

A longitudinal analysis of gendered patterns in political action in France: a generational story?

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Abstract This article asserts that the impact of generational replacement on gendered political participation patterns is not sufficiently taken into account by existing analyses of participatory gender inequalities. In this longitudinal study, gender and generational differences in French protest patterns are systematically examined. The article tackles two interrelated questions: what is the impact of generational replacement on gender differences in political action in France, and from an individual-level perspective, how do we explain the different participation levels from different generations of women and men? A longitudinal quantitative analysis of survey data from the European Values Study from 1981 to 2008 confirms the significance of generational differences as well as the multi-dimensionality of participatory gender differences.

Keywords Inequality · Political participation · Gender gap · Generational change

Introduction

In contemporary France, as in most advanced Western democracies, a new cohort of female political participants has been socialised in societies with drastically increasing levels of education, increasing degrees of female labour market participation, more egalitarian gender roles, and where politics is not just a man's business anymore. Considering these dramatic societal changes, I wonder if the variable "gender" still represents a significant predictor of different levels of participation among younger cohorts. Indeed, as existing empirical evidence has shown, despite considerable gains in terms of gender equality in education, labour

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force participation, and citizenship rights, women are still slightly though consistently less likely to engage in certain forms of political participation than men in most advanced Western democracies (Burns et al. 2001; Norris 2002; Norris et al. 2004; Dalton 2008; Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010). Therefore, the so-called gender gap has turned out to be much more persistent in some forms of political participation than originally suggested by scholars (Mossuz-Lavau and Sineau 1983; Schlozman et al. 1994; Conway 2001). They claimed that these participatory gender inequalities would gradually disappear with women's increasing levels of education and participation in the workforce. Without doubt, these persisting participatory gender inequalities are more puzzling than ever and may thus need to be reconsidered. This article claims that studies on gendered participation patterns have not paid sufficient attention to the significance of generational replacement for the evolution of participatory gender inequalities. On the one hand, this comes from the fact that most research relies on a cross-sectional research design, focusing only on data at one point in time and thus representing only a snapshot of participatory gender inequalities. On the other hand, this also stems from the greater attention given to age effects—in contrast to cohort effects—in political behaviour research.

The scarcity of longitudinal analyses on participatory gender differences contributes to an ignorance of variation within the category of gender. In this article, gender refers to the socially constructed roles and learned behaviours of women and men associated with the biological characteristics of females and males (see Oakley 1972). Women's roles evolved over time, and important factors of politicisation influence more and more groups of women (see Le Hay and Mossuz-Lavau 2010). Different cohorts of women have been socialised in very contrasting environments regarding the existence of gender equality in the political, economic and social realms. In turn, this might influence the development of different political attitudes and behaviours. I argue that time, and more specifically generational replacement, should be taken more seriously and more deeply investigated to capture the evolution of gender inequalities in political participation levels. If women from more recent cohorts consistently acquire the deeper necessary predispositions for political action thanks to their educational attainments, labour market participation, and higher psychological political involvement, they might become as politically active as men.

Thus, this article aims to analyse and respond to a twofold research question: first, do we see narrowing gender differences in political action over time and across succeeding birth cohorts? Second, how can we explain participatory gender inequalities across different birth cohorts from an individual-level perspective? Building upon Inglehart and Norris (2003) revised modernisation theory, I theoretically tackle these questions by adding a generational component to existing explanations of participatory gender inequalities. Empirically, I use longitudinal data from the European Values Study (EVS) to focus on the evolution of participatory gender differences concerning *three* distinct types of political action over time, namely demonstrating, signing petitions, and boycotting.¹

¹ Past research has shown that these different political acts do not build a uniform dimension in every country (Teorell et al. 2007a). This justifies the choice of this article not to integrate all three items into an overall scale of non-institutional political participation.



The first section of the article provides a brief review of the literature on participatory gender inequalities after which theoretical expectations will be derived. The second section justifies the selection of the case of France for the analysis of gendered patterns in political action. Data, operationalisation and methodological aspects are then discussed. Descriptive statistics on the evolution of gender differences in political action in France as well as the results of the multivariate analyses will be presented and critically discussed afterwards. The last section offers concluding remarks and new avenues for further research.

Gender, time, and political participation

Research shows that gender inequalities in political participation vary depending on the type of political activity (e.g. Burns et al. 2001; Hooghe and Stolle 2004; Marien et al. 2010; Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010). Indeed, a more careful analysis of women's political engagement asserts its conditionality depending on how individuals distinguish between different forms of political participation. In fact, while women and men nowadays vote at similar rates in most established European and other advanced democracies (see, for example, Conway 2001; Gallego 2007; Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010), gender inequalities in other forms of political engagement persist. Several studies show that on the one hand, women generally participate less in the more formal and state-centred *institutional* acts of political participation, such as engaging in campaign and party-related activism (Conway 2001; Burns et al. 2001; Norris et al. 2004; Teorell et al. 2007b; Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010; Marien et al. 2010). On the other hand, research also reveals that with regard to some *non-institutional* forms of participation, i.e. more informal, private and less visible acts such as political consumerism or signing petitions, women are more likely to be active than men (Stolle and Hooghe 2011; Stolle et al. 2005; Stolle and Micheletti 2006; Gallego 2007; Teorell et al. 2007b; Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010; Marien et al. 2010; Stolle and Hooghe 2011). These studies have enlarged their definition of political participation and unveiled some *reversed gender gaps* in extra-institutional forms of political participation.² There seems to be a “women-friendly” way (Stolle et al. 2005) of participating, at least in some countries.

Most research on participatory gender inequalities encompasses single-year studies (Morales 1999; Burns et al. 2001, Hooghe and Stolle 2004; Norris et al. 2004; Baum and Santo 2007; Desposato and Norrander 2008; Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010; Coffé 2013). Consequently, many of these studies merely offer a snapshot of gender inequalities in political action for a specific year. Moreover, only a few focus on differences of the magnitude of participatory gender inequalities across generations. Hence, there is very little empirical evidence on this issue. In their pooled analysis of post-industrial nations, Inglehart and Norris (2003) find smaller

² In view of the reported variance in forms and sizes of participatory gender inequalities, this article refrains from using the term “gender gap”. More importantly, it questions its analytical usefulness. The term “gender gap” not only omits the fact that women tend to participate differently than men but it is also a “catch-all term” that stands for many other gendered patterns of political behaviours or attitudes as well as economic inequalities between women and men.



gender differences among post-war generations in the case of civic and political activism. The results from Coffé's descriptive analyses (2013) similarly point to smaller gender differences among the two youngest cohorts in Western and Eastern Europe in terms of electoral and several other modes of political participation. Her descriptive analyses even indicate that the so-called gender gap revolves among the youngest cohorts in Western Europe for different political activities (Ibid., 104). Yet again, none of these studies mobilises longitudinal data to compare over time and/or distinguish between generational, age and period effects. A notable exception is Stolle and Hooghe's study (2011). Nonetheless, they focus on age and therefore life-cycle effects. In this article, I claim that there may be some evolution over time in women's political behaviour that might have nothing to do with age effects. For this reason, comparisons over time are crucial to disentangling whether certain political behaviours are explained by certain events in national politics (period effects) and do not correspond to a durable phenomenon. On the contrary, one might think that the patterns of political activity of a certain birth cohort differ significantly from that of older birth cohorts all other things being equal. In the latter case, I speak of a cohort pattern since it concerns a whole birth cohort and differentiates them from others. Comparisons over time allow identifying social change and generational replacement as one of the greatest forces for change.

Concerning the explanation of participatory gender inequalities, existing accounts point in general to structural inequalities, such as women's and men's different levels of decisive socioeconomic resources (like education, income, occupation, time, and civic skills) as well as to their different cognitive orientations towards politics, like political interest, knowledge, and efficacy (Welch 1977; Schlozman et al. 1994; Verba et al. 1997; Burns et al. 2001; Hooghe and Stolle 2004; Norris et al. 2004). However, as was mentioned above, persisting participatory gender inequalities are more puzzling than ever at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Therefore, I argue that they may require different explanatory approaches. Overall, I claim that explanations of participatory gender inequalities have to be systematically reviewed and tested given possible inequalities in the apportionment of these key determinants of political action among different generations as well as in view of the possibility that they may differently affect women's and men's political action propensity.

Increasing gender equal political action through generational replacement

Generational theories argue that there are substantial differences between generations since many generations were socialised in contrasting economic, political and social environments. In turn, this might influence the development of different values, political attitudes and behaviours (Mannheim 1928; Inglehart 1977, 1990, 1997). In their revised version of modernisation theory, Inglehart and Norris (2003) assume that structural developments lead to, and interact with, cultural shifts that, under certain circumstances, impact political behaviour (Ibid., 102f.). They suggest that social trends such as the expansion of female education and labour market participation on the one side, and the general decline in religious convictions (secularisation) as well as the rise of emancipatory values of postmaterialism on the



other side, have contributed to greater gender equality. This cultural process is sustained by generational replacement. Women from younger generations should be much less likely to perceive politics as a man's domain since they are expected to be more educated, more active, less religious and to hold less traditional view of gender roles. Participatory gender differences might thus gradually decrease over time due to modernisation developments and generational replacement in post-industrial societies. Therefore, the main claim of this article is that generational change may have major consequences for the evolution of participatory gender inequalities in political action across Europe. If women from more recent birth cohorts acquire greater predispositions for political action because of their educational attainments, labour market participation, and higher psychological political involvement, they might be equally politically active as men.

Hypothesis 1 Women from younger cohorts are more likely to engage in all three forms of political action than their older counterparts. Therefore, existing gender inequalities in political action are partly explained by generational differences.

Gendered generational effects

Inglehart and Norris (2003) argue that modernisation processes impact all citizens and particularly women. Modernisation processes are coupled with increasing educational opportunities for women as well as growing female participation in the labour market. Both are important factors that may have discouraged women from getting politically involved prior to these changes. Therefore, generational belonging should affect women's propensity for protest activism more than men's.

Hypothesis 2 Generational belonging has a differential effect on the likelihood of women and men to participate in demonstrations, petitions, and boycotts. Belonging to older birth cohorts has a stronger negative effect for women than for men.

Generational differences and gendered effects on key determinants of political action

Structural and political determinants of political action may explain the hypothesised generational differences in protest activism. Overall, Western European women from younger cohorts have greater access to (secondary) education, to resources through their increased labour market participation and they live in less religious societies. In line with "cognitive engagement theory" (Dalton 2004), more educated women from younger birth cohorts should also understand and process information on complex political issues and decisions more easily than their older counterparts. Since the generational educational and labour market participation differentiation for women is much stronger than for men, one could argue that education and labour market participation should have a stronger effect on women's political action propensity than on men's.

Hypothesis 3 Women from younger cohorts are more likely to take part in different forms of political action than their older counterparts because of their



relative advantage with regard to structural factors (education; labour market participation; religiousness).

Hypothesis 3a Higher levels of education increase women's likelihood of engaging in demonstrations, petitions, and boycotts more strongly than men's.

Hypothesis 3b Labour market participation increases women's likelihood of engaging in demonstrations, petitions, and boycotts more strongly than men's.

In addition to generational and gender differences in these structural factors, political or cultural factors should also be accounted for. Cultural explanations argue that differences in resources are not the unique determinant of women's and men's political engagement: political attitudes, values, and ideological beliefs motivate people to mobilise into political action. Those political factors influence citizens, independently from their relative social and economic backgrounds. Moreover, people with lower politicisation predispositions may simply not want to take part in political life (Verba et al. 1995). Considering the evolution of female political rights, female political representation, as well as the increasing legitimacy for women to speak out in public, one might argue that younger generations of women do not perceive politics as a men's business anymore and might feel more legitimate than their older counterparts to talk about politics. Therefore, compositional differences in politicisation factors such as "engaging in political discussions" or "politically leaning to the left" might explain cohort differences in political action levels. Furthermore, there should be a differential effect of such politicisation factors, meaning that they should have a stronger impact on women's political action propensity than men's. In the same vein, a further explanatory factor is the emergence of new, different values. Inglehart and Norris (2003) expand Inglehart's theory on the rise of postmaterialist values in post-industrial societies (1977, 1990, 1997). This rise is more significant for the youngest birth cohorts and shapes our understandings of participatory gender inequalities. New generations of women would therefore be more likely to engage in non-institutional forms of political participation as well as that they would be more inclined to defend egalitarian gender roles. Unequal generational apportionment in postmaterialist values might thus explain generational differences in political action levels. Additionally, I presume that the emancipatory impact of postmaterialist values might be stronger for women's political action potential than for men's.

Hypothesis 4 Women from younger cohorts are more likely to engage in different forms of political action than their older counterparts because of their relative advantage with regard to political factors (levels of politicisation and levels of postmaterialist values).

Hypothesis 4a Politicisation factors, such as engaging in political discussions and placing oneself on a left–right scale, increase women's likelihood of engaging in demonstrations, petitions, and boycotts more strongly than men's.

Hypothesis 4b Postmaterialist values increase women's likelihood of participating in demonstrations, petitions, and boycotts more strongly than men's.



Research design

Two main reasons encourage the choice of France for the analysis of gendered patterns in protest participation. First, France is known for its historically well-developed “protest culture”. French citizens have, relative to other advanced Western democracies, an “above-average” propensity to engage in protest (see Mayer 2013). Second, there is a French specificity when it comes to the relationship between gender and politics (Achin and Lévêque 2006; Sineau 2008). Achin and Lévêque (2006, 24) mention three aspects supporting this distinctiveness in comparison with other countries. Firstly, there is France’s outstanding time lag of approximately a century between men’s enfranchisement in 1848 and women’s in 1944. Women’s enfranchisement came more than two decades after most Nordic, Anglo-Saxon or other continental European countries such as Germany (1919). Secondly, French feminisms’ relationships to politics are singular. This is illustrated by the relative weakness of the French suffragist movement as well as the fact that the majority of French feminists refused to participate in “conventional” politics up to the 1970s. Thirdly, Achin and Lévêque point to the strong and persisting under-representation of women in the French national parliament since 1945 (ibid.). At the beginning of 2017, France was still in the 63rd place in a worldwide comparison on women’s political representation in parliaments with about 26% female representation in the lower national chamber (IPU 2017). However, some changes have recently occurred when considering that in 1946, only 5.6% women were present in the French National Assembly. Forty-seven years later, in 1993, their political representation had risen to 6.1% (Mossuz-Lavau 2002). Hence, for a very long time, politics has been almost completely a man’s domain in France (cf. Sineau 2008).

Those two aspects legitimate the choice of France as an interesting case for analysing cohort differences in participatory gender inequalities over time. Indeed, one might expect that these contrasting socialisation environments and developments in the political realm might produce strong differences in political behaviour among different birth cohorts of French women.

The central aim of this article being to compare gendered patterns of political action in France across time, a *longitudinal data set* is in order. The strength of a longitudinal data set is that individuals are sampled at more than one point in their life span; therefore, the assessment of any generational impact is made less problematic than is the case in cross-sectional research designs. Ageing effects are unavoidably entangled with period and cohort effects in cross-sectional studies. A cohort is also always a group at a particular stage of the life course (see Pilcher 1994, 488). The European Values Study (EVS) contains repeated measures of political behaviours, attitudes and beliefs within European societies across several time points. Additionally, the longitudinal data file of the EVS (2011) covers 27 years, with four different waves for the French case (1981; 1990; 1999; and 2008). It is therefore a well-suited database for the purpose of this study since it allows us to better analyse and disentangles cohort, life-cycle and period effects.³

³ In comparison, the European Social Survey started only in 2002 and, thus, covers a too short time period for our analyses (2002–2014).



As indicated before, this article focuses on the evolution of participatory gender differences for three distinct forms of political action over time, namely demonstrating, signing petitions and boycotting. All three variables are polytomous, indicating whether the respondent (1) “has done”, (2) “might do” or (3) “would never do” any of those political acts. I left demonstrating and petitioning in their original polytomous coding. However, I had to create a binary measure of boycotting (combining the categories “have done” and “might do” into one category) because of the very small proportion of French respondents in the category “have done”. Accordingly, it must be made clear that in the case of boycotting, the measurement used corresponds to “boycotting potential” since the answer “might do” implies a certain individual readiness to be mobilised but does not stand for an actual political behaviour.

The main independent variable of this study is *gender*. When it comes to examining gender empirically, we are confronted with some limits of existing survey data. Traditional understandings of sex dominate measurement practices in survey research. Most surveys in social sciences, such as the EVS, measure only the “sex of the respondent”, and some even conflate the concepts of sex and gender altogether (see Westbrook and Saperstein 2015). Given the fact that the EVS raises only a question about the biological sex of respondents, I use sex as a proxy of gender (see “Appendix” in section). One could argue that I should rather speak of *sexed* than *gendered* patterns of participation. However, using the term *gendered* rather than *sexed* participation allows me to take on an anti-essentialist feminist point of view. Indeed, gender differences in political action may not be due to inherent “natural differences” between males and females but rather due to socially constructed differences between women and men. This implies constructed identities and assigned behaviours for women and men. In simple terms, gendered political participation patterns could be nothing else than the result of an unequal distribution of resources or motivational attitudes between women and men. Moreover, by using the term gender, I also suggest that what is seen as “masculine” or “feminine” legitimate behaviour differs over time and thus among birth cohorts.

Concerning the conceptualisation and operationalisation of *generations*, I decided not to create and regroup “political generations” (see Mannheim 1928; Zukin et al. 2006; Grasso 2016). There are three critical reasons for this choice: first, creating political generations in a Mannheimian sense would make it necessary to identify the major historical events that predominated the youth of certain generations. Yet, as Pilcher (1994, 488) rightly points out: “*There has not been a ‘Wall Street Crash’ in women’s lives; the changes in women’s lives have not occurred in a sharp, easily delineated manner, although there have been a number of key events (such as World War Two) which have punctuated the gradual change*”. Put differently, by focusing on the socialisation and politicisation of certain social groups, such as women or even ethnic minorities, one can quickly find several competing “major key events” for them and thereby several competing “cutting points”. It becomes thus impossible to empirically account for these “competing political generations”. Second, if we wanted to compare different political generations from different countries, the same problem with regard to “cutting points” appears. Third, the formation of political generations ignores gradual change, as Tiberj (2017) points out. Creating cutting



points with regard to major historical events might omit other minor, low intensity, but lasting developments in society. Therefore, I follow Tiberj's approach (2013, 2017) and ground my cohort cutting points on birth decades. Birth decades are purely arithmetical, random and hence neutral cutting points. In this way, I designed six different birth cohorts.⁴ The operationalisation and coding of the remaining independent variables are presented in Appendix at the end of this article.

Analytically, this article distinguishes between possible compositional and conditional effects of explanatory variables (see Fontana et al. 2006). *Compositional effects* mean that inequalities in participation levels among women and men as well as different generations may be explained in terms of the different apportionments of an explanatory variable among women and men or generations. A *conditional effect* refers to a differential effect of an explanatory variable for a certain subgroup.

Methodologically, gender and generational effects are tested in nested and separated multinomial (demonstrating, petitioning) and binomial logistic (boycott potential) regression models for each mode of participation and by gender. More precisely, I control *step by step* for the significant effect of generational belonging on three different forms of political activism for French women and men. If women's or men's belonging to a certain birth cohort has, *ceteris paribus*, a statistically significant effect on a certain form of political participation, one can argue that cohorts participate politically in a significantly different way. Otherwise, it may not be generational belonging that matters. Other aspects related to a certain period or to *compositional effects* would therefore make succeeding cohorts behave differently (see Tiberj 2013, 756ff). Hence, this study uses separated regression models to compare the hypothesised *conditional* and *compositional* effects of different explanatory variables on women's and men's propensity to contribute in political activism. This approach improves our understanding of the sources of participatory gender inequalities.

Gender, cohorts, and political participation: empirical results

As shown in Fig. 1, in 1981 in France, demonstrating used to be a male-dominated activity, with a significant 17-point gap with women: 36% of men in contrast to 18% of women reported having already participated in a demonstration. This finding corresponds to the results of the seminal "Political Action Study" from Barnes et al. (1979). Barnes et al.'s measure of "protest potential" was positively associated with being a man (Barnes et al. 1979, 106ff). They were the first to reveal gender differences in political activism because until then, they had solely been established for institutional forms of political participation (Duverger 1955; Verba et al. 1978).

Gender differences in demonstrating were greater than 10 percentage points in France until the end of the 1990s. In 2008, these proportions were about 47 and 43%, respectively, showing a much smaller and non-significant gender difference of

⁴ Two exceptions with regard to cutting points had to be made for the first (1930 and before) and last birth cohort (1971 and after). In their case, any smaller regrouping was problematic in terms of numbers of respondents. The number of respondents from birth cohorts 1910–1920 was already very small in 1990, and the same applies of course in an inverse sense for the cohort 1980–1990.



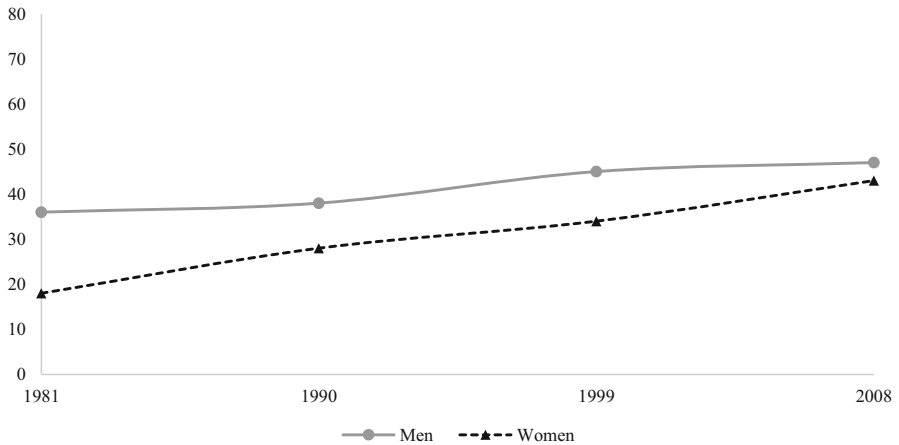


Fig. 1 Evolution of the proportions of French women and men who have participated in demonstrations. *Data:* EVS 1981–2008, not weighted

about four points. Participatory gender differences in the “would never do” category eroded from a 20-point difference in 1981 to a difference of five points in 2008, with still slightly but significantly more women indicating that they “would never do” demonstrations in France.⁵ However over time, there has been a continuous erosion of gender inequalities in actual participating levels as well as in levels of refusal to participate in demonstrations among women and men in France.

In contrast to demonstrating, the act of signing a petition is rather an individual mode of non-institutional political action. Prior research on participatory gender differences indicated that women prefer this kind of action since it can be done in a private realm and may be easily integrated in an everyday routine (Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010; Micheletti and Stolle 2006). Figure 2 illustrates that this has not always been the case. In the 1980s in France, men were also more involved than women in petitioning. In 1981, about 50% of men compared with 41% of women reported having already signed a petition: a significant nine-point difference. These gender differences equalised by the 1990s and even reversed by 2008, with French women being slightly more active than men in petitioning (65% of men vs. 70% of women). Hence, a reversion of participatory gender differences in petitioning is occurring in France.

Concerning the evolution of participatory gender inequalities in potential boycott engagement (see Fig. 3), the empirical evidence for France challenges the dominant characterisation of political consumption as a “women-friendly way” of politically participating derived from the political consumerism literature (see Stolle et al. 2005; Stolle and Micheletti 2006; Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010). It seems that pooled analyses (Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010) or studies that focus too much on Northern European countries (Stolle et al. 2005) may obscure the fact that political

⁵ Due to lack of space, results for the “would never do category” are not shown but available on request.



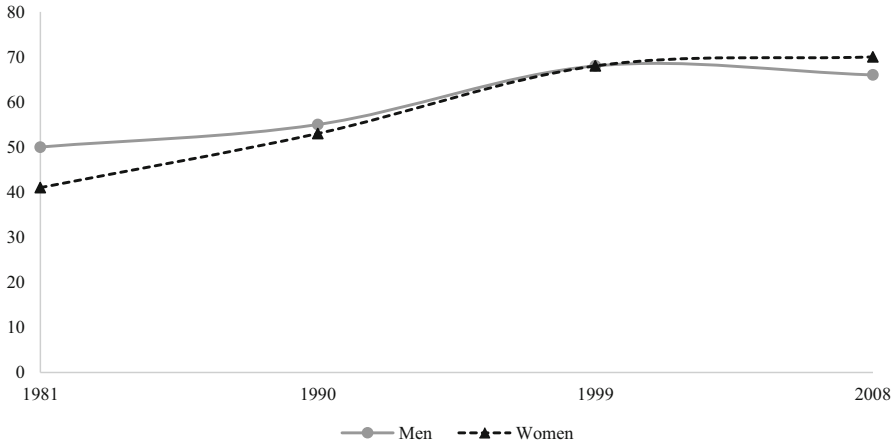


Fig. 2 Evolution of the proportions of French women and men who have participated in signing petitions. *Data:* EVS 1981–2008, not weighted

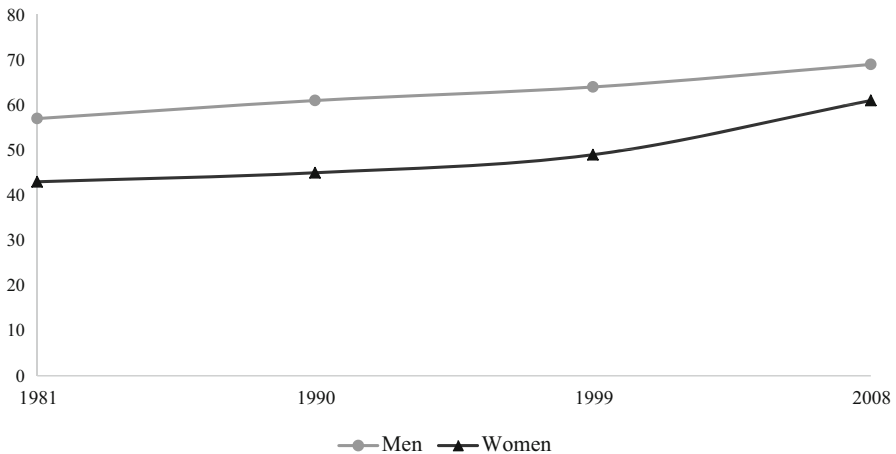


Fig. 3 Evolution of the proportions of French women and men who potentially participated in boycotts. *Data:* EVS 1981–2008, not weighted

consumerism is a much less widespread and not necessarily a more “women-friendly way” of political participation in France. As shown in Fig. 3, gender differences in boycotting are decreasing rather slowly and are still not closing down. In 2008, a significant eight-point gap remains, with 69% of men and 61% of women indicating that they would potentially contribute in boycotts. These results confirm Yates (2011). He found striking disparities between European countries with regard to participation levels in boycotting and buycotting. According to him, the trend of reversed gender differences in participation levels in political consumerism “*is confined to certain countries, and applies much less to boycotting. Habitual practices and traditional roles of women in family provisioning might render*



boycotting, to a greater extent than boycotting, more politically accessible for women than for men" (2011, 213). In line with Yates, one could argue that in contrast to boycotting, boycotting is a more individual mode of political action since it implies an individual labelling scheme rather than a social movement or other political collective organisations which pull people into action. Yet, one will hardly find a label on a product that says "don't by me". People get "boycott information" mostly through non-governmental organisations or social movements. Research on civic associations has shown that there also exist important participatory gender inequalities. Women are not only less involved than men in civic associations in some countries, but more significantly their civic engagement suffers from strong sexual segregation (Norris and Inglehart 2006; Rétif 2010). While men tend to engage more in political groups, women seem to engage more in religious or charity-like organisations (Ibid.). These gender differences could explain why gender differences in boycotting persist in France.

Overall, the results from these descriptive analyses have shown that participatory gender inequalities in political action in France are gradually diminishing (demonstrating, boycotting) over time, or even reversing (petitioning). In the next section, I will reflect on the driving forces behind this process.

Testing gender and generational effects for participation in demonstrations

Overall, the results from my first regression model on French women's actual participation in demonstrations (see Table 1, model 1) are in line with my first hypothesis. French women from the youngest cohort of the data are on average significantly more likely to participate in demonstrations than women from the 1961–1970 cohort. With the exception of the 1951–1960 cohort, all other older women cohorts are on average significantly less likely than the second youngest generation of the data set (1961–1970) to participate in demonstrations. In addition, belonging to older cohorts than the reference birth cohort has on average a stronger negative impact on French women than men. On average, belonging to the pre-war cohorts of French women reduces by a factor of 5 the chances of participating in demonstrations (versus a factor of 2.8 for men). This confirms my second hypothesis.

However, as soon as I control for structural factors (Table 1, model 2), most of these cohort differences among women turn insignificant. For most of these French cohorts, gender differences in education, occupational status and religiousness explain why they are more or less likely to participate in demonstrations. It is thus in fact the lower levels of education, financial assets, and occupational experiences—which are all closely associated with political participation—that explain older female cohort's lower levels of political engagement. These results point to compositional effects regarding structural factors and confirm hypothesis 3 for almost all cohorts with one exception: the "1930 and before" cohort of French women. Even when controlling for structural and political factors, generational belonging to this pre-war cohort of French women still reduces by a factor of 2.5 the chances of participating in demonstrations (*versus* 1.6 for men). The effect of



Table 1 Nested multinomial regression models on demonstrating

Demonstrating	Model 1 “have done”		Model 2 “have done”		Model 3 “have done”	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
<i>Birth cohorts: reference category 1961–1970</i>						
Cohort 1930 and before	0.20*** (0.04)	0.36*** (0.07)	0.45** (0.10)	0.69 (0.15)	0.40*** (0.10)	0.61* (0.14)
Cohort 1931–1940	0.41*** (0.08)	0.64* (0.13)	0.86 (0.19)	1.17 (0.26)	0.64 (0.15)	0.99 (0.23)
Cohort 1941–1950	0.60** (0.11)	1.17 (0.24)	0.93 (0.19)	1.71* (0.38)	0.76 (0.17)	1.44 (0.34)
Cohort 1951–1960	1.08 (0.19)	1.23 (0.24)	1.34 (0.26)	1.42 (0.29)	1.16 (0.24)	1.18 (0.25)
Cohort 1971 and after	1.73* (0.38)	2.54*** (0.63)	1.28 (0.30)	1.87* (0.49)	1.46 (0.36)	1.88* (0.51)
<i>Survey year: ref. cat. 1981</i>						
1990	1.36 (0.25)	1.13 (0.20)	1.05 (0.21)	1.07 (0.20)	1.01 (0.22)	1.08 (0.22)
1999	1.71** (0.28)	1.28 (0.21)	1.65** (0.29)	1.27 (0.22)	2.16*** (0.42)	1.60* (0.29)
2008	2.78*** (0.45)	1.18 (0.20)	2.15*** (0.39)	1.08 (0.20)	2.56*** (0.51)	1.44 (0.29)
<i>Education: ref. cat. completed at 15–17 years</i>						
14 years and under			0.80 (0.15)	0.68* (0.11)	0.89 (0.18)	0.75 (0.13)
18–20 years			2.51*** (0.39)	1.69** (0.29)	2.04*** (0.34)	1.46* (0.26)
21 years and above			5.59*** (1.08)	3.76*** (0.75)	3.53*** (0.75)	2.59*** (0.55)
<i>Occupation: ref. cat. not in the labour market</i>						
Self-employed			1.16 (0.32)	0.84 (0.23)	1.32 (0.40)	0.83 (0.25)
Higher management			2.85*** (0.56)	1.45 (0.38)	2.10*** (0.45)	1.11 (0.31)
Employees			1.76** (0.29)	1.34 (0.38)	1.69** (0.30)	1.10 (0.33)
Workers			0.97 (0.20)	1.08 (0.28)	1.17 (0.26)	0.94 (0.26)
Religious			0.59*** (0.07)	0.64*** (0.08)	0.81 (0.11)	0.77 (0.10)
<i>Political discussions: ref. cat. never</i>						
Occasionally					3.13*** (0.45)	2.78*** (0.41)



Table 1 continued

Demonstrating	Model 1 “have done”		Model 2 “have done”		Model 3 “have done”	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Frequently					8.97*** (2.18)	5.98*** (1.41)
<i>Left–right placement: ref. cat. neither</i>						
Left					2.82*** (0.44)	2.81*** (0.45)
Right					0.77 (0.12)	0.93 (0.15)
<i>Postmaterialist values: ref. cat. materialist</i>						
Mixed					2.09*** (0.31)	1.66*** (0.24)
Postmaterialist					4.35*** (0.97)	2.96*** (0.61)
N	2309	2204	2309	2204	2309	2204
Pseudo R^2	6.22	3.37	12.40	6.98	18.95	12.77

Interpretation The reference category for the dependent variable is “never”. Results for the “might do” category have been omitted but are available on request. The coefficients are relative risk ratios. Standard errors in parentheses. N has been restricted in order to make models comparative. Data are not weighted
 *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

belonging to this pre-war cohort is persistently stronger for French women than men, which again confirms partly my hypothesis 2: generational belonging clearly matters more for women’s than for men’s likeliness to participate in protests.

Moreover, I do not observe exactly the same generational patterns for French women and men in the case of demonstrating. The “pre-war cohort effect” is somewhat less persistent for men. More interestingly, there is a persistent positive effect of belonging to the youngest birth cohort in the case of French men. French men who were born in “1971 and after” are on average continuously more likely than men from the 1961–1970 birth cohort to participate in demonstrations, all else being equal.

In Table 1 model 2, I observe significant and positive effects of education for both women and men in France. In line with my hypothesis 3a however, the effect of higher education is much stronger for women than men. Having a very high level of education increases on average the odds of French women participating in demonstrations by about 5.6 times (*versus* by about 3.8 times for French men) at equal levels of occupational situation and religiousness. More importantly, in contrast to men, there is a significant positive “job effect” for women’s protest propensity. Working as an employee or in higher management rather than not being in the labour market increases women’s odds of going to a demonstration by about 1.8 and 2.9 times. This confirms hypothesis 3b. Thus, this result points to the positive and mobilising effect of women’s participation in the workforce providing women with the necessary assets for political involvement.



Nevertheless, an important qualification has to be made: the positive job effect seems to be confined to rather high-level jobs. Women who work as workers or who are self-employed do not have a significantly higher protest propensity than women who are not in paid work.

Model 3 of Table 1 shows that French women who frequently discuss political matters are on average more than nine times as likely to engage in demonstrations than women who never do so, all else being equal. Men who also frequently talk about politics are only six times as likely to demonstrate than men who never do so. There is clearly a stronger positive politicisation effect of political discussions for women. This confirms hypothesis 4a. Similarly, postmaterialist values also have a stronger positive effect on French women's propensity to demonstrate than men's (confirming hypothesis 4b). The quest for emancipation which is intrinsic to postmaterialist values clearly does more heavily influence women's readiness for voicing their political interests or beliefs in protests.

Finally, it should be noted that since the end of the 1990s, there is a positive and significant period effect for women's propensity to engage in demonstrations, while this is not the case for men. It seems thus that time has played a significant role for women's increasing demonstrating activity in France.

Testing gender and generational effects for participation in petitions

The results for actual engagement in petitions (Table 2) are somewhat similar to those for demonstrating in the case of women and generational effects. The results from Table 2 model 1 seem to be again in line with my first hypothesis: French women from the youngest cohort of the data set are more than twice as likely to file a petition (rather than never doing it) than women from the 1961–1970 cohort. And while the 1951–1960 and 1941–1950 cohorts are as likely as the second youngest generation of French women of this study to engage in petitioning, this is not the case for the two oldest cohorts. The latter are significantly less likely than the second youngest generation to file a petition.

As we can see in the second model of Table 2, the negative effect of belonging to the 1931–1940 cohort for women's protest propensity turns insignificant as soon as we control for structural factors. This confirms hypothesis 3 for this cohort in the case of petitioning. Once again, the oldest pre-war generation of French women is in comparison with their second youngest counterpart persistently less likely to actually file a petition rather than never doing so, all else being equal. More importantly, in contrast to the results for demonstrating, there is also a persistent positive effect for belonging to the youngest generation of French women of our data set: women who were born in 1971 or after are on average approximately twice as likely as women who were born between 1961–1970 to actually file a petition, all else being equal. So, we can only partly confirm my hypothesis 3 since I am unable to fully account for the participatory differences between the youngest, oldest and second youngest French female birth cohorts of the data set.



Table 2 Nested multinomial regression models on petitioning

Petitioning	Model 1 “have done”		Model 2 “have done”		Model 3 “have done”	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
<i>Birth cohorts: reference category 1961–1970</i>						
Cohort 1930 and before	0.30*** (0.07)	0.33*** (0.08)	0.58* (0.15)	0.68 (0.20)	0.56* (0.15)	0.65 (0.19)
Cohort 1931–1940	0.52** (0.12)	0.61 (0.16)	0.96 (0.24)	1.13 (0.32)	0.83 (0.22)	1.01 (0.30)
Cohort 1941–1950	0.98 (0.24)	1.12 (0.31)	1.40 (0.36)	1.67 (0.50)	1.27 (0.33)	1.45 (0.44)
Cohort 1951–1960	1.04 (0.23)	1.09 (0.28)	1.16 (0.27)	1.19 (0.32)	1.06 (0.25)	1.09 (0.30)
Cohort 1971 and after	2.43** (0.82)	1.24 (0.40)	1.95 (0.67)	0.90 (0.30)	2.21* (0.78)	0.85 (0.29)
<i>Survey year: ref. cat. 1981</i>						
1990	1.49* (0.29)	1.11 (0.23)	1.27 (0.26)	1.03 (0.22)	1.24 (0.26)	1.01 (0.23)
1999	2.29*** (0.42)	2.21*** (0.45)	2.29*** (0.44)	2.21*** (0.47)	2.67*** (0.53)	2.74*** (0.61)
2008	2.77*** (0.52)	1.64* (0.35)	2.27*** (0.45)	1.51 (0.34)	2.50*** (0.51)	1.93** (0.46)
<i>Education: ref. cat. completed at 15–17 years</i>						
14 years and under			0.76 (0.14)	0.54** (0.11)	0.82 (0.16)	0.61* (0.13)
18–20 years			1.85*** (0.34)	1.41 (0.31)	1.50* (0.29)	1.17 (0.26)
21 years and above			3.13*** (0.80)	3.06*** (0.84)	1.94* (0.52)	2.05* (0.58)
<i>Occupation: ref. cat. not in the labour market</i>						
Self-employed			1.03 (0.27)	0.71 (0.23)	1.06 (0.30)	0.64 (0.21)
Higher management			2.75*** (0.67)	1.93* (0.61)	2.13** (0.54)	1.56 (0.52)
Employees			2.11*** (0.39)	1.82 (0.62)	2.06*** (0.39)	1.56 (0.55)
Workers			1.12 (0.23)	1.45 (0.45)	1.27 (0.27)	1.35 (0.43)
Religious			0.72* (0.10)	0.74* (0.11)	0.85 (0.13)	0.84 (0.13)
<i>Political discussions: ref. cat. never</i>						
Occasionally					2.33*** (0.35)	3.82*** (0.64)



Table 2 continued

Petitioning	Model 1 “have done”		Model 2 “have done”		Model 3 “have done”	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Frequently					6.36*** (2.24)	4.37*** (1.25)
<i>Left–right placement: ref. cat. neither</i>						
Left					1.84*** (0.34)	1.80** (0.36)
Right					0.97 (0.16)	0.84 (0.16)
<i>Postmaterialist values: ref. cat. materialist</i>						
Mixed					1.37* (0.20)	1.81*** (0.30)
Postmaterialist					3.34*** (1.00)	2.71*** (0.72)
N	2329	2210	2329	2210	2329	2210
Pseudo R^2	4.60	2.83	8.80	6.11	12.37	10.91

Interpretation The reference category for the dependent variable is “never”. Results for the “might do” category have been omitted but are available on request. The coefficients are relative risk ratios. Standard errors in parentheses. N has been restricted in order to make models comparative. Data are not weighted
 *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Furthermore, hypothesis 2 is only partly confirmed. The first model of Table 2 shows that there are almost no significant negative generational effects for men’s propensity to sign a petition but for the oldest pre-war cohort of French men. Indeed, we observe a similar strong negative effect of belonging to this generation for French women and men: on average, belonging to the oldest pre-war cohort reduces for men on average the chances of signing a petition by a factor of about 3 (3.3 for women). In contrast to their female counterpart, their different petition propensities can be explained through generational differences in apportionment of structural factors.

In contrast to the results of demonstrating, hypothesis 3a can only be partly confirmed. While having a higher level of education only has a significant positive effect on women’s propensity to sign a petition, the positive effects of a very high level of education on petitioning are somewhat similar for French women and men. However, as in the case of demonstrating, we can again detect a significant and positive job effect for French women who work as an employee or in higher management compared to women who are not in the labour market, while there are again no noteworthy significant job effects for men’s likeliness to sign a petition.

The results from the third model of Table 2 confirm hypotheses 4a and 4b. As in the case of demonstrating, frequently discussing political affairs and acquiring emancipating postmaterialist values have a stronger effect on French women’s



likeliness to sign a petition in comparison with men. Moreover, time has again played a significant role for women's increasing involvement in petitioning in France, as confirms the strong positive period effect. While there is also a significant and positive period effect for men, it is not as strong in the case of women.

Testing gender and generational effects for potential participation in boycotts

Finally, the results for my measurement of French citizens' boycott potential (Table 3) are quite different with regard to generational effects.

First of all, results from the second and third model in Table 3 illustrate that once I control for the level of education, professional activity, political attitudes, religiosity and postmaterialist values, belonging to the youngest birth cohort has a significant negative effect on French women's boycott potential. This means that women who belong to the "1971 and after" cohort are on average about 1.5 times less likely to potentially engage in boycotts than the second youngest cohort of this study, all else being equal. Therefore, in the case of boycott engagement I clearly cannot confirm my first hypothesis. While I observed a rather linear pattern in the case of demonstrations and petitions, with an increased readiness for participation in successive female birth cohorts, there is no such linear pattern in the case of boycott activities. I would like to emphasise that this result may be explained by the different, more collective nature of boycotts in comparison with boycotts.

Concerning the comparison of generational effects, we can observe that the negative effect of belonging to the two oldest generations on boycott potential is not much stronger for women in comparison with men. Furthermore, once structural and political control variables are introduced, belonging to the oldest birth cohort appears to have a slightly stronger negative effect on French men than women. That said, there are stronger negative and significant effects of belonging to the 1941–1950 as well as the youngest birth cohort for women compared to men. This lower propensity of the youngest birth cohort of French women to be potentially involved in boycotts in comparison with their older counterparts, all else being equal, cannot be confirmed in the case of men and is particularly intriguing. I can therefore only partly confirm my second hypothesis.

Moreover, in contrast to the results for the acts of demonstrating and petitioning, existing generational differences in the case of boycotts are not explained by structural or political factors. They remain significant. Therefore, I cannot confirm my hypotheses 3 and 4 for boycott activities.

Once again, I detect a stronger positive effect of higher and very high levels of education on women's boycott potential, confirming hypothesis 3a. Similarly, I do not detect any significant job effect for men's boycott potential, whereas there is again a significant positive effect of high-level jobs for their female counterparts (confirming my hypothesis 3b). In addition, in line with hypotheses 4a and 4b, the results from the third model of Table 3 confirm that frequently engaging in political



Table 3 Nested logistic regression models on boycotting

Boycotting potential	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
<i>Birth cohorts: reference category 1961–1970</i>						
Cohort 1930 and before	0.21*** (0.04)	0.18*** (0.03)	0.42*** (0.08)	0.29*** (0.05)	0.39*** (0.08)	0.24*** (0.05)
Cohort 1931–1940	0.36*** (0.06)	0.37*** (0.06)	0.66* (0.12)	0.59** (0.11)	0.53*** (0.10)	0.49*** (0.09)
Cohort 1941–1950	0.50*** (0.07)	0.72* (0.12)	0.71* (0.12)	0.96 (0.17)	0.62** (0.11)	0.80 (0.15)
Cohort 1951–1960	0.80 (0.12)	1.09 (0.18)	0.89 (0.14)	1.23 (0.20)	0.79 (0.13)	1.10 (0.19)
Cohort 1971 and after	0.85 (0.14)	1.41 (0.26)	0.63** (0.11)	1.09 (0.21)	0.67* (0.12)	1.09 (0.22)
<i>Survey year: ref. cat. 1981</i>						
1990	0.90 (0.13)	1.16 (0.18)	0.73* (0.12)	1.10 (0.18)	0.66* (0.11)	1.13 (0.20)
1999	0.89 (0.12)	0.95 (0.13)	0.79 (0.11)	0.91 (0.13)	0.86 (0.12)	1.03 (0.16)
2008	1.48** (0.19)	1.04 (0.15)	1.19 (0.17)	0.95 (0.15)	1.27 (0.19)	1.12 (0.19)
<i>Education: ref. cat. completed at 15–17 years</i>						
14 years and under			0.64** (0.10)	0.71* (0.10)	0.68* (0.11)	0.78 (0.12)
18–20 years			1.73*** (0.21)	1.52** (0.21)	1.45** (0.19)	1.34* (0.19)
21 years and above			3.46*** (0.53)	2.74*** (0.44)	2.39*** (0.39)	1.99*** (0.34)
<i>Occupation: ref. cat. not in the labour market</i>						
Self-employed			0.75 (0.17)	0.77 (0.18)	0.75 (0.18)	0.74 (0.18)
Higher management			1.76*** (0.28)	1.38 (0.29)	1.39* (0.23)	1.15 (0.25)
Employees			1.20 (0.16)	1.33 (0.31)	1.15 (0.16)	1.20 (0.29)
Workers			0.79 (0.13)	0.99 (0.21)	0.88 (0.15)	0.92 (0.20)
Religious			0.64*** (0.62)	0.61*** (0.06)	0.80* (0.08)	0.66*** (0.07)
<i>Political discussions: ref. cat. never</i>						
Occasionally					1.93*** (0.21)	2.32*** (0.28)



Table 3 continued

Boycotting potential	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Frequently					3.75*** (0.69)	3.32*** (0.62)
<i>Left–right placement: ref. cat. neither</i>						
Left					1.89*** (0.23)	2.01*** (0.26)
Right					0.93 (0.11)	1.16 (0.15)
<i>Postmaterialist values: ref. cat. materialist</i>						
Mixed					1.67*** (0.19)	1.54*** (0.19)
Postmaterialist					3.75*** (0.66)	2.45*** (0.42)
N	2239	2128	2239	2128	2239	2128
Pseudo R^2	5.74	8.42	13.70	13.64	20.66	19.51

Interpretation The reference category for the dependent variable is “never”. The coefficients are odds ratios. Standard errors in parentheses. N has been restricted in order to make models comparative. Data are not weighted

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

discussions and possessing emancipating postmaterialist values have a stronger positive effect on French women’s boycott potential than on men’s.

Conclusion

This article tested participatory gender and generational differences in political action over time, using longitudinal EVS data on France. Some important contributions have been emphasised.

First of all, the longitudinal research design shows an erosion of gender differences in non-institutional political participation in France. Gender differences in petitioning have not only equalised but even slightly reversed over time. This result confirms the arguments developed by feminist scholars who argue that women do not so much participate less but differently than men (see Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010). Nevertheless, being a woman still has a small but persistent negative impact in the cases of demonstrating and boycotting in France.⁶ Participatory gender differences for these two types of political engagement

⁶ This has been tested by using the same regression models but not separating for women and men and introducing the variable gender instead (results not shown).



cannot solely be explained by generational differences. Gender still matters for engagement in protests and boycotts in France.

Secondly, the results highlight the strength of a more nuanced quantitative research design. The individual analysis of participatory gender differences in three different forms of political action shows its conditionality depending on how one distinguishes between different forms of political participation. Furthermore, by separately modelling and analysing three distinct forms of political action for women and men, we can observe that generational belonging as well as educational attainment, occupation, levels of politicisation and postmaterialist values do not have the same impact on French women's and men's activism propensity. This is an important empirical result that reinforces the significance of gender sensitive theoretical explanations. Moreover, it confirms the relevance of analytically distinguishing between compositional and conditional effects.

Thirdly, in line with other research, this longitudinal analysis mostly confirms that post-war birth cohorts—but not necessarily the youngest—are the motor behind the rise of different forms of non-institutional political participation in France (Tiberj 2017).

Fourthly, many generational differences can be explained by structural factors. Put differently, most of the observed differences in participation levels between women from older and younger cohorts were explained by the fact that these generations differ in levels of education, occupational status and religiousness. Yet, there are some notable exceptions: the youngest French female generation of the data set is, *ceteris paribus*, more likely to sign a petition but less likely to engage in boycotts than their older counterparts. In addition, structural and political factors could not explain the persistently negative effect of generational belonging to the oldest pre-war cohort both in the case of French women and men.

Where do we go from here? I argue that gender and generational differences should be analysed in further contexts, to find out whether their participation patterns are similar to those of France's. I believe that more comparative research for gendered political action is needed. While existing research widely recognises political participation as a context-dependent phenomenon (Dalton et al. 2010; Hooghe and Quintelier 2014; Vráblíková 2014), the analysis of contextual factors remains still rare in the study of participatory gender inequalities (Desposato and Norrander 2008; Karp and Banducci 2008). More longitudinal research is needed in order to learn how contextual arrangements interact with age, period and cohort effects.

Additionally, analyses with more recent longitudinal data are needed in order to find out more on the evolution of participatory gender inequalities in the European postcrisis environment. EVS data ends in 2008 and Inglehart's and Norris' theory (2003) did not take into account a potential materialist backlash triggered by an economic crisis.

Finally, we need more qualitative investigations to examine the reasons for women's greater engagement in petitioning as well as to find out more about the



different logics of boycotting and buycotting that make men apparently more likely to engage in the first and women more likely to engage in the latter.

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Appendix

Variable	Description	Range
Sex	Sex of respondent is used as a proxy for gender since the EVS does not ask respondents about their gender: (1) “female (0) “male”	0 (min.)–1 (max.)
Education	“age when education completed” (1) “14 years and less” (2) “15–17 years” (3) “18–20 years” (4) “21 years and more”	1 (min.)–4 (max.)
Type of occupation	(1) “self-employed” (2) “higher management” (3) “employees” (4) “workers” (5) regrouping all groups which are not in the labour market	1 (min.)–5 (max.)
Political discussions	Used as a proxy for the individual degree of politicisation The EVS asks respondents whether they discuss: (1) “frequently”, (2) “occasionally” or (3) “never” matters of politics with friends and colleagues Variable has been recorded so that higher values indicate a higher frequency of political discussions	1 (min.)–3 (max.)
Ideological self-placement on left–right scale	Used as a second proxy of the degree of individual politicisation EVS asks its respondent to place their political views on a scale that goes from 1 (very left)–10 (very right) Recoded into three categories: 1–4 “left leaning”, 6–10 “right leaning” and “undecided” 5 plus all respondents who answered “don’t know”	1 (min.)–3 (max.)
Religiousness	A dummy variable out of two measures was created The first question asks respondents whether they belong to a religious denomination The second question asks if the person considers him/herself as a religious person The variable indicates (1) when someone belongs to a religious denomination or describes himself as religious; (0) stands for people who do not belong to a religious denomination or describe themselves as not religious	0 (min.)–1 (max.)



Variable	Description	Range
Postmaterialist values	<p>Postmaterialist values are measured by the EVS's 4-item scale on postmaterialism:</p> <p><i>There is a lot of talk these days about what the aims of this country should be for the next ten years. On this card are listed some of the goals which different people would give top priority. If you had to choose, which of the things on this card would you say is most important? And which would be the next most important? 1) Maintaining order in the nation; 2) giving people more say in important government decisions 3) fighting rising prices; 4) protecting freedom of speech</i></p> <p>If a person chose twice the same materialistic (1/1 or 3/3) or postmaterialistic (2/2 or 4/4) aim, he or she was coded as materialistic (1) or postmaterialist (3) person. Otherwise they were designated as "mixed" (2)</p>	1 (min.)–3 (max.)

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