

The Impact of *Presidentas* on Women's Political Activity

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Chapter Abstract

Women in Latin America have been elected to the presidency eight times since 1999 in five different countries, yet little is known about the societal consequences of having female presidents (*presidentas*) in Latin America. This chapter analyzes the effects of the presence of *presidentas* in Latin America on women's political activity. Using public opinion data on 17 countries over eight years, we show that *presidentas* augment three forms of mass political participation among women: vote intention, rates of campaigning, and attendance at local meetings. We also identify three possible causal pathways by which the presence of *presidentas* could lead to increased political activity by women: changing conceptions of the appropriateness of women in politics, a greater sense of government responsiveness among women, and increased female psychological engagement in politics. Statistical analyses show no gender differences in the effect of female presidents on any of the three mechanisms. However, they do show that having a female president is associated with greater support for the appropriateness of women in politics among both men and women whereas it has no effect on government responsiveness and psychological engagement. Our findings, thus, reveal that female presidents are associated with greater political activity of women and greater support for female political leaders among men and women in Latin America. It is still unclear, however, exactly what specific mechanisms produce these outcomes.

The Impact of *Presidentas* on Women's Political Activity

In the past sixteen years, women have democratically won the presidency eight times in Latin America. Mireya Moscoso was elected president of Panama in 1999, and between 2006 and 2010, Chile elected Michelle Bachelet (2006-2010), Argentina elected Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (2007-2011), Costa Rica elected Laura Chinchilla (2010-2014) and Brazil elected Dilma Rousseff (2010-2014). In the past four years, three of these women mounted re-election campaigns and won office for a second time. Fernandez and Rousseff won reelection in Argentina and Brazil, respectively, and Bachelet was reelected in 2013 in Chile (immediate reelection is prohibited in Chile).

Presidential victories of these women are remarkable for many reasons. Although the number of female presidents is low in absolute terms, the election of women to the presidency in five of eighteen Latin American countries just in the past sixteen years is impressive in relative terms. Additionally, these women were democratically elected in a region long known for *machismo*. The *presidenta* phenomenon also suggests major advances in women's political representation in the region. There is little doubt that the presidency is the most visible political office in Latin America. Compared to U.S. presidents, Latin American presidents enjoy greater constitutional prerogatives (Shugart and Mainwaring 1997), and they tend to attract more media attention because of their political power.

Despite the novelty and importance of the rise of *presidentas* (female presidents) in Latin America, research on them has been limited. The most popular topics have been how these women have won office and what they have accomplished as *presidentas* (Quiroga 2008; Thomas and Adams 2010; Jalalzai 2012; Ríos Tobar 2008; Stevenson 2012; Barnes and Jones 2011; Jensen 2008; Franceschet and Thomas 2010; Piscopo 2010; Staab and Waylen forthcoming). Although most of these studies have been president- or country-specific, a few cross-national analyses do exist (see, for example, Jalalzai 2012 and Barnes and Jones 2011).

What has received no serious attention, however, is what the societal consequences are of women's election to the presidency in Latin America. Existing research from around the world

suggests that increased visibility of historically marginalized groups in elected political offices will augment the political participation of those groups in society (Atkeson 2003; Banducci, Donovan and Karp 2004; Barreto 2007; Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Burns et al. 2001; Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006, 2007). Building from this literature, we analyze in this chapter whether the presence of *presidentas* in Latin America increases political activity of women in society, and if so, how much and why.

We argue that the election of women to the presidency in Latin America should have positive effects on political participation of women and work to close long-standing gender gaps in political activity in Latin America (Desposato and Norrander 2009). We suggest three causal pathways that could theoretically link the presence of *presidentas* to increased political activity among women. First, *presidentas* may change cultural beliefs about the appropriateness of politics for women, and in turn, encourage women to become more politically involved. Second, the election of *presidentas* could make women feel that the government will be more responsive to their concerns, thereby raising the potential payoffs of political activities. Third, female presidents could make them more interested in politics or more likely to follow it in the news. This augmented psychological engagement in politics, in turn, could increase their political participation.

We use the Americas Barometer public opinion data from Vanderbilt University's Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) for 17 Latin American countries over an eight-year period as a tool to explore the relationship between *presidentas* and political activity.¹ We demonstrate that *presidentas* exert a positive impact on three forms of women's political activity—voting intentions, campaign participation, and local meeting attendance—and have no statistically significant impact on men's behavior. The presence of *presidentas* almost entirely closes the gender gaps in these three forms of political activity.

It is unclear, however, which mechanism underlies the relationship between *presidentas* in office and women's political activity. Empirical analyses show that citizens living under

¹ We exclude the Dominican Republic because it has unusually high levels of political activity, making it an outlier.

presidentas do not sense greater government responsiveness nor are they more psychologically engaged. However, the presence of *presidentas* is positively related to citizens' views of how appropriate it is to have women in politics, which corroborates Morgan and Buice's (2013) conclusion that women's descriptive representation in Latin America can serve as a "catalyst" for norms of gender egalitarianism. The fact that these effects are not statistically different for women than they are for men, however, suggests that this mechanism is not necessarily responsible for closing the gender gap in political activity. More research is needed to determine exactly how and why the election of *presidentas* increases women's political activity and whether the phenomenon occurs outside of Latin America.

Should *Presidentas* Affect Women's Political Activity? Why?

Multiple studies have shown that members of historically marginalized groups tend to participate less in politics. Although theories differ on the mechanisms driving the relationship, most scholars converge on the same general prediction: enhanced descriptive representation will augment the corresponding group's political participation. More precisely, it is the increased visibility of in-group members that is believed to spur political activity (Atkeson 2003; Banducci, Donovan and Karp 2004; Barreto 2007; Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Burns et al. 2001; Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006, 2007). This research motivates our study's central hypothesis: *presidentas* will exert a positive impact on women's political activity.

Existing research suggests three causal mechanisms that may link the presence of a *presidenta* to increased female political activity—cultural appropriateness, government responsiveness, and psychological engagement. The cultural appropriateness mechanism derives from an account of women and men behaving according to cultural norms. This is a version of what has become known as "cue theory" (Atkeson 2003), and it posits that citizens are socialized to believe that politics is a "man's world" because men dominate politics. Politics – just like *fútbol* – is a sport played mostly by men (Burns et al 2001; Craske 1999). Because both men and

women prefer to follow gender-specific cultural rules, men are attracted to political activities and women are not.

According to this logic, rising visibility of female leaders should challenge traditional conceptions of the appropriateness of female leadership in politics (Burns et al 2001; Hansen 1997). In Latin America, women profess stronger support for female leadership than men (LAPOP 2008, 2012), and it could be that both women's and men's views on the appropriateness of female political activity constrain women's actual activity. Morgan and Buice (2013) found that women are sensitive to gender-equality cues, such as increased female descriptive representation, but men are even *more* susceptible to these cues. In sum, cultural beliefs about the inappropriateness of politics for women – held by men and women – could discourage women from becoming politically active. If *presidentas* challenge those beliefs, then women may feel encouraged to participate. Therefore, we hypothesize that the presence of a *presidenta* should make citizens feel more positively inclined toward women in political leadership.

Another line of reasoning suggests that women may infer that male politicians know less and care less about their concerns than female politicians and, thus, government is less responsive to them. Because men dominate politics, women may calculate that political activity is not worth their time and effort. On the other hand, rising visibility of female leaders sends the message to women that their in-group is gaining power. Since these female leaders may share their policy concerns, increased visibility of female politicians sends women the message that the potential policy payoffs from participating are greater and that government will be more responsive to their needs and concerns, more generally. Thus, we hypothesize that the presence of a *presidenta* should exert a positive impact on women's perceptions of government responsiveness.

Indeed, multiple studies show that greater descriptive representation augments historically marginalized groups' "external efficacy," or their perception of how much government leaders care about and thus will respond to their concerns (Atkeson and Carrillo 2007; Banducci et al. 2004; Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Burns et al. 2001; High Pippert and Comer

1998). Examining this in the context of contemporary Latin America is important because it offers a strict test of the effect of gender in producing changes in perceptions of government responsiveness. All of the *presidentas* under study here are ideological moderates whose administrations have been characterized more by policy continuity than change. Bachelet, Chinchilla, and Rousseff were cabinet ministers who succeeded popular male presidents from their same party. Fernández succeeded her husband. The subsequent *presidenta* administrations largely promoted the continuation of economic policies. As a result, if presidential gender has an effect on perceptions of government responsiveness, we can be confident that it is largely independent of policy change.

The third line of reasoning is that *presidentas* may affect political activity through increased psychological engagement with politics. Gender gaps in political engagement are significant in Latin America, just as they are in many parts of the world (Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer 2012).² *Presidentas* could increase women's psychological engagement and women thereby become more politically active in a behavioral sense. Thus, a psychological mechanism could link the *presidentas*' rise to increased female political activity.

Studies conducted on the United States have shown that the presence of female legislators augments women's engagement, measured by interest in politics, political discussion, and political knowledge (Reingold and Harrell 2010). Wolbrecht and Campbell (2006, 2007) argue that discussion about politics is the causal mechanism linking increased female presence in parliaments to increased political activity. The emergence of *presidentas* attracts public attention and may produce greater interest in, discussion about, and attention to political news. Along these lines, we hypothesize that the election of female presidents could increase political engagement among women in Latin America.

Gender and Political Activity in Latin America

² The mean for interest in politics (measured on a 1-4 scale) for women in Latin America from 2006-2012 is 1.9 while the mean for men is 2.1. The mean for following news (measured on a 1-5 scale) for women from 2010-12 is 4.3 while for men the statistic is 4.4.

Gender gaps in political activity exist in many parts of the world, and Latin America is no exception. Although Latin American women tend to report voting in elections at similar rates as men (Carreras and Castañeda-Angarita 2014),³ they are less active in other forms of political participation. Three forms of political activity where substantial gender gaps exist in Latin America are the *intention* to vote, campaign participation, and local meeting attendance.⁴ We use data from LAPOP's Americas Barometer from 2004-2012 to assess gender gaps in political activity, and subsequently, analyze the role of *presidentas* in explaining women's political activity.

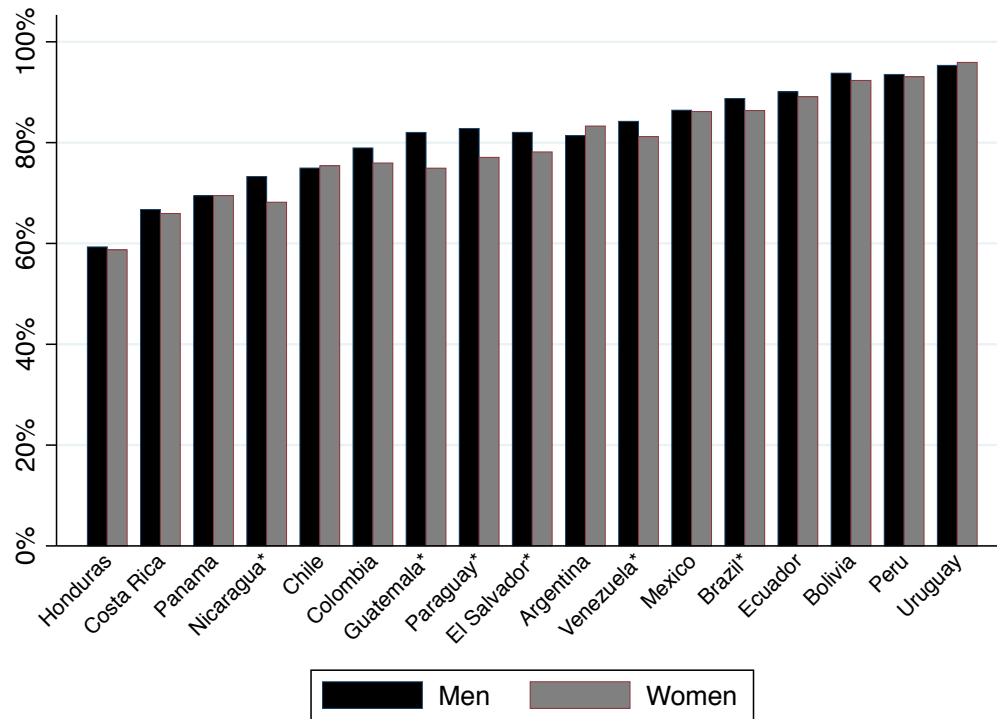
The first way that we operationalize political activity is with vote intention. Elections are a unique moment when citizens can directly manifest their preferences. *Vote intention* reflects whether citizens would go to the polls in the hypothetical case that an election was held this week.⁵ In Latin America, on average, 84% of men say that they would vote if a presidential election were held next week, whereas only 80% of women say that they would do the same. Variation exists across countries, as well, which is evident in Figure 1. Honduras features the lowest rates of vote intention with a mean of almost 60%. Far more Uruguayans – approximately 96% – say they would go to the polls and vote. In 11 out of the 17 countries, the gender gaps in voting intention were not statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. Gender gaps are statistically significant in Paraguay, Brazil, Venezuela, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala. Guatemala has voluntary voting laws and features the largest gender gap: 82% of Guatemalan men say they would vote if an election were held this week compared to just 75% of Guatemalan women said the same.

³ See Desposato and Norrander (2009) for different findings.

⁴ Questions about working on campaigns and participating in local meetings questions were included in every survey beginning in 2004, but vote intention questions were only asked in 2008-12. Only about 10% of all respondents claim to have participated politically by campaigning and attending meetings, whereas, on average, over 80% of all respondents claim they would vote in a hypothetical upcoming election.

⁵ The exact wording of the survey question is “If the next presidential elections were held this week, what would you do?” Respondents are given four options – not vote, vote for the incumbent candidate or party, vote for a candidate or party different from the incumbent, and vote blank/null. We recode this variable as zero if the respondent said they would not go to vote and one if the respondent said they would vote for the incumbent, for the challenger, or vote blank. In other words, our variable is binary and captures whether the respondent would vote at all.

Figure 1: Intention to Vote by Country and Gender (LAPOP 2008-12)



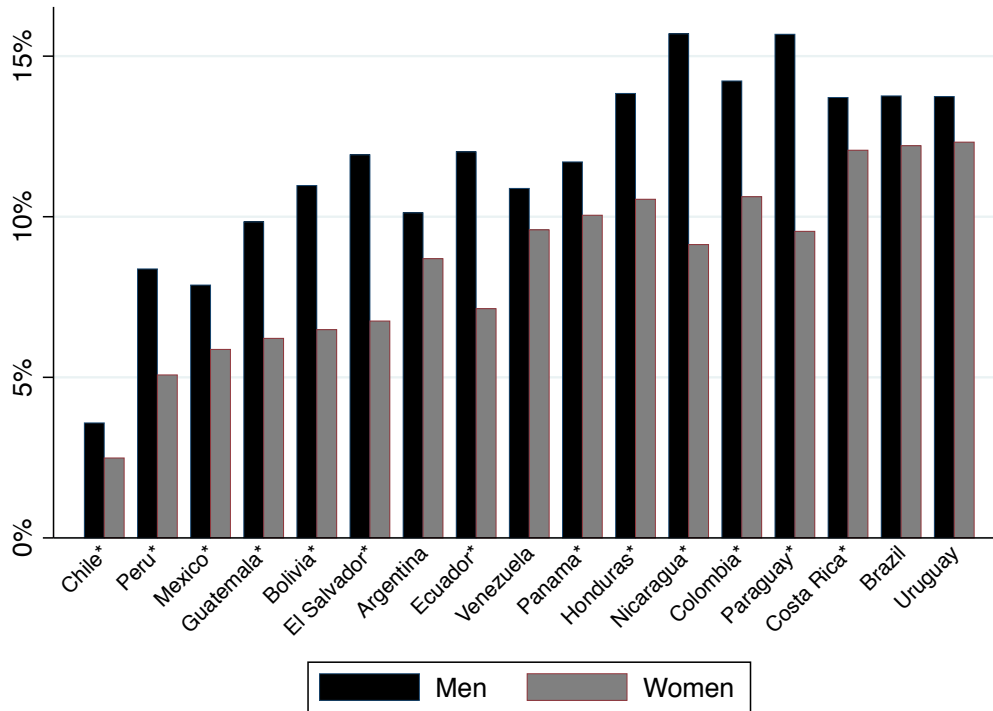
Note: Figure presents the mean percentage of respondents who reported they would vote in a hypothetical election. An asterisk indicates countries where the gender gap is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

We also measure political activity with questions about campaigning because individuals who help out on campaigns become deeply involved in the electoral process. Those who campaign arguably can influence an electoral outcome more than those who only vote. If women and men display different levels of campaign participation, this can translate into men’s disproportionate power over electoral outcomes. In Latin America, the regionwide gender gaps in campaign participation are substantial—12.2% of men said they had campaigned compared to only 8.7% of women.⁶ Figure 2 shows the variation in women’s and men’s campaign activity across countries. Chileans campaign the least—only 3% said they had helped out during the last presidential election—but the gender gap of one percentage point is statistically significant. Uruguayans are the most active campaigners—13% of citizens said they campaigned, but a 1.4% gender gaps exists and is borderline significant (p -value of 0.10). Gender gaps in campaigning

⁶ We assess campaign participation according to the question “Did you work for any candidate or party in the last presidential election?” We coded “yes” responses as 1 and “no” responses as 0.

are statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level in every country except Brazil, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Argentina. Paraguay had the largest gender gap. While 16% of Paraguayan men said they campaigned, only 9% of women said the same.

Figure 2: Campaigning Participation by Country and Gender (LAPOP) 2004-12



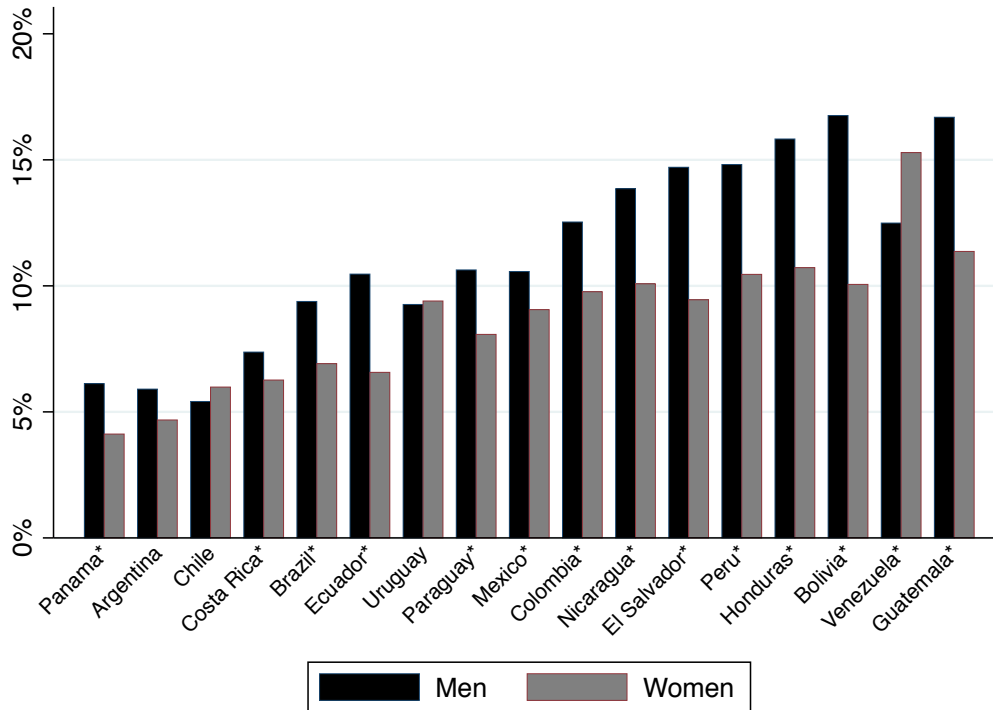
Note: Figure presents the mean percentage of respondents who reported they participated in an election campaign. An asterisk indicates countries where the gender gap is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

Attendance at political meetings at the local level assesses the extent to which citizens voice their opinion on issues that directly affect their lives. While 11.9 percent of Latin American men from 2004-12 said they had attended local political meetings, only 9.9 percent of women said they had done so.⁷ Figure 3 shows the gender differences in local meeting attendance across Latin American countries. All countries have statistically significant gender disparities in this measure of local political involvement except Argentina, Chile and Uruguay. 16% of Bolivian men reported attending local meetings while only 9% of Bolivian women reported the same. Gender gaps favor men in all countries except Venezuela. Venezuelan women participated

⁷ The exact wording of the question we use to assess this is: “Have you attended a town meeting, city council meeting or other meeting in the past 12 months?” We coded “yes” responses as 1 and “no” responses as 0.

more in local political meetings than did men with a gap of 2.8 percentage points. This is not surprising given that the 2004-2012 period was the heyday of former President Hugo Chavez' efforts to increase participatory democracy in Venezuela, and women were a key target of those efforts.

Figure 3: Local Political Meeting Attendance by Country and Gender (LAPOP 2004-12)



Note: Figure presents the mean percentage of respondents who reported they attended local political meetings. An asterisk indicates countries where the gender gap is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

Gender gaps in these three forms of political activity are evident in most countries of Latin America. Fewer women than men express intentions to vote; women are less involved in political campaigns than men; and, in all countries but Venezuela, fewer women than men attend local political meetings. Has the rise of the *presidentas* in some Latin American countries reduced these gaps by disproportionately increasing women's political activity relative to men's?

Variables and Methods for Data Analysis

The three political activity measures just described are this study's main dependent variables. They capture fundamental but diverse types of political activity, and the correlations among them are low. The strongest correlation ($r=0.16$) is between campaigning and attending local meetings. The correlation between vote intention and campaigning and vote intention and

local meetings is 0.07 and 0.05, respectively. Because of these low correlations, we examine the impact of *presidentas* on each indicator separately.

We use logistic regression with country and year fixed effects to estimate the effect of *presidentas* on citizens' political activity.⁸ We include country weights, as provided by LAPOP, which in addition to appropriately balancing the different number of and representativeness of responses helps to account for the problem of lack of independence across respondents within countries (a problem that typically requires clustered standard errors). In addition to the country and year fixed effects, we control for individual and country-level factors that could confound or mediate the relationship between the presence of a *presidenta* and women's political activity (as described below and elaborated upon in footnotes and the chapter appendix).

The main independent variable is the presence of a female president in office at the time the fieldwork for the Americas Barometer was conducted. A female president was in power during the fieldwork for the 2004 survey in Panama, the 2006-8 surveys in Chile, 2008-12 surveys in Argentina and the 2012 surveys in Costa Rica and Brazil. Although the number of cases with female presidents is small, the analyses below allow us to provide an initial test of the effect of women's presence on political activity. All conclusions, of course, will require additional research to more fully support them, but this study provides a start to theorizing about and empirically validating the relationship between female presidents in Latin America and women's political activity.

In order to estimate the effect of *presidentas* on women's political activity and closing the gender gap in political activity, we must also examine the effect of *presidentas* on men. Therefore, the models all include an interaction term between the gender of the respondent (the *female* variable) and the presence of a female president (the *presidenta* variable). This interaction tests whether *presidentas* have significantly different effects on men and women and whether the gender gap in political activity is significantly reduced under female presidents. We then can

⁸ Hierarchical modeling is not appropriate for this data since only 17 countries are included in the study. This is not enough to justify the hierarchical modeling's assumption that the countries are a random sample.

show what those different effects look like with calculations of marginal effects from the interaction models (Brambor, Clark, and Golder 2006).

Individual-level control variables. It could be that *presidentas* tend to win elections in places and time periods when individuals have more resources. Carreras and Castañeda-Angarita (2014) found that individual resources – education, wealth and political experience (age cohort) – were major predictors of voting in Latin America. If we assume that resources will predict political activity more generally, any impact of the *presidentas* could be spurious if models do not control for these factors.⁹

In addition to conventional resource measures, other individual-level variables could confound the relationship between *presidentas* and women’s participation. Some scholars of women’s political engagement in the United States have argued that the impact of increased visibility of female politicians works primarily through the pathway of partisanship. In other words, the gender of politicians may have no effect on political activity above and beyond partisan effects (Lawless 2004). Concerns about partisanship acting as an intervening variable may be more warranted in the U.S. context than in Latin America because partisan identification is generally weaker in the Latin American context of volatile party systems (Mainwaring and Scully 1995). However, we control for partisan effects to ensure robust results by accounting for presidential party congruence.¹⁰

⁹ Education is measured on an ordinal scale from 1 to 3: some elementary (0-5 years of education), some high school (6-12 years) and a high school degree or more (13 years or more). Wealth is measured on a scale of 0 to 7, in order of increasing wealth, according to questions seven possessions in the surveyed household: television, refrigerator, telephone, number of cars, motorcycle, washing machine, microwave and running water. The age variable is divided into five cohorts – 16-24; 25-34; 35-49; 50-64 and over – and coded from 1 to 5 in order of increasing age cohorts.

¹⁰ The party self-identification survey question that we used to create this measure is not available for 2004, and thus including this variable in the campaign and local meeting models would mean throwing out all 2004 observations, which includes the Moscoso presidency. The models presented in this chapter, therefore, control for presidential party congruence in the intention to vote model but not in the campaign or local meeting models. Campaign and local meeting models that excluded all 2004 observations and included party congruence are not significantly different than the results presented here – the impact of *presidentas* is still positive and significant at the $p < 0.10$ level.

We used two questions to create the presidential party congruence dummy. First we employed answers to the question, “Do you identify with any political party?” If the response is no, then we coded the variable as zero. The second question was asked to all respondents who replied yes to the first question. The exact wording is: “Which political party do you identify with?” Respondents then named their preferred party. We coded the presidential party congruence variable as zero if the individual identified with a party that does not exercise power in the executive branch. The variable is only coded as one if the respondent said they sympathize with the party of the current president. About 17 percent of respondents identified with the current president’s party.

Presidential popularity could also confound the relationship between *presidentas* and political activity. We account for the fact that political activity may be higher for some citizens simply because they have higher approval of female (or any) presidents. All models thus control for presidential approval.¹¹

Country-level control variables. Country-level variables also could mediate or confound the relationship between *presidentas* and women's participation. First, it is possible that the effect of *presidentas* is moderated by the amount of time they have been in office. Ideal data would be collected immediately after presidential elections to capture the initial symbolic effect of a female president's election. LAPOP fieldwork dates vary from year to year, however, so that is not possible. To account for the time differences between the election and the LAPOP survey, we created a presidential *election proximity* variable that measures the number of months between the president's election and the survey fieldwork.

Seven surveys were conducted during presidential election campaigns, and these events could also mediate the relationship between *presidentas* and citizens' political activity. Therefore, the models include a dummy variable that captures whether a presidential *campaign* was happening at the time of the LAPOP fieldwork. We coded *campaign* as "1" if a presidential election fell within three months of the LAPOP survey dates. Moreover, we include a second control variable for whether a female candidate was in the presidential race and had a reasonable chance of winning the election. We measure viable female candidates by whether the candidate finished within the top three candidates or within a 10% margin of winning the election. Four countries had viable female presidential contenders in elections that were within three months of LAPOP fieldwork: Peru in 2006, Paraguay in 2008, Costa Rica in 2010, and Mexico in 2012.¹²

¹¹ The exact wording of the survey question for presidential approval is "Speaking in general of the current administration, how would you rate the job performance of President (name of current president)?" The possible responses are very good (2), good (1), neither good nor bad (0), bad (-1) and very bad (-2). This question was included in every LAPOP survey.

¹² In Costa Rica in 2010, LAPOP fieldwork was conducted from January 20-February 12, and Laura Chinchilla was elected on February 7, 2010. We code Costa Rica in 2010 as having a female president because many respondents would have been surveyed after her election. The *viable female candidate* variable is coded as 1 for Costa Rica this year because Chinchilla constituted a viable female presidential candidate during much of the survey period. Our results largely hold when we code Costa Rica as not having a female president in 2010. The only notable difference is that the effect of *presidenta* on men becomes positive and statistically significant. The difference between the

This variable controls for any effect that female contenders may have on political activity separate from the effect of the gender of the sitting president.

Also at the country level, women's overall economic and social empowerment could confound any relationship between *presidentas* and women's political activity—*presidentas* may be more likely to be elected to begin with in countries with greater female empowerment. We therefore control for national levels of female autonomy with two variables—national *fertility rates* data from the World Bank¹³ and *female education* data from the United Nations.¹⁴ Finally, the vote intention models control for whether voting was compulsory in the country at the time of the survey fieldwork.¹⁵ Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia and Venezuela are the only countries that did not have compulsory voting at the time of fieldwork.

Do *Presidentas* Increase Women's Political Activity?

Table 1 presents the statistical results for the three dependent variables measuring political activity. The table shows that the interaction terms in all three models are statistically significant. This means that the presence of female presidents has significantly different effects on men's and women's political participation. The first half of Table 2 presents the marginal effects calculations from the model to show the estimated effect of *presidentas* on men compared to women. For men, the presence of female *presidentas* has no significant effect on their likelihood of acting politically. For women, however, *presidentas* have significant positive effects. Converting the logit estimates in Tables 1 and 2 into more substantively intuitive average partial derivatives, we can estimate that women living under a *presidenta* have almost a 5% higher probability of saying they would vote if the presidential election were next week than

effects on women and men are still significant and women are more positively affected than men by having a female president. Models available upon request.

¹³ The World Bank fertility data are available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN>.

¹⁴ The U.N. Development Program data on education measure the average number of years that women over 25 years of age attend school <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/mean-years-schooling-females-aged-25-years-and-above-years>.

¹⁵ Data on compulsory voting is available from: Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) http://www.idea.int/vt/compulsory_voting.cfm.

women living under a male president.¹⁶ The probability that women campaign is 3% higher in a country with a *presidenta* as compared to a *presidente*. Women in countries with female presidents have a 3.4% higher probability of participating in local political meetings than women in countries run by male presidents. Having *presidentas* in office increases women's probability of voting, campaigning, and attending local meetings whereas it has no effect on men's political activity.

Does the strong positive effect on women lead to smaller gender gaps in political activity? Yes. The second half of Table 2 shows the effect of the female variable (i.e., the "gender gap") on political activity under male and female presidents. Under male presidents, significant gender gaps favor men over women for all three forms of political activity. Under female presidents, the gender gap is no longer significant for intention to vote or attending local meetings and is significantly reduced in size for campaigning.

¹⁶ We generated the change in probabilities reported here by using Stata's margins option with partial derivatives after the logit models and then calculating the marginal effects of those estimated probabilities for women and men (Brambor, Clark, and Golder 2006).

Table 1: Logit Models Explaining Political Activity

	Would Vote	Campaign	Local Meeting
Female	-0.13 (0.02)***	-0.35 (0.02)***	-0.30 (0.02)***
<i>Presidenta</i>	0.17 (0.11)	0.18 (0.12)	0.13 (0.10)
<i>Presidenta</i> *Female	0.19 (0.06)***	0.18 (0.07)***	0.27 (0.08)***
Wealth	0.03 (0.01)***	-0.02 (0.01)**	-0.08 (0.01)***
Age	0.12 (0.01)***	0.10 (0.01)***	0.15 (0.01)***
Pres. Party Congruence	1.75 (0.10)***	-- --	-- --
Pres. Approval	0.16 (0.01)***	0.15 (0.02)***	0.14 (0.01)***
Pres. Election Proximity	0.003 (0.001)***	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
Election Season	0.32 (0.18)*	0.07 (0.11)	0.11 (0.09)
Viable Female Candidate	0.09 (0.15)	-0.13 (0.11)	-0.11 (0.09)
Average Female Education	0.20 (0.04)***	0.10 (0.04)**	-0.05 (0.04)
Fertility Rate	-0.87 (0.21)***	-0.16 (0.18)	-0.67 (0.18)***
GDP per capita (log)	0.94 (0.26)***	-0.18 (0.16)	-0.05 (0.18)
Compulsory Voting	0.10 (0.14)	-- --	-- --
N	63,739	105,140	110,762
Years Included in Model	2008-12	2004-12	2004-12

Logit estimates with standard errors in parentheses. Year and country dummies not shown.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 2: Marginal Effects of *Presidentas* on Male and Female Respondents

<i>Presidentas</i> effect on:		
	Men	Women
Vote Intention	0.17 (0.11)	0.36** (0.11)
Campaign Participation	0.18 (0.12)	0.37** (0.12)
Local Meeting Attendance	0.13 (0.10)	0.40** (0.10)
Gender gap in: (<i>Female</i> effect)		
	<i>Presidente</i>	<i>Presidenta</i>
Vote Intention	-0.13** (0.02)	0.06 (0.05)
Campaign Participation	-0.35** (0.02)	-0.17* (0.07)
Local Meeting Attendance	-0.30** (0.02)	-0.03 (0.08)

Logit estimates with standard errors in parentheses. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

The three political activity models also provide support for other theories of political participation, but these findings exist alongside the effects of presidential gender. Results from the vote intention model reveal that individuals with more education, wealth, and political experience have a higher probability of saying they would vote. Unsurprisingly, congruence with the incumbent president’s party exerts a highly significant, and indeed, the largest effect in terms of magnitude. Subscribing to the same party as the current president raises the propensity to vote by 24%.¹⁷ However, the president’s gender matters above and beyond this so we can thus conclude that the effect of *presidentas* is not entirely mediated through partisanship as scholars of women’s participation in the United States have contended (Lawless 2004). Moreover, presidential approval exerts a significant and positive impact on intention to vote—above and beyond partisanship. The coefficient for proximity of the last presidential election is significant but substantively quite small—it increases the likelihood of voting by only 0.05%—and, if the survey was conducted during an election season, then respondents have a 4% higher probability of saying they would go to the polls. The variable for whether the campaign included a viable female candidate is not significant.

¹⁷ The changes in probabilities estimated here are average partial derivatives from Table 1.

Country-level variables also indicate that respondents living in places with greater female autonomy have a higher intention to vote. The higher the national average number of years that women attend school, the higher the overall probability that respondents claim that they would vote in a hypothetical upcoming election. Conversely, the higher the fertility rate, the lower the overall probability that respondents say they would go to the polls. GDP per capita also positively impacts overall probability of voting. Whether voting is compulsory does not exert an impact independent of these controls.¹⁸

According to the campaign model, more schooling and political experience also augment the probability of participating. Nevertheless, contrary to predictions, wealth has a negative impact on the probability of campaigning. This could suggest that groups with fewer material resources are more likely to be dissatisfied with the status quo and therefore they tend to help out on campaigns more frequently than those with more material resources.¹⁹

As expected, the higher the individual's approval of the president, the more likely the respondent is to have pitched in during a campaign. However, the results are not consistent with the idea that campaigns – with or without viable female candidates – occurring at the time of the survey fieldwork exert an independent impact on the propensity to campaign. This result is less surprising if we remember that the LAPOP question asked about the previous presidential election rather than any election that was going on at the time of the survey. Finally, respondents living in countries with higher female education levels have a higher probability of campaigning while national fertility rates exert no independent impact. GDP per capita has no significant impact on campaigning rates.

Similar to the campaign model, more education and political experience seems to increase the probability of attending meetings, and wealth exerts a negative impact. The more the respondent approves of the president, the greater the probability that she or he will participate locally. Finally, the results for meeting attendance suggest that the higher the national fertility

¹⁸ Controlling for gender quotas does not significant change the results.

¹⁹ Another interpretation could be that the wealthy prefer to give donations rather than work on a campaign. However, no survey question asks about donations, so we cannot test this possibility.

rate, the less likely the respondent will participate in local politics. The proximity of the presidential election, election season, national female education levels and GDP were found to exert no effect independent of these other controls.

In sum, the results of all three models support the conclusion that women living under *presidentas* tend to profess higher levels of political activity, controlling for a series of potential confounders and mediators. Women under *presidentas* intend to vote more frequently. They also help out more on political campaigns and are more active in local politics. Their increased probability of being political active under female presidents is substantial enough to close the gender gap in the intention to vote and local meeting attendance and reduce it significantly for campaign work. This provides initial evidence that the presence of *presidentas* is related to increased political activity among women.

Why are Women in Countries with *Presidentas* More Politically Active?

We have now established that female presidents are correlated with women's political activity. The next question is, why? In the theoretical section of the paper, we outlined three causal pathways that could link *presidentas* to increased female political activity. Here we empirically evaluate whether presidential gender has different effects on men's and women's perceptions of the appropriateness of women in politics, feelings of government responsiveness, and political engagement. If presidential gender is positively associated with women's positive views of women in government, government responsiveness, and/or political engagement but not men's, then we have initial evidence that those mechanisms could be the path through which presidential gender produces greater political activity among women and closes the gender gaps in political activity.

Data and Methods

In this section, the dependent variables in the statistical models are the three posited causal mechanisms.²⁰ To measure cultural appropriateness, we used the following question from the LAPOP Americas Barometer: “Some say that, in general, men are better political leaders than women. Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree?” This question was only asked in 2008 and 2012, and unfortunately Chile was not included in the 2008 survey. Therefore, any inferences we make can only be generalized to the Fernández, Chinchilla and Rouseff administrations. We coded the responses from 1-4 according to how strongly the respondent *disagreed* with this statement so that positive effects indicate greater acceptance of women in politics.

We measure government responsiveness (sometimes referred to as “external efficacy”) with the survey question worded as follows: “Those who govern this country are interested in what people like you think. How much do you agree or disagree with this statement?” Responses are on a 1 to 7 scale of increasing agreement that government is responsive to citizens. This question was asked in three surveys: 2008, 2010, and 2012.

Finally, we measure political engagement with two indicators—political interest and following politics in the news. Interest in politics is measured with the question, asked in all countries in 2006-12: “How much interest do you have in politics: a lot, some, little or none?” We code these responses from 1-4 in order of increasing interest in politics. The news question was only asked in 2010 and 2012. The exact question wording is as follows: “For statistical purposes, we would like to know how much information people have about politics and the country. About how often do you pay attention to the news, whether on TV, the radio, newspapers or the Internet?” Potential responses are daily, a few times a week, a few times a month, rarely and never, which we code in order of increasing attention to the news on a five-point scale.

Our statistical methodology is similar to the previous section, however, we run ordered logit regressions for all of these models because the dependent variables are ordinal rather than

²⁰ See the appendix for descriptive statistics on the dependent variables and gender gap figures by country, similar to Figures 1-3.

dichotomous. Again, the key variables here are the dichotomous *female* and *presidenta* variables and an interaction between the two. We include most of the same control variables as in the last section to isolate the effect of *presidentas*.

Findings

Table 3 presents the results for the tests of the observable implications derived from the hypothesized mechanisms. In none of the models is the interaction term between female and presidential gender significant. This means that presidential gender has no significantly different effect on men's and women's views of the cultural appropriateness of women in politics, their expectations of government responsiveness, or their political engagement. If presidential gender has no different effects on women than men here, then none of these three mechanisms can explain why presidential gender closes gender gaps in political activity through its disproportionately strong effects on women's political activity. Further evidence of this emerged when we re-ran the models from the previous section with the four measures of the possible causal mechanisms included. None of the four possible causal mechanism variables eliminated the effect of presidential gender on women's political activity. Thus, the explanation for why presidential gender is related to women's political activity must derive from something else. What that is, we are unsure of at this point.

Table 3: Tests of Appropriateness, Responsiveness and Engagement

Logit estimates with standard errors in parentheses. Control variables, year and country dummies

	Appropriateness	Responsiveness	Engagement	
	Support Fem. Leadership	Sense of Gov. Responsiveness	Interest in Politics	Follow News
Female	.70 (0.02)***	-0.03 (0.01)**	-0.36 (0.01)***	-0.21 (0.02)***
<i>Presidenta</i>	0.52 (0.12)***	-0.06 (0.07)	-0.10 (0.06)	0.08 (0.18)
<i>Presidenta*Female</i>	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.05 (0.04)	0.07 (0.04)*	-0.01 (0.06)
N	45,638	76,582	94,715	52,904
Year Included	2008, 2012	2008-12	2006-12	2010-12

were included in the model, but are not shown here.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 4: Tests of Appropriateness, Responsiveness and Engagement (No Interaction)

Logit estimates with standard errors in parentheses. Year and country dummies not shown.

	Appropriateness	Responsiveness	Engagement	
	Support Fem. Leadership	Sense of Gov. Responsiveness	Interest in Politics	Follow News
Female	0.70 (0.02)***	-0.03 (0.01)***	-0.35 (0.01)***	-0.21 (0.02)***
<i>Presidenta</i>	0.48 (0.12)***	-0.09 (0.07)	-0.07 (0.06)	0.07 (0.18)
Education	0.23 (0.02)***	-0.07 (0.01)***	0.50 (0.01)***	0.45 (0.02)***
Wealth	0.04 (0.01)***	0.01 (0.01)	0.05 (0.01)***	0.14 (0.01)***
Age	-0.05 (0.01)***	0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)***	0.21 (0.01)***
Pres. Party Congruence	0.01 (0.03)	0.36 (0.02)***	1.09 (0.02)***	0.21 (0.03)***
Pres. Approval	-0.08 (0.01)***	0.59 (0.01)***	0.11 (0.01)***	0.05 (0.01)***
Pres. Election Proximity	-0.02 (0.003)***	-0.002 (0.001)**	0.001 (0.001)	-0.01 (0.002)**
Election Season	-0.52 (0.23)**	-0.12 (0.13)	0.46 (0.06)***	-0.08 (0.18)
Viable Female Candidate	0.84 (0.21)***	-0.003 (0.11)	-0.04 (0.06)***	-0.02 (0.11)
Average Female Education	0.09 (0.05)*	0.11 (0.03)***	0.10 (0.03)***	0.09 (0.05)*
Fertility Rate	0.29 (0.18)	-0.44 (0.14)***	-0.24 (0.10)**	1.21 (0.62)*
GDP per capita (log)	-0.34 (0.23)	0.03 (0.15)	-0.08 (0.12)	0.38 (0.42)
N	45,638	76,582	94,715	52,904
Year Included	2008, 2012	2008-12	2006-12	2010-12

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Even though presidential gender does not have different effects on women than men, it importantly does have effects on both women and men as shown in Table 4. This table simply removes the interaction term between *female* and *presidenta* from the statistical model and shows the estimated effect of respondent gender and having a female president on citizens (both men and women). The first notable findings are the gender gaps in all the dependent variables, revealed by the statistical significance of the *female* variable. The direction of that gender gap varies across models, however. Women have a higher likelihood of professing much stronger

support for women’s leadership than men. Men demonstrate a higher likelihood of efficacy, interest in politics and rates of following political news. The effect of *presidentas* on these dependent variables, however, is limited to the support for female leaders. Having female presidents leads to greater support for political leaders, but it has no effect on efficacy, interest in politics, or following politics in the news. We now discuss these results in more detail for each of the four dependent variables.

	“Men are better political leaders than women.”	Under a <i>Presidenta</i>	
greater support for	Disagree Strongly	0.10	leads to levels of female
	Disagree	-0.03	
	Agree	-0.05	
	Strongly Agree	-0.02	

Cultural appropriateness. Results from the model of beliefs about female leadership support the hypothesized appropriateness mechanism. *Presidentas* exert a positive and highly significant impact on citizens’ support for female leaders, and there is no differential impact between male and female respondents. Table 5 shows the changes in predicted probabilities for support of female leaders when citizens are governed by a *presidenta*. The most support for female leadership is measured by a “strongly disagree” response to the statement. Most of the movement in public opinion occurs between the “disagree” and “strongly disagree” answers. Living under a *presidenta* means that citizens are 2% less likely to strongly agree with the statement; 5 percent less likely to agree with the statement; 3% less likely to disagree with the statement and 10% more likely to strongly disagree with the statement. Again, the beliefs data only captures the effects of the Fernández, Rouseff and Chinchilla presidencies because the question was only asked in 2008 and 2012, and did not include Chile in 2008. Nevertheless the observation that under *presidentas*, the predicted probability for disagreeing strongly with this statement changes by 10% is remarkable.

Table 5: Changes in Predicted Probabilities for Support of Female Leaders²¹

²¹ Calculated with the margins command in Stata. Holding all other variables at their means. Average interest levels for women in 17 Latin American countries from 2004-12 is 1.94.

Note: All changes are significant at the $p < 0.01$ level.

The findings concerning the effect of the campaign of a viable female candidate also are consistent with the general prediction that increased visibility of female political leaders can change citizens' views about the capacity of female leaders. In this model, the *viable female candidate* variable captures the presidential run of Paraguayan Blanca Ovelar in 2008 and Mexican Josefina Vázquez in 2012. Ovelar ran for the Colorado Party and won with 32% of the vote. Backed by the PAN, Vazquez ended up winning 26% of the vote. The dummy for the election season is also significant, but it is negative. The combined impact of both variables is positive and significant at the 0.01 level. Results therefore show that if a viable female candidate is campaigning during the LAPOP survey fieldwork dates, then the men and women profess stronger support for female leaders.

The plausibility of the appropriateness model is strengthened by the observation that other key variables are significant and their coefficients accord with our expectations. The more education and wealth a respondent possesses, the more they support women leaders. Unsurprisingly, older age cohorts seem to cling to more traditional gender norms.²²

Government responsiveness. As noted previously, Table 5 shows that *presidentas* do not exert a positive impact on citizens' feelings of government responsiveness. Female presidential candidates and elections have no substantive impact on citizen sentiments either. What factors do influence citizen feelings about government responsiveness? More education has a significant and negative impact on feelings of efficacy, but wealth and age cohort have no impact. Presidential party congruence and presidential approval are also significant determinants. Respondents living in countries with greater female education and lower fertility rates feel generally more efficacious, and GDP does not exert an impact independent of these measures of female autonomy.

²² Although not included in this model, ideology is also significant determinant of beliefs about female leadership. Respondents with a more conservative ideology express less support for female leadership. Including it does not change any of the results.

Psychological engagement. The presence of female presidents in Latin America does not affect citizens' interest in politics or tendency to follow politics in the news. No presidential gender effect emerges in our models. However, more resources, congruence with the president's party and approving more strongly of the president leads to stronger interest and greater political news consumption. The election season has a significant positive impact on interest, but it does not increase the amount of political news Latin Americans consume. Whether a viable woman was campaigning shows no effect in either model. Fertility rate has a negative effect on interest but a surprisingly positive effect on news consumption. GDP per capita exerts no additional effect above and beyond the other variables. These findings match previous work on resource and political explanations for citizen's engagement in politics.

Although our empirical results do not support the conclusion that cultural appropriateness of women in politics, government responsiveness, and psychological engagement in politics are the causal mechanisms by which presidential gender is linked to women's political activity, our results do show that presidential gender is related to views of cultural appropriateness for both men and women. Whereas previous research has found this when focusing on women's representation in legislatures in Latin America (Morgan and Buice 2013), we show support for it through women's representation in presidencies. Presidential gender does not, however, affect citizen perceptions of government responsiveness or their political engagement. This is important, as well, for showing the limits of the effects that female presidents can have on society.

Conclusions

The number of women elected to presidencies in Latin America is still quite low, but the election of five women eight times in only the last fifteen years is quite remarkable. Although studies have analyzed the accession of some of these women to the presidency and started to explore the policy effects of women's presidencies, this chapter offers one of the first studies of the societal consequences of the presence of *presidentas*. Latin America has often been

characterized as a region with low civic activity and political marginalization of women (Craske 1999; Klesner 2007), but we show in this chapter that the rise of *presidentas* could have a positive impact on both these democratic deficiencies. Statistical evidence is largely consistent with the proposition that the presence of *presidentas* in Latin America relates to women's political activity, as measured by intention to vote, campaigning, and attending local meetings.

What causal mechanism links *presidentas* to increased female participation? Our empirical analyses do not allow us to convincingly answer this question. But, we do show evidence that the presence of female presidents is associated with both male and female citizens having more positive cultural attitudes about politics being an appropriate arena for women's participation. Long-standing beliefs have assumed that politics is a man's domain. Yet, the influx of women into political positions such as legislatures in the past thirty years has been helping to change that. In this chapter, we find evidence that female presidents may help to change attitudes toward women in politics even more.

Contrary to many studies of the effect of descriptive representation on historically marginalized groups in the developed world (Atkeson and Carrillo 2007; Bobo and Gilliam 1990), female presidents do not produce greater feelings of government responsiveness or more psychological engagement with politics for women (or men). The argument that members of historically marginalized groups infer that in-group members care more about their interests and thus a government comprised of more of those group members will be more responsive to their concerns does not hold up for the case of *presidentas* and women in 21st century Latin America. Furthermore, no evidence supports the idea that *presidentas* generally augment women's interest in politics either.

One mechanism by which presidential gender could affect political activity that we were unable to test is the political discussion mechanism identified by Campbell and Wolbrecht's (2006, 2007) studies of anticipated political involvement of adolescents in the U.S. and Europe. They found that girls – upon observing larger numbers of women in office – begin to discuss politics more with their friends and family. This increased discussion leads to greater anticipated

political involvement. Our chapter was unable to test this directly because the LAPOP question on political discussion was only asked in 2006 and 2008, when only Chile and Argentina (2008 only) had a female president. This provides too little variation on female president to test any hypotheses about political discussion. However, a related factor – general interest in politics – was found to be unaffected by *presidentas*. Future research on presidential gender and political activity should try to study the political discussion mechanism more directly.

Much scholarship has examined the impact of female legislators on women’s symbolic representation (see, for example, Schwindt-Bayer 2010; Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer 2012; Lawless 2004; Atkeson 2003). To our knowledge, however, this is the first empirical exploration of the impact of *presidentas* in Latin America. Extant research has been conducted on Latin American voting behavior and civic activities (Desposato and Norrander 2009; Klesner 2007), but no study so far has examined political activity as measured by rates of intention to vote, campaigning and attending local meetings. This study therefore contributes to the literature on contextual effects and political behavior in Latin America as well as the possible impacts of female presidents. Much work remains to be done on how *presidentas* affect citizen attitudes about politics and political behavior, but this chapter provides initial evidence that presidential gender is a variable that needs more attention—both in Latin America and worldwide.

Appendix
Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for All Variables

	Variable	Years	N	Mean (s.e.)	Min.-Max.	
Main Independent Variable	Presidenta	All	137,550	0.11 (0.004)	0-1	
	Would Vote	2008-12	72,062	0.81 (0.003)	0-1	
	Campaign	All	129,554	0.10 (0.31)	0-1	
	Attend Local Meeting	All	134,229	0.11 (0.31)	0-1	
Dependent Variables	Support for Fem. Leadership	2008, 2012	51,627	2.89 (0.01)	1-4	
	Sense of Government Responsiveness	2008-12	87,102	3.34 (0.01)	1-7	
	Interest in Politics	2006-12	118,039	2.04(0.96)	1-4	
	Follow Political News	2010-12	60,513	4.39 (0.01)	1-5	
Individual-Level Controls	Female	All	137,550	0.52 (0.50)	0-1	
	Education	All	135,771	1.97(0.004)	1-3	
	Wealth	All	124,981	3.87 (1.75)	0-7	
	Age Cohort	All	135,123	2.57(1.25)	1-5	
	Presidential Party Congruence	2006-12	105,669	0.17 (.37)	0-1	
	Presidential Approval	All	134,124	0.21 (0.95)	-2-2	
	Presidential Election Proximity	All	137,550	14.22 (9.83)	0-40	
	Election Season	All	137,550	0.08 (0.27)	0-1	
	Country-Level Controls	Viable Female Candidate	All	137,550	0.05 (0.003)	0-1
		Fertility Rate	All	137,550	2.70 (0.60)	1.7-4.5
Average Female Education		All	137,550	7.31 (1.57)	3.2-10	
GDP per capita (log)		All	137,550	8.43 (0.01)	6.8-9.6	
	Compulsory Voting	All	137,550	0.70(0.01)	0-1	

Figure 1: Average Support for Female Leaders by Country and Gender 2012

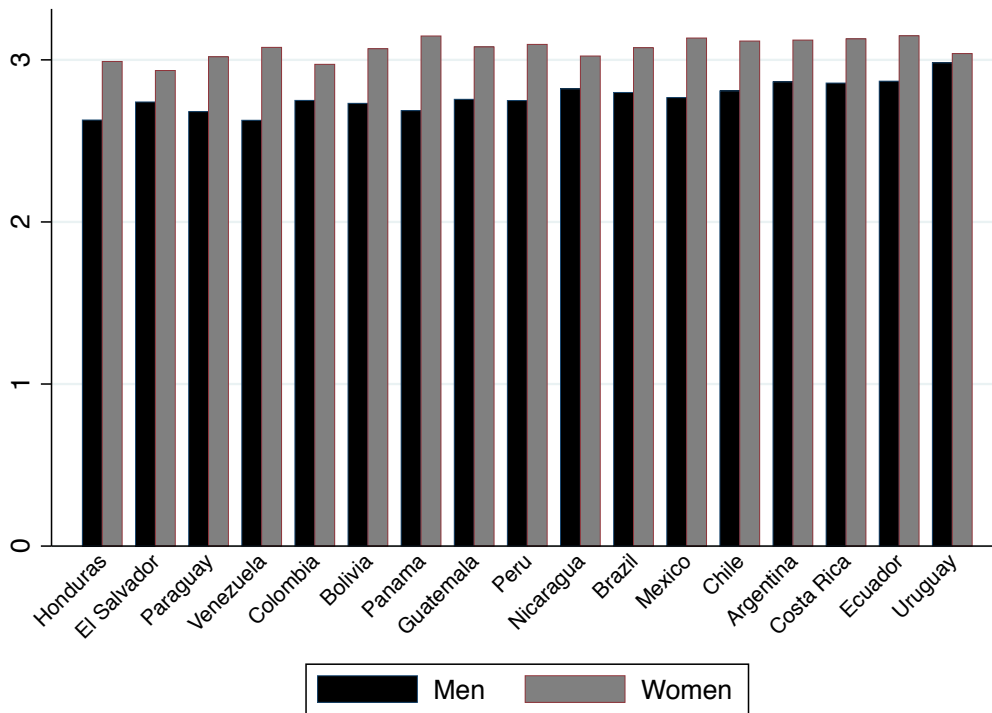


Figure 2: Sense of Government Responsiveness by Country and Gender 2008-12

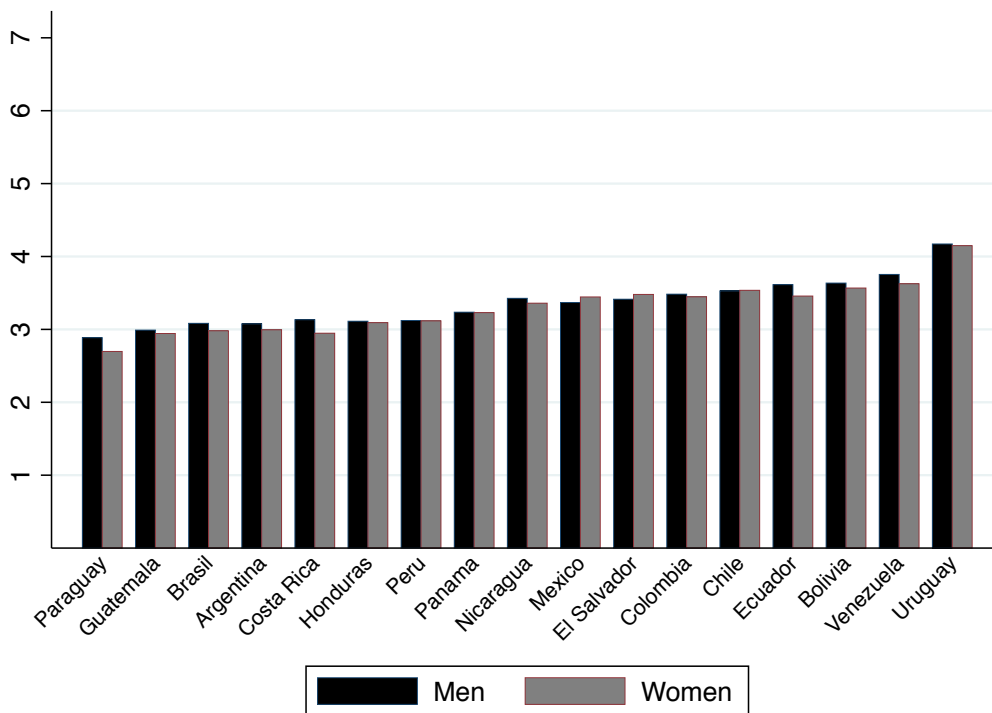


Figure 3: Interest in Politics by Country and Gender 2006-12

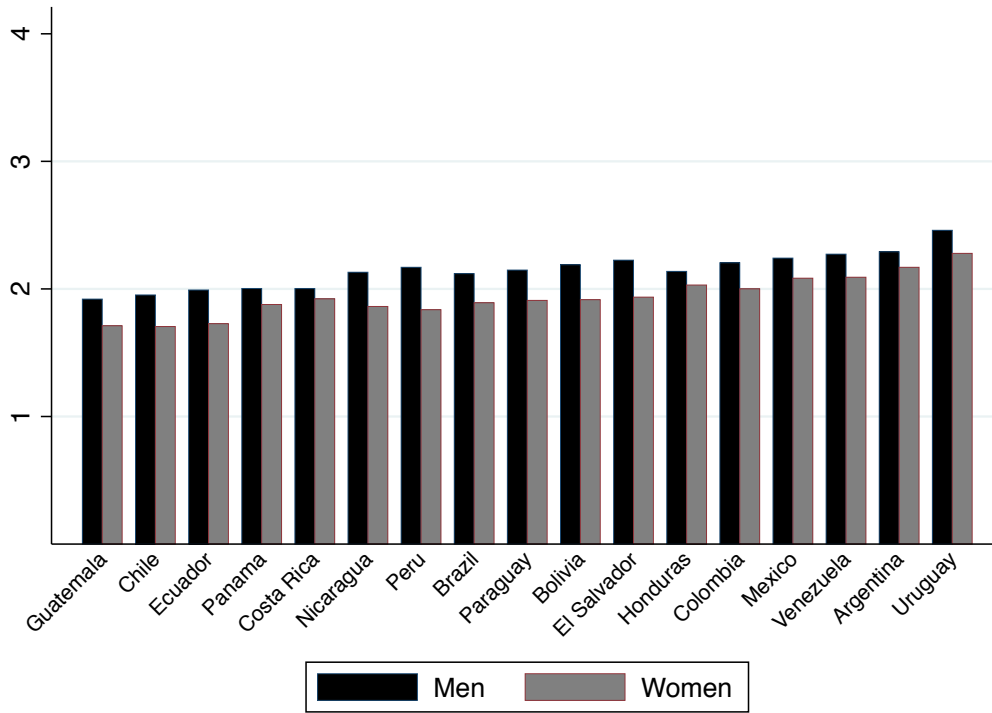
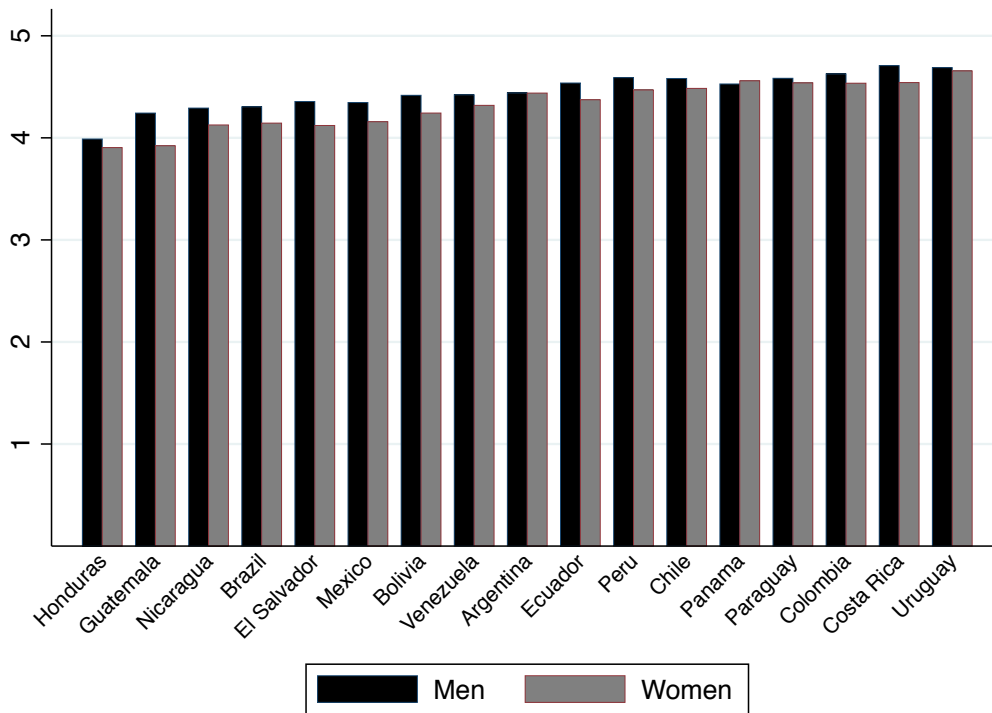


Figure 4: Political News Consumption by Country and Gender 2010-12



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