Portuguese Communist Party/United Democratic Coalition (PCP/CDU—Partido Comunista Português/Coligação Democrática Unitária) tended to draw a fairly narrow band of male voters from the older age cohorts. Whereas the CDU’s median voter in both contests was about the same age as the CDS-PP, the CDU did a poorer job of appealing to a broad range of male cohorts, particularly in the 2002 contest. Most of its voter base among men lies in a narrow band of those aged forty-five to sixty. Among women this was not the case. In any case, it is also worth noting how the two main “catch-all” parties’ electorates were virtually identical in terms of gender and age in both contests. Our hypothesis that age would provide an interactive effect for gender and party choice was not supported by the results here.

**Conventional Participation, Beyond Voting**

Several empirical studies of participation have shown that gender differences in conventional political participation are diminishing worldwide (see Christy 1987). As Table 8.1 shows, the same was true in Portugal in 2002 for the overwhelming majority of forms of political participation that we have considered to be “conventional” (beyond voting). The only form of conventional participation showing a significant gender gap is “contacting a member of parliament in any way.” While 8 percent of the Portuguese men in our sample have contacted a member of Parliament during the past twelve months, only 4.8 percent of the women did the same. Although significant (p<0.05), the intensity of the relation between the variables is extremely weak (Cramér’s V = 0.066). All the other forms of conventional participation, namely “contacting a politician or government official,” “trying to persuade people to vote” and “showing support for a party,” are no more likely to be done by men than by women in Portugal.

We may therefore conclude that there is a slight gender gap in what concerns conventional participation, but it is only found on one of our items and is very weak as well.

**Unconventional Participation**

Whereas some scholars have found strong gender differences as one moves up from relatively easy activities like voting, to more difficult ones, such as running for a political office or engaging in protest activities (Verba et al. 1978; Mohai 1991; Morales 1999), others have found the opposite. Frieze et al. (1978: 344) have demonstrated that women are more opposed to protests and demonstrations than men, while Barnes et al. (1979: 184), Jennings and Farah (1980) and Paulsen (1994) suggest that sex-related differences in unconventional types of participation are generally smaller than those in conventional types (see Christy 1987; Burns 2002).

Previous analyses of this question for the Portuguese population (Baum 2002) are also supported by our analysis of the 2002 post-electoral survey data, the gender gap is more significant for unconventional forms of political participation than for conventional forms. Of the eight forms of unconventional participation analyzed, only three of them show no significant gender gap and those are: signing a petition, blocking a road or railroad, or occupying buildings or factories. In any case, the latter two repertoires are so infrequently admitted to by our respondents that it is meaningless to look for gender gaps on them. Simple bivari-
ate analysis (see Table 8.1) suggests that women are significantly less likely to participate than men in protests, marches, or demonstrations (Cramer’s V = 0.070), unofficial strikes (Cramer’s V = 0.087), actions or opinion movements in defense of human rights (Cramer’s V = 0.109), to put up posters or distribute leaflets (Cramer’s V = 0.093), and to write a letter to a newspaper (Cramer’s V = 0.086).

This result may be related, though surely not exclusively, to the fact that women’s family responsibilities affect their political ambition and the kinds of political activism they pursue (Conway 1997: 21). Our analysis of the gender and generational gap in unconventional participation supports this hypothesis somewhat, as we can see from Figure 8.3.

The results suggest that women’s unconventional participation rates are highest for the youngest female cohort (where they actually surpass the male cohort just slightly), and then steadily decline from there among the older female cohorts. If women’s family responsibilities grow with age—which seems a reasonable supposition given Portuguese women’s average age at the birth of their first child is now 27.4 years (INE) and society’s gendered expectations about who should care for elderly family members, then Conway’s hypothesis may very well explain the results we found in Portugal.

It is also noteworthy that the pattern we detected for men is very different, with a spike in unconventional participation among the cohort aged forty-five to fifty-four. This is one of the first indications that we have found in the literature on Portuguese political behavior that the “revolutionary generation,” in this case those men aged eighteen to twenty-seven in 1975, may have retained some “lessons” from those highly participatory years of direct political action. Due to space limitations we must leave this question for future research, but if we do find a similar “bump” in rates of unconventional participation for this same cohort in other studies over time, then we may have found the explanation for the gap in male-female rates of unconventional participation. However, we also wish to caution against an overly dramatic reading of these findings. After all, our scale of participation ran from zero to four, and our age cohorts only varied in their mean rates between, roughly, 0.2 and 0.4. Participation rates are so low on this index that we hesitate to make much out of the microscopic gender and age differences we managed to detect.

In what concerns political participation writ large, we may therefore conclude that in Portugal, 1) the gender gap is completely nonexistent in electoral participation and party vote; 2) it is uncommon and weak in conventional participation beyond voting; and 3) it is quite common, though weak, in unconventional forms of political participation. Furthermore, overall rates of extra-electoral participation for both genders are extremely low. Before we go on trying to understand what explains the differences we found between women and men in unconventional political participation, let us just try to understand if the results we arrived at are very different from those of other western countries.

### Women’s Political Participation Writ Large: International Comparisons

The Comparative Study for Electoral Systems, Module 1 data-set, does not contain many questions allowing a deep and interesting analysis of the gender gap in political participation in different countries. Consequently, this is just an introductory and rather superficial analysis. However, it has the positive particularity of including Portugal, which is usually not the case in most international analyses.

There are only two variables in this data-set that permit direct measurement of political participation: contact with politician in the past year and electoral participation.

#### Table 8.2: Analyzed countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Date of questionnaire</th>
<th>Study timing**</th>
<th>Election year</th>
<th>Election type***</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Post-ES</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>P/L</td>
<td>1269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Post-ES</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>P/L</td>
<td>2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Post-ES</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>P/L</td>
<td>1631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Pre-E and Post ES</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>P/L</td>
<td>2101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Post-ES</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>P/L</td>
<td>2055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Post-ES</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>P/L</td>
<td>1303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Post-ES</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>P/L</td>
<td>1208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Post-ES</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>P/L</td>
<td>1157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Post-ES</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>P/L</td>
<td>2048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Post-ES</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>P/L</td>
<td>2897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Pre-E and Post-ES</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>P/L and P</td>
<td>1534</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
(a) Post-ES = Post-election study; Pre-E and Post-ES = Pre-election and post-election study
(b) P/L = Parliamentary/legislative; P/L and P = Parliamentary/legislative and presidential
participation. We have decided to analyze all the countries from Western Europe included in the data-set, plus the United States. Table 8.2 contains a summary of some important information about the countries that will be analyzed. Let us briefly see how the gender gap varies among these kinds of participation, in the considered countries.

In what concerns electoral participation (Table 8.2), we confirm what has been often said in the literature: that women now vote in proportions equal to men (for example Burns et al. 2001; Conway 2001). The only country where women vote significantly less than men is Switzerland (Chi Sq=36.7; p < 0.001). On the opposite side is Norway—the only country where women are significantly more likely to go to the polls than men (Chi Sq=5.2; p<0.05). In spite of these two exceptions, we can conclude that in Western Europe and the United States gender no longer accounts for voter turnout.

Finally, in what concerns contacting a politician, the gender gap is significant in most of the countries analyzed. Again we prove what has often been said (for example Burns et al. 2001) that with respect to other forms of political activity (apart from voting), men are more likely to take part and therefore Portugal doesn’t seem to distinguish itself from most of the other West European countries. This gender gap is particularly strong in Iceland (Chi Sq=54.4; p < 0.001) and in Switzerland (Chi Sq=32.9; p < 0.001). The latter is the country, among those we are analyzing, which has the strongest gender gap: it is significant in the two questions considered, and in trade union membership rates as well. On the opposite side is Sweden, the only country where no significant gender gap was detected in any of the variables analyzed. This is also unsurprising given that country’s high level of gender empowerment and the percentage of women in parliament.

### Explaining the Gender Gap

Let us come back to some of the possible sources for the gender gap in unconventional participation in Portugal. Fulfilling the aim of this paper we used two kinds of variables as controls: structural variables (related to resources) and cultural variables (more precisely those related to political attitudes). Why do we believe that these explanations will work perfectly as controls for the gender gap in political participation? The simplest answer is that there is a clear gender gap both in resources and in political attitudes in Portugal!

Above we provided an overview of some of the aggregate measures of women’s relative access to economic resources in Portuguese society. Our conclusion was a messy one, in that no clear picture of inequality exists for all of the relevant aggregate measures for which we have data. Of particular noteworthy attention was the paradoxical position of women in terms of educational attainment. On average, women have lower levels of education than men, but much as in the United States and other post-industrial economies, young Portuguese women now make up a majority of those with post-secondary education. Our suggestion was that this ought to lead to very distinct patterns of women’s political participation, depending upon age.

### Individual-level Resource Data

As can be easily understood from Table 8.3, though only three variables are presented, our individual-level data demonstrates that there is still a considerable gender gap in resources in Portugal. Men are not only significantly more literate than women, but they earn more and are less likely to be unemployed as well.

In order to test our hypothesis about an interactive effect between age, gender and unconventional participation we produced Figure 8.3, where it is clear that the difference between men and women in unconventional forms of political participation is highest among the middle-aged cohorts (though it begins to diminish again among those aged fifty-five and over). From this brief incursion into the gender gap in socioeconomic characteristics, it seems clear that simple differences in resources may explain at least a part of the gender gap in unconventional political participation. It remains to be seen whether future research can also detect a significant “revolutionary cohort effect” among those men aged forty-five to fifty-four in our sample. Such a finding would suggest that generational zeitgeist effects may have remarkable staying power over time, and thus limit/overcome resource-based theories of political mobilization (Klandermans 1984; Marks and McAdam 1996; see also Baum 1997b).

### Table 8.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Sig. (Anova)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>15.2*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status</td>
<td>54.6%</td>
<td>73.9%</td>
<td>51.3*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
(a) 1-11 scale, mean
(b) 1-5 scale, mean
(c) Works at least 15 hours per week or student

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001, Ns = not significant

Significance indicators in bold are Chi-Square statistics for the cross-tabular analysis. Statistical significance numbers for the scale indices reflect one-way ANOVA tests for means differences.
higher levels of political interest and attention to what happens in government and politics (Conway 1997: 86; Burns et al. 2001: 335). Similarly, in our data we find that among men, the percentage of those who are quite or very interested in politics is significantly higher than the female one (53.5 percent and 39.9 percent, respectively). Not surprisingly, men are also more significantly exposed to politics in the media: TV, radio and newspaper, mainly the latter (Anova=84.1; p<0.001). All of these variables were then combined to create the index of political involvement, which shows a clear gender gap (Anova=57.0; p<0.001). Portuguese men are significantly more likely to be politically involved than women.

The second area of Table 8.4 also shows a significant gap exists on the concept of internal political efficacy. This concept, well studied in the literature (Blauner 1964; Prewitt 1968; Finifter 1970; Citrin et al. 1975; Elden 1981), suggests that an individual’s personal sense of competence as a political actor has a substantial impact on that person’s likelihood to engage in political action. In our sample, a majority of citizens appear to have low levels of personal political efficacy, but it was lower among women. In fact, 78 percent of the female citizens think that “politics are so complicated that they can’t understand what is going on,” against 69 percent from the other sex (Chi Sq=11.5; p<0.001). Similarly, while only 37 percent of the female Portuguese population believe that they “understand and judge political questions very well,” half of the male respondents think the same (Chi Sq=30.5; p<0.001). Furthermore, as has been shown before (Cabral 1997; Baum 2002), the sense of political efficacy is particularly weak among Portuguese women: only 21 percent of them believe that “they can take an active role in group discussions of political issues.” Though the male percentage for this item is not incredibly impressive either (26 percent), it is significantly higher than the female one (Chi Sq=4.6; p<0.05). We combined these variables to create the index of “internal political efficacy,” in which the gender gap is very clear (Anova=39.7; p<0.001).

Curiously, however, in terms of political attitudes (Table 8.4), more precisely in terms of trust in institutions, there is almost no gender gap. The low levels of personal political efficacy and involvement that our study detected have not proved an impediment to the creation of “diffuse support” for a few key institutions in Portuguese society, but confidence is frankly low for the parliament, courts, the government, and political parties in particular. In any case, this was true for both sexes equally.

The fact that we found clear differences between men and women in two of the three attitudinal indices lead us to suppose that different levels of political involvement and efficacy may also explain the gender gap in unconventional participation.
Table 8.5: Modeling unconventional participation (a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Socio-economic resources</th>
<th>Adding political attitudes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender (0=male; 1=female)</td>
<td>-0.074</td>
<td>Ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.324***</td>
<td>0.264**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.145***</td>
<td>0.144**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household income</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>Ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political involvement</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.178***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal political efficacy</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted r²</td>
<td>0.111</td>
<td>0.152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(standard error)</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>0.952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N</td>
<td>576</td>
<td>576</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
(a) Scale 0-8 max.
Standardized beta weights are presented. Enter Method used in linear regressions. “OK,” “NA,” and “Refused to answer” are excluded from the analysis
* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001, Ns = not significant

Testing Explanations for the Gender Gap in Unconventional Participation

In this section we utilize regression analysis in order to test which of the two theories on the origins of the gender gap (resources or attitudes) better explain the Portuguese gap in unconventional political participation. Theoretically and methodologically we have chosen to follow Laura Morales’s research on the gender gap in Spain. As Morales explained in her piece,

The objective of the regression analyses is not so much to obtain a strong predictive model of the different dependent variables (levels of political participation in several forms), as to control for the significance of gender in predicting participation. In this sense, when the introduction of other variables converts gender into a nonsignificant variable, we can assume that those variables account for the gender gap (Morales 1999: 236).

To do this we ran two regressions. In the first one, (Table 8.5, first column) we introduced socio-economic factors alone. The result is that gender remains as a "nearly significant" predictor (p=0.065). This means that the while introduction of the socioeconomic variables (namely education, age, and income) are more powerful explanatory factors than gender alone, gender nevertheless retains some power in the model. Overall, this model offers a rather poor fit, explaining only about 11 percent of the variance in unconventional political behavior, but as we explained earlier, our goal was not so much the achievement of a high R² value as an assessment about what happened to gender when other factors are entered into the model.

In this regard, the second regression (the second column of Table 8.5) helps us. When we added political attitudes and involvement to the equation, gender disappeared entirely as a predictor (p=0.466). This suggests that the main reason why women tend to participate less than men is simply because they are less politically involved. Education level remains the strongest predictor of unconventional participation, followed by "political involvement" and age.

If the first model had converted gender into a completely nonsignificant predictor, we would have good reasons to think that as time passes, and women continue to achieve higher levels of education, better jobs, etc., the gender gap in political participation would disappear. The fact that it retained some marginal significance suggests that a solution based upon correcting gender-based inequalities in resources will only go so far in correcting male-female differences in unconventional sorts of participation.

In order to test this supposition further, we ran another regression using the same independent variables, only this time we split the file into male (valid N=256) and female groups (valid N=318). The results were telling. For men, the resource variables were all significant predictors in model one, and when the attitudinal variables were added, only household income and internal political efficacy remained below statistical significance. For men the key predictors were (in order of importance): education (0.284, sig.=0.000), political involvement (0.213, sig.=0.001) and age (0.186, sig.=0.006). However, among women, only education proved statistically significant in Model 1. And when we added the attitudinal variables, the key predictors were: education (0.262, sig.=0.000), political involvement (0.142, sig.=0.022), and internal political efficacy retains some marginal predictive power (0.103, sig.=0.09). Confounding our initial hypothesis, age was not found to be a significant predictor when controlling for the level of education.

From the above results we understand that the major explanation for the lower levels of participation among women is not just their lack of educational resources, but also their lack of interest in politics and sense of personal capacity as political actors. The lower levels of political involvement and efficacy felt by women is a phenomenon that has been detected before, both in analyses of Portuguese political behavior (Cabral 1997), and internationally as well (Burns et al. 2001). This suggests that the way men and women are socialized to politics in Portugal is significantly different and merits closer investigation in future research.

Conclusions

Just as our analysis of the aggregate status of gender equity in Portugal’s political system and economy pointed to uneven and at times contradictory statistical indicators, so too our results at the individual level. For example, our analysis of the 2002 post-electoral survey confirmed that in terms of electoral turnout, party
choice, and other forms of conventional political participation, gender differences are minimal. This would be a congratulatory statement for Portuguese democracy were it not for the fact that conventional forms of participation (beyond simply going to the voting booth) are so rarely practiced by most citizens. Still, in terms of the national-level representation of women and their exercise of the most basic forms of democratic political participation, Portuguese democracy appears relatively "normal," albeit still far from parity.

However, in what concerns the more demanding forms of political participation, such as various types of protest repertoires, our findings tend to support the conclusions of Verba et al. (1978), Mohai (1991), and Morales (1999). They all found strong gender differences as one moves up from relatively easy activities like voting, to more difficult ones, such as running for a political office or engaging in protest activities. Of course, we do not want to overstate our case here. Overall, extra-electoral modes of political participation in Portugal are still alarmingly low, as Cabral (2000), Freire (2003), and others (Bacalhau 1994) have illustrated elsewhere. But in what concerns us here, the rather strong gender gap we detected in unconventional forms of participation cried out for an explanation.

Our key finding was that both resource-based and attitudinal variables explain this gap. As expected, among both men and women, individual differences in levels of education clearly play the largest part in explaining the frequency of unconventional participation, with the more educated employing their political agency with greater frequency than the less educated. However, among the attitudinal variables, one’s level of political involvement proved to be of nearly equal importance in our regression model. And it was the gender gap on this political interest/involvement scale that proved to be especially dramatic. Due to spatial constraints, we will leave our investigations of the sources of women’s lower levels of political involvement and interest to another paper. But one intriguing research question for future study is whether women’s lower levels of political interest is linked to the relative absence of women in Portuguese politics; another is whether there is a link between the density of women within Portuguese parties and parliament and the substantive representation of women’s issues. Studies of United States’ politics have already suggested there is. As Burns et al. (2001: 383) say:

A powerful factor in explaining the disparity between men and women in participation is the gender difference in psychological orientations to politics—political interest, information, and efficacy. And a powerful factor in explaining the gender difference in these orientations is the gender composition of the political environment. We have demonstrated that women are more likely to know and care about politics when they live in a political environment in which women seek and hold visible public offices.

Our research, preliminary as it may be, suggests two potentially fruitful paths for future inquiries. On the one hand, we need to know more about the institutional
1. Concretely, this means that all EU policy directives, plans, proposals, and programs are supposed to be examined for their potential impact on the equality between men and women prior to their adoption (Pollack and Hafner-Burton 2000). Scholars have generally found this directive, like so many others, has met with mixed success at the national level.

2. On the problems of making a direct link between the characteristics of representatives and their policy actions, see Pitkin (1967: 66-72).

3. “Women’s concerns” are understood to be those that “bear on women” for either “biological” or “social” reasons (Lovenduski 1997: 708). For a critical overview of the substantive impact that women have had on policy outcomes, see Ross (2002).

4. On the effects of electoral system choice on women’s representation, see Matland and Taylor (1997), and Vengroff et al. (2000).

5. Based on the authors’ calculations from UN data (UNDAW 1996). Malta and Cyprus were coded here as West European.

6. Of these five portfolios, the same woman, Manuela Ferreira Leite, held two. Nevertheless, she was the first woman appointed to head the Ministry of Finance and served as something of a “super-minister,” sharing duties as the head of the Ministry of State with the leader of the Popular Party, Paulo Portas. Note that in the latest governmental shift in 2005, Prime Minister Jose Socrates’ cabinet (Socialist Party-PS) only includes 2 women out of 17, or 11.8 percent. Many observers, both inside and outside the PS, saw this as a setback for Portuguese democracy.

7. City halls, municipal assemblies, and parish councils.

8. This refers to the few highly successful women in the media and in certain unexpected fields, such as the physical sciences, who give the impression that women are much further advanced in Portugal than is really the case.

9. We operationalize our various modes of participation in a later section.

10. Overall, ever since women were first given the right to vote in the United Kingdom, women have tended to favor the Conservatives, and men Labour; however, this distinction has now entirely disappeared. In 1997, both men and women had identical levels of support for the Labour Party, and this was repeated in the 2001 elections.

11. See Baum and Rendás-Baum (2004) for an initial exploration of this issue using data from the European Values Survey.

12. Herbert McClosky (1968: 252) defined political participation as “those voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers and, directly or indirectly, in the formation of public policy.” Samuel Huntington and Joan Nelson (1976: 4) defined it simply as, “activity by private citizens designed to influence governmental decision making.”

13. The Cramer’s V, which measures the intensity of the relation between two variables, varies from zero to one.

14. Below we test whether this finding remains true when other variables are entered as controls.

15. Actually we created another two indices: external political efficacy, and index of social trust. However we decided not to use them because their Cronbach’s alpha was very low.

16. Such a finding is not unusual within Southern Europe though, see Morlino and Montero (1995).

17. It is important to note that our valid N in this type of regression analysis drops to only 576 individuals. This is because missing cases for any of the variables in the models were excluded from the analysis. We also compared the distribution of the individuals included and excluded from the analysis, and concluded that for the resource/socio-demo variables, there were insignificant differences between the two groups. However, mean differences for political involvement and internal political efficacy were significantly lower amongst those excluded from the regression analysis compared to the 576 who remained. Unfortunately, there is really very little we can do to resolve this problem since we are not using longitudinal data.

18. The adjusted $R^2$ value for this model was higher for men (0.179) than for women (0.112).
Exploring the Gender Gap in Portugal


Diário de Noticias, July 7, 2002.


References


Trust, Mobilization, and Political Representation in Portugal

Manuel Villaverde Cabral

Theoretical and Analytical Framework

In previous studies, I have explored the social and demographic factors conditioning the exercise of political citizenship rights using a conventional set of indicators of participation and mobilization in Portugal (Cabral 2000). More recently, since it became clear that the generalized perception in Portuguese society of feelings of power-distance was not associated with any of the conventional sociodemographic variables, I proceeded to conduct comparative historical research aiming at exploring some of the social factors that may account for that generalized power-distance (Cabral 2003). Returning now to the theme of political mobilization in Portugal, using data from the first National Election Study in Portugal (NES), it is possible to introduce new variables of social and political trust, party representation, and the individuals' perceptions of how well or poorly they are politically represented into a parsimonious and falsifiable statistical model.

With these new variables incorporated into the model, the next step is to test empirically some aspects of the theories of civic culture (Almond and Verba 1963; 1980) and social capital (Putnam 1993; 2000). The interrelationship between these two theories has remained unresolved, particularly: (1) the relationship between the stock of personal and social trust, on the one hand, and the individual involvement in networks of collective action, that is, the stock of social capital on the other; and (2), the relationship of the civic culture prevalent in a given society and the performance of political and social institutions, particularly in respect to their capacity to both generate feelings of proximity to power and to be genuinely representative.