

# Why women participate less in civic activity: Evidence from Mali\*

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## Abstract

Civic engagement fails to foster democratic representation and accountability when women or other marginalized groups face barriers to participation, as they do in many developing countries. Rather than flattening access to participation, a randomly assigned civic education course in Mali widened the gender gap when it increased civic activity among men while decreasing that among women. Qualitative evidence reveals mechanisms by which the information intervention generated perverse consequences for women. In a place where women are traditionally unwelcome actors in the public sphere, the course heightened the salience of civic activity, thus increasing social costs for female participators. Women report implicit and explicit threats of sanctions from male relatives and village elders. The intervention did, however, work to close the gender gap in civic and political knowledge. Together, these findings suggest that information asymmetries constrain civic participation, but information alone cannot overcome discriminatory gender norms – and may even exacerbate them.

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# 1 Introduction

Globally, women engage less than men in civic activity, and this is particularly true in developing societies (Verba et al., 1993; Isaksson et al., 2012). To the extent that civic participation is a mechanism for individuals and groups to make their voices heard and hold leaders accountable, such a gender disparity undermines the representativeness of government to its people. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, this paper investigates two potential explanations for the gender gap in participation: asymmetric costs to participation and deficits of civic information.

First, I examine the easier of the two constraints to manipulate – whether increasing civic information and skills can close the gender gap in civic participation. Rather than flattening access, a randomly assigned civic education intervention in Mali actually widened the disparity, increasing civic participation among men while decreasing that among women. Focus groups and interviews suggest that, in a place where women are traditionally unwelcome actors in the public sphere, the intervention heightened the salience of civic participation thus increasing social costs among women. Evidence of a more general phenomenon, I show that socio-economic determinants of gender discrimination within Mali help explain cross-country variation in the gender gap in civic participation on the African continent.

I define civic participation as citizen engagement in public affairs with the aim of improving public life or influencing government policy. Political participation – the act of directly engaging in politics through party activity, electoral campaigns, or serving in public office – is a subset of civic participation. While studies in American politics often focus on political participation (Verba et al., 1995; Zukin et al., 2006), a broader definition of civic participation is more appropriate in a developing country context. Where political parties are weak and disorganized, electoral campaigns focused on patronage rather than policy issues, and formal channels of contacting public officials rare or ineffectual, political participation narrowly defined is a less useful avenue through which citizens can affect policy outcomes. Instead, organizing with other community members outside of formal political organizations can be a more effective way to pressure politicians or voice public opinion. Confirming this intuition, Isaksson et al. (2012) find the gender gap in inter-electoral participation in Africa is greater than the gender gap in political participation.

I develop hypotheses to explain the gender gap in civic participation using a decision-theoretic framework. Recognizing that women are differentially affected by parameters affecting the choice to engage in civic life generates two sets of explanations. First, women face greater social and material costs to participation. Second, they are less likely to have the information and civic skills necessary to formulate and express grievances. A randomly assigned information intervention tests the second of the two explanations: whether infor-

mation deficits are a constraint to civic participation, particularly among women.

The relationship between information and civic participation is difficult to measure because of an inherent endogeneity problem. Participants in civic activity are more likely to be informed than non-participants because of learning that occurs through engagement. In addition, more well-connected participants can restrict access to or withhold information from non-participants. It is thus hard to distinguish whether information gaps between participants and non-participants are a result of differential levels of participation or its root cause. A field experiment that randomly assigns a civic education course to 64 Malian localities mitigates endogeneity concerns.

Treatment effects are measured using a civic event register, a novel instrument that produces more valid measures than standard survey questions. Because it is a normatively appealing item, standard survey measures of civic activity are subject to confirmation bias. The event register requires participants to provide detailed descriptions of each reported civic activity. I show that people are more likely to dishonestly report civic participation on a survey compared to the event register.

Examining treatment effects on the propensity of respondents to participate in civic activity reveals that while the intervention has no net impact on civic participation, it significantly increases civic participation among men while decreasing participation among women. To understand why, I additionally collect qualitative evidence from treatment communities. I find that pre-existing norms against women's participation in the public sphere are made more salient by the civics course, resulting in higher costs to future participation among women. Female participators report increases in both implicit and explicit sanctions by men in their household and male leaders in their community.

The implications of these findings are nuanced. Information deficits *did* pose a constraint to civic participation among men which were rectified, at least in part, by a civic education intervention. And, it is not the case that women failed to gain anything from the civics course either. Women's civic and political knowledge improved significantly with treatment. The fact that these changes in knowledge and attitudes did not translate into changes in civic behavior for women as it did for men suggests that pre-existing gender norms rather than disparities in knowledge and skills are the binding constraint on female participation. While women may reap some benefit from improved civic skills and knowledge, closing the gender gap in civic participation requires the harder and longer work of changing gender norms.

This work adds to a growing evidence base on gender equality in local development. Mandating female participation has been shown to improve gender equality in politics. In Afghanistan, mandating involvement of women in local elections and on village councils more

than superficially increases female participation in local governance and has a demonstration effect of making women’s political participation more acceptable (Beath et al., 2013). Similarly, electoral quotas in India continue to elicit greater female political and economic participation after they are withdrawn (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004; Bhavnani, 2009). A cross-country study on the African continent finds additional support for the idea that increasing representation of women in elected positions decreases the gender disparity in political participation (Barnes and Burchard, 2013).

However, gender norms are not quickly or easily transformed and sometimes undermine egalitarian institutions. In India, men still evaluate female politicians unfavorably due to strong distaste for female leadership (as opposed to poor performance) (Beaman et al., 2009) and in China, women frequently have their ballots cast or filled out by others without their consultation (Scott and Pang, 2006). Similar to this paper’s findings, a review of USAID programs finds that encouraging gender equality through civic education interventions and not a formal mandate reinforce gender disparities in the political realm (USAID, 2002).

Mixed findings in the literature on the gendered effects of reducing barriers to civic and political participation highlight the salience of social costs. Attempting to increase voter turnout through social pressure, Jung et al. (2012) find that a get-out-the-vote campaign increasing awareness of the visibility of voting in fact depresses female turnout. In contrast, Grossman et al. (2013) find that reducing barriers to participation through information technology can flatten gender disparities. Text-messaging is a relatively anonymous, and thus less costly, way of contacting politicians compared to turning out to vote or the visible civic acts I study.

This study additionally makes theoretical and methodological contributions to the literature on information and civic participation. While existing studies have identified a conditional effect of information on civic participation by gender (Finkel et al., 2000; USAID, 2002), I contribute theoretical intuition and explore mechanisms underlying the gendered impact of civic education. Previous studies attempt to address the problem of selection bias by controlling for confounding participant attributes (Finkel, 2002; Bratton et al., 1999), but the analyses are still subject to bias from unobservable factors. The use of an experimental design coupled with qualitative data collection additionally highlights the advantages of using a mixed-method approach. The field experiment soundly identifies the puzzling and, for some, unexpected finding that a civic education intervention reduced female participation. The focus groups and interviews then uncover the mechanisms by which the intervention led to a perverse consequence for women.

## 2 Micro-dynamics of civic participation

To generate potential explanations for why women participate less in civic activity, I turn to micro-level theories of an individual's choice to engage in civic life. Little in the extant literature theorizes the decision to engage in civic activity; however, theories of political participation are far more developed. I briefly discuss the latter and then consider its implications for civic participation, broadly defined.

Downs' (1957) rational voting model formulates the choice to vote as a function of the probability with which the activity will yield a beneficial outcome, the size of that benefit, and the cost of the activity being undertaken. The expected payoff of participation is

$$E(V) = p(B) - C$$

where  $p$  is the probability the action will result in a beneficial outcome,  $B$  is the evaluation of the proposed alternative relative to the status quo and  $c$  is the cost of participating. Others (Riker and Ordeshook, 1968; Fiorina, 1976) later re-formulate this purely instrumental model with modifications that reflect more expressive components of voting. Notably, Riker and Ordeshook recognize that benefits to voting are not purely conditional on the probability that the action yields a particular outcome. Rather, there are additional indirect benefits of voting such as an ethical commitment to vote, an appreciation for the democratic system, or an affinity for a particular party or candidate. Similarly, "expressive" theories of political participation rely on social and psychological explanations rather than an economic calculus such as gaining or expressing a valued identity through voting and other forms of civic actions Schuessler (2000).

The instrumental model predicts that the most well-connected and well-off individuals are most likely to participate in politics. Wealthier people will incur lower relative direct costs of participation and wealth or connectedness increases  $p$ , the probability with which the outcome achieves the intended result. Verba and Nie's (1972) study in the United States confirms that Americans with high socio-economic status are more likely to participate politically. Expressive theories suggest that the more an individual is dissatisfied with the status quo, the more she should be motivated to express her demands or complaints, regardless of the outcome. Controlling for socio-economic status, Verba and Nie find that Black Americans are more likely to participate in civic engagement than White Americans.

Both rationales predict greater levels of education lead to increased political engagement, even controlling for socio-economic status. More educated people are "more likely to consider themselves competent to influence the government" (Almond and Verba, 1963). On the one hand, this would increase the parameter  $p$ , thus increasing the expected value of civic participation. On the other hand, educated individuals are more likely to "be aware of

politics” and “to have political opinions” thus making expressive engagement in politics more likely. Other explanations for the link between education and civic engagement include the opportunity to practice civic skills and higher cognitive attainment.

These insights about the determinants of political participation are as, if not more, salient for civic participation. Because voting is anonymous and civic participation is not, social costs and benefits may be even greater in the civic than the political context. Further, voting and some forms of political participation such as promoting a party or candidate are relatively simple tasks compared to engaging in community meetings or formulating demands on politicians.

This discussion suggests two separate, but not mutually exclusive, arguments for why women participate less in civic life. First, women face higher costs to participation. This cost can be material: women are likely less financially secure than men, making time and monetary costs to participation a greater constraint. Women also face more discrimination in the public sphere making social costs to civic participation much greater for women than men. Second, women have less access to information and skills necessary for meaningful engagement than men. These asymmetries lead to more uncertainty among women over  $p$ , the efficacy of their actions, and  $B$ , the value of taking an action. Further, information deficits make the formulation of demands or grievances more costly.

A randomly assigned civic education intervention provides a rigorous test of the second argument: whether information deficits are responsible for the disparity in civic participation between men and women. I find that while low levels of information constrain civic participation among men, they do not explain gender disparities in participation. Qualitative data provides evidence in support the first explanation: differential costs to participation can better account for gender disparity in civic engagement.

### **3 Civic participation in the Malian context**

To test whether information deficits constrain rural citizens, and women in particular, from participating in civic life, this paper examines the impact of a civic education intervention in one developing democracy, Mali. Mali was considered a stable democracy from 1992 until March 2012 when a group of soldiers briefly took power during a military coup. The data examined in this study were collected in 2011, prior to the coup. Though Mali remains one of the poorest countries in the world and ranks in the 94th percentile on the Human Development Index, Mali’s democracy was known for robust *de jure* democratic institutions and protections of civil and political liberties. Most Malian elections have been judged free and fair by election observers, a Press Freedom Index ranked Mali second in all of Africa

(Reporters without Borders 2010), and the state constitution protected the right to free association and assembly.

In spite of these formally protected rights and freedoms, social inequities in Mali invoke Fiorina’s (1999) warning of the “dark side” of civic engagement whereby the interests of those most civically engaged are incongruous with the interests of the larger community. This is best exemplified by disparities in civic participation among gender groups. Other marginalized groups such as youth and minority ethnicities also participate relatively less than their more enfranchised counterparts, but the gender disparity in civic participation is, by far, the largest. Globally, the 2010 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index ranked Mali 131 of 134 countries.

This section discusses two key features of Malian society that contribute to such high levels of gender disparity: discriminatory laws and norms and gender-related information asymmetries. While neither is atypical of a developing country, Mali is somewhat of an outlier. On the other hand, because of readily observable differences between genders, Mali is a useful case for exploring the mechanisms underlying gender-based differences in civic and political participation. The significance of these mechanisms can be tested more systematically across countries in future research.

### 3.1 Marginalized social status

Women are widely considered a marginalized social category in Malian society. One reason for disenfranchisement arises from customary land law as women are traditionally unable to own land. Women are also formally discriminated against in the legal code: the legal marriage age for women is lower than for men; women need their husband’s permission to open a business; as the head of the family, the husband controls household finances and choice of residence; and women are legally bound to obey their husbands. Widespread social norms such as domestic violence against women and high rates of female circumcision also negatively effect female engagement in the public sphere.<sup>1</sup>

A closer look at Bambara gender ideology reveals some cultural explanations for these formal and informal gender norms. Bambara is the majority ethno-linguistic group in Mali and as such, may influence other groups.<sup>2</sup> According to Turriffin (1988), “Men are structurally dominant because belief in male superiority legitimates their control over the jural-political domain as well as over women’s reproductive and productive labor power; men are considered the most important agricultural workers.” Women have some power independent

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<sup>1</sup>For a more comprehensive discussion, see Bleck (2011).

<sup>2</sup>Bambara constitutes about two-thirds of the sample population in the survey data exploited in this paper.

of their husbands that derives from their child-bearing capacity and services as domestic workers, but economically, they are inferior.

While urbanization and economic development often bring with it improved gender relations, this is not necessarily the case for the Bambara. Patrilineal norms governing lineage gives men privileged access to land, labor and technology. Further, traditional cultural definitions governing appropriate marketing activity for men and women (who trades which goods, who buys and who sells) has given men an even greater advantage. According to Wooten (2003), “the male-centered patterns of access to key productive resources that characterize the food economy are echoed in the realm of production for cash: men, particularly senior married men, have priority access to the most lucrative domains.” Specifically, men farm the most productive land and are responsible for providing staple products for meals, but otherwise keep income from surplus crops to invest or spend on themselves. Women cultivate smaller vegetable plots for both household consumption and market trade. With revenue from their surplus yield, women are responsible for children’s education, clothing and other household expenditures.

### **3.2 Information and skill deficits**

Lack of access to information and weak formal education contribute to making civic and political information a scarce asset in Mali for both men and women. For households living in rural areas, access to television and newspaper is very infrequent and not all households can afford a radio. As a result, in the 2006 Demographic and Health Survey, only 26 percent of participants say they watch television and only 2 percent say they read newspapers at least once a week, although 60 percent say they listen to radio at least once a week. And while 77 percent of Malian children are presently enrolled in primary school, according to UNICEF, only 26 percent of adults are literate. Finally, an informal review of existing civic education efforts in Mali found a lack of any systematic form of civic education.<sup>3</sup>

There is clear evidence of gender disparities in civic and political information as well. In the household survey conducted by the author among 5,560 rural Malians in 2011, women are 35 percent less likely than men to be able to name the mayor of their commune and 24 percent less likely to know how mayors are chosen for public office. Men are 23 percent more likely to correctly name the level of government responsible for providing local public goods such as primary education, clean water and primary health care. This may be explained, in

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<sup>3</sup>Civic education was officially eliminated during the Traoré regime in 1972 and reintroduced in 2009. Evidence of this reintroduction was not apparent at the time of the study. Students receive some information about government in high school, but fewer than 3 percent of respondents in the household survey report having finished secondary school.



part, by the fact that men typically own and operate the radio belonging to the household. Women reported never listening to the radio 8 percent more often than men and listening everyday 15 percent less often.

To the extent that formal education is necessary to seek out or comprehend such information, women are at a disadvantage as they report receiving formal schooling 18 percent less than men. And to the extent that pre-existing skills or personal connections facilitate future participation, women again fall behind men. Women’s engagement in local associations is primarily confined to women’s associations rather than mixed-gender groups. While 75 percent of women surveyed reported participation in the local women’s association, they participate a quarter as much as men in parent-teacher and professional organizations, a fifth as much in village associations and less than a tenth as much in youth associations.

## 4 Measurement strategy

Identifying the effect of being informed on civic participation poses a measurement problem. Citizens who do not participate in civic life are likely to be less well-informed because civic participation itself provides a source of information. So, is the fact that men participate more in civic life a function of being better informed, or are men better informed precisely because they participate more? A randomly-assigned information intervention overcomes this endogeneity problem. Average differences in civic participation between the treatment and control group can be attributed to the effect of information on civic engagement rather than the other way around.

Though the findings of the experiment are rigorously estimated, they are incomplete. Because of the sensitivity and normative nature of the subject matter, survey items on a questionnaire did not reveal *why* women participated less in civic activity, only that they did. To better understand the mechanisms underlying this causal relationship, follow-up interviews and focus groups with male and female participants dig beneath politically correct survey responses to expose the chain of events that led to diminished civic participation among women. The qualitative data collection strategy is outlined in Section 6.2.

### 4.1 Treatment: a civics course

In early 2011, I implemented a field experiment in 95 rural communes in Mali in which an information treatment in the form of a civics course was randomly assigned to some communes and not others. Communes are subdivided into an average of 15 villages averaging about 1000 people per village. The treatment is conducted at the village level rather than

the commune to ensure a more representative sample of commune residents can access the treatment. Provided at one-week intervals, the course consists of two or three half-day sessions conducted by a trained Malian instructor in the local language.

The course provides information about the rights and responsibility of citizens in the democratic process.<sup>4</sup> Importantly for this analysis, the course discusses ways that citizens can participate in the governance of their commune – by participating in public meetings, by staying informed about the government’s activities, by lobbying the commune council for community needs, and by making informed decisions at the ballot box. Participants are also provided details about the activities that fall under the local government’s jurisdiction, namely, the provision of local public goods. Because Mali is a secular state, the course highlights the fact that support for religious and traditional activities fall outside the government’s domain.

Within treated communes, individuals voluntarily self-select into treatment following a village-wide assembly that provides details about the course and an invitation to participate. As might be expected, participants differ systematically from non-participants.<sup>5</sup> About 43 percent of participants were women whereas women comprise about 50.5 percent of the population in the sample regions. The average age of participants was 45, higher than the average age among survey respondents of about 40 years old. Participants are better socially connected than non-participants: about 48 percent of self-reported participants are related to the chief compared to only 34 percent of other respondents. They are less likely to be from a minority ethnic group in their village, and are better educated. 70 percent of self-reported participants say they attended some school while only 56 percent of other respondents report any schooling.

## 4.2 Survey

Three months after the implementation of the civics course, a follow-up survey measures differences in outcomes between treatment and control groups. Because of self-selection of participants into treatment at the village-level, I am more interested in the effect of the treatment on the entire village than on the participants themselves. The survey is thus conducted among a random selection of households from each village rather than just

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<sup>4</sup>Course material was developed in collaboration with the Malian Ministry of the Interior (MATCL). Course activities and supplementary audio-visual material were borrowed from Malian NGOs and a national civic education program, PNEC. The full course curriculum is available on the author’s website.

<sup>5</sup>I infer course participation from affirmative answers to two survey questions about awareness of a civics intervention in the village and participation in that civics intervention. Likely due to affirmation bias, there is dramatic over-reporting of participation as evidenced by a quarter of respondents from the control group saying they participated in a civics course. To my knowledge, there was no other civics course carried out in sample communes in recent years.

participants from the course.

With an average of 30 participants per course in villages with often over 1000 residents, the proportion of course participants to village residents is small. Therefore, it may seem surprising that any impacts of the intervention are detected by the survey instrument. One potential explanation for finding treatment effects among the random sample of households is the oversampling of leaders – local leaders are assumed to be more likely to participate in the course and are thus oversampled in the survey. Second, tight-knit social networks within villages are an important conduit of information and thus can reasonably transmit information from course participants to nonparticipants. This is particularly true of women, 75 percent of whom say they are active in their village women’s association. In an experimental information intervention in Pakistan, treatment effects were just as large on untreated female neighbors as they were on treated women (Gine and Mansuri, 2011).

### 4.3 Sample

The experimental sample consists of the 95 rural communes in the five *cercles* or districts of Kati, Koulikoro, Segou, Macina, Baraoueli. These cercles, located along the Niger River, are in two of Mali’s most populous regions, Koulikoro and Segou. Each commune is randomly assigned to one of three groups: control, a first treatment arm or a second treatment arm. The second treatment arm provides an additional course session on local government performance that is not included in the first. Because the substantive distinction between treatment arms is not relevant for this analysis, I pool the treated groups together. The intervention in the 64 treated communes took about two months to complete. The control group does not receive any intervention and is visited by members of the research team for the first time during the follow-up survey.

Using a block randomization design, I stratified the sample on three variables related to information provision and government accountability: geographic region, whether the mayor elected in 2009 is an incumbent, and a composite commune-level development index<sup>6</sup>. Due to budget and time constraints, I treated 5 randomly selected villages plus the commune seat in each commune in the sample. The total number of villages in the experimental sample is 556.

Treatment and control communes are not clustered geographically so spillover from treatment into control communes is thus a possibility. This concern is mitigated by the fact that sample communes are spread over vast terrain with poor road infrastructure linking one village to another. Further, information that spills over into control communes would bias

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<sup>6</sup>The development index is produced by UNDP’s Observatoire de Développement Humain Durable and includes measures of electrification, telecommunication, population size, and public goods.

the estimated treatment effect downward, making spillover effects less of a concern for the purpose of this analysis.

## 5 Data

To understand whether and for whom treatment affected civic engagement, I combine demographic data from the survey with data on participation in civic activity across treatment and control groups. The data on civic participation is from the household survey and an event register. The former contains self-reports on the frequency of participation in civic events while the latter contains detailed self-reports of participation in discrete civic events. First, I discuss both sources of data and how the civic event register improves upon the survey data, a standard method of measuring civic participation in the literature. Then, I discuss the construction of the dependent variable measuring civic participation. Finally, I report the econometric specification I use to analyze treatment effects.

### 5.1 Survey and event register

The survey and event register are conducted with one person in 10 different households in each of the sample villages. Of the 10 households, 6 are selected randomly using a sampling method that ensures geographic representation across the village. Stratifying on gender, individuals within households are randomly selected. The remaining 4 surveys in each village are conducted with targeted local leaders: the women’s leader, the youth leader, the head of the village association, and the village assistant elected during the civics course.

Survey respondents are asked the frequency with which they participated in four types of civic activities in the past year: 1) attending village meetings, 2) attending commune meetings, 3) getting together with a group to address a problem, and 4) petitioning a leader. Response options include often, sometimes, once or twice, and never. With these data, I create a *Survey activity index* that averages over responses to these questions.

Asking survey participants to self-report the extent to which they engage in civic activity is a standard way of measuring civic participation.<sup>7</sup> These measures, however, are subject to confirmation bias. If participants believe it is normatively “good” to engage in civic activities, they are more likely to dishonestly answer in the affirmative to please the enumerator. A treatment effect would then pick up both changes in sensitivity to norms as well as changes in actual behavior. Because we are more interested in the latter, changes in actual behavior, I designed a measurement instrument to reduce this type of survey bias.

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<sup>7</sup>The question wording on my survey is adapted from the Afrobarometer.

When the participant responds affirmatively to any civic activity question, the enumerator then asks the respondent to describe participation in each discrete event. The enumerator records all responses in a civic event register. Each event observation includes the date, number of people involved, details about the issue at hand, and any follow-up or response. Subsequently, each event is anonymously verified by either the village chief or commune secretary. Fewer than one percent of reported activities were not verified. In total, the civic event register contains 9406 observations reported by 3716 respondents. The number of civic events reported per person is significantly correlated at 0.56 with the Survey activity index.<sup>8</sup>

Because the civic event register requires the respondent to provide detailed information about each event, it is more difficult to fabricate responses. This is borne out in the data: 836 respondents, or 15 percent of the sample, reported engaging at least occasionally in civic activities on the survey but then failed to provide accounts of civic engagement in the event register. In contrast, only 61 people, or 1 percent of the sample, reported never engaging in civic activities on the survey and then described at least one civic event on the register.

## 5.2 Construction of the dependent variable

Detailed descriptions in the event register allow for disaggregation of the data based on varying definitions of civic activity. The civics course curriculum discussed activities that fall under local government purview and those that do not. The former include provision of public goods and public administration. The latter comprise religious activities and those for profit or personal gain. To improve precision of estimating treatment effects, I limit the analysis to areas of civic activity I would expect treatment to impact. Blind to treatment group, civic events were coded into one of twelve categories: grievances, public goods, town hall meetings, taxes, political party, associations, personal conflicts, NGO activity, administrative, religious/traditional, and for-profit. Contrary to the other categories, I would not expect the treatment to have an effect on events categorized as religious<sup>9</sup> (496 events) or for-profit<sup>10</sup> (1491 events) in nature. Not only did the civics course explicitly state that religious activities fall outside the civic domain, but Bleck (2013) finds that religious and political

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<sup>8</sup>I do not distinguish between the four types of reported activities (attending meetings, contacting leaders, etc.), but rather whether or not a respondent reported participating in any activity. There is little theoretical distinction between differential treatment effects on any particular activity type and the lines between activity types are blurred. For example, some respondents attended a village meeting at which contacting their leader was discussed. The order in which the questions are asked also generates bias – there are four times as many reports of attending village meetings compared to getting together with a group to address a problem even though many of the reported activities across these two categories are not substantively distinct.

<sup>9</sup>Organizing an evening Koran reading, distributing garb for a religious holiday, and mobilizing youth to repair the mosque are examples of religious activities.

<sup>10</sup>For-profit activities include meeting to discuss getting a better price on goods at market, collecting payment for shared crop production, or meeting to discuss animal husbandry.

participation are inversely related in Mali.

The category NGO activity (1419 events, 343 of which refer to participation in treatment) helps address another measurement problem: the lack of a placebo condition. The control group received no intervention when ideally they would have received a course on something other than civic education. If individuals have a time budget for engaging in NGO activities, then their participation in the course itself is likely to decrease participation in other NGO-sponsored events. For instance, a participant in the civics course may be just as likely to attend a meeting convened by the chief, but much less likely to attend the next NGO project meeting. This would bias against finding a treatment effect.

The primary dependent variable, *Civic event indicator*, thus excludes religious, for-profit and NGO activities, resulting in a total of 6000 of the original 9406 events. 2915 survey participants, or 52 percent of the sample, report participation in at least one event in the included categories. For most analyses, I use a binary indicator of whether or not an individual reports participation in at least one included activity on the civic event register. Such an indicator answers the question of whether treatment inspired new entrants into civic life as opposed to whether treatment generated a marginal increase in civic participation. Count data is subject to greater measurement error resulting from variation in enumerator effort to record multiple events as well as participant patience in recounting multiple events. The count data also contains several outliers that disproportionately affect the analyses. I report analyses using the count dependent variable and dropping extreme outliers in the appendix.

### 5.3 Econometric specification

Because the dependent variable is measured at the individual level but treatment assignment is at the commune level, I use a mixed model fit using restricted maximum likelihood to account for dependence among individual observations within villages and among village observations within communes.<sup>11</sup> Average treatment effects on individual-level outcomes  $y_{ivc}$  for individual  $i$  in village  $v$  in commune  $c$  are estimated using the following equation:

$$y_{ivc} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_c + S'_{ivc} \Sigma + Z'_e \Pi + W'_c \Gamma + \alpha_c + \gamma_{vc} + \varepsilon_{ivc}$$

where  $T_c$  is an indicator of whether the commune received treatment,  $\beta_1$  is the parameter of interest measuring average treatment effects,  $S'_{ivc}$  is a vector of individual-level controls,  $Z_e$  is a fixed effect for enumerator,  $W_c$  is a fixed effect for block or the unit on which randomization was stratified,  $\alpha_c$  are random effects for commune,  $\gamma_{vc}$  are random effects for village, and  $\varepsilon_{ivc}$  is an error term. Standard errors are clustered at the commune level,

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<sup>11</sup>I use the *xtmixed* command in Stata.

the unit of randomization. To assess heterogeneous treatment effects, I interact the binary treatment indicator with an indicator variable for gender.<sup>12</sup>

To further increase power of the analysis, I include individual-level controls that have a direct relationship to the dependent variable. The binary variable *Woman* takes a value of 1 if the respondent is a woman. Members of minority ethnic groups are indicated by the variable *Minority*. A respondent is coded as a minority if they belong to an ethnic group to which less than a quarter of the other survey respondents in that village belong. 12 percent of respondents are coded as minorities. As a measure of wealth, I include *Asset*, a binary variable that takes a value of 1 if the respondent’s household owns either a television, car or motorcycle (about two-thirds of the sample). *Chiefrel* is a binary indicator that takes a value of 1 if the participant is biologically related to the village chief (39 percent of sample). The binary variable *Leader* takes a value of 1 if the person is one of the 4 targeted leaders surveyed, and 0 if the person is from one of the 6 randomly selected households. *School* takes a value of 0 if the participant reported no schooling, 1 if informal or some primary schooling was reported, and 2 if the participant completed primary or higher levels of education. About 60 percent of the sample reports any schooling, and only 12 percent of those completed primary school or higher. Because age is measured as a categorical variable placing individuals in 10-year bins of increasing value, I employ fixed effects for age.<sup>13</sup>

## 6 Effects of information on civic engagement

Before studying how men and women may have been differentially affected by the civics course, I examine aggregate treatment effects on the entire sample. Table 1 presents results of regressing the dependent variable – Survey activity index in Column 1 and Civic event indicator in Column 2 – on treatment indicators and control variables.<sup>14</sup> Results suggest no net effect of treatment in the case of civic event indicator and a positive effect of treatment (significant at  $p = .11$ ) in the case of the Survey activity index. All results in this section are robust to the exclusion of controls.

One explanation for the discrepancy between measures is confirmation bias. If respondents in the treatment group learned that civic engagement is normatively desirable, they are more likely to dishonestly report engaging in civic activity. The positive effect on the

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<sup>12</sup>Though the dependent variable is binary, I report results of a linear regression model for ease of interpretation. Results are robust to logistic regression.

<sup>13</sup>While these variables should not have changed with treatment, the reporting of some of them may reasonably have been affected. However, balance tests reveal no significant difference between treated and control groups.

<sup>14</sup>See Appendix A for an analysis of treatment effects on the full register of civic events and excluded categories.

Table 1: Average treatment effects on civic activity by measurement instrument

	Survey	Restricted events
Treatment	0.036 <sup>†</sup> (0.023)	0.005 (0.018)
Schooling	0.137*** (0.011)	0.076*** (0.011)
Leader	0.223*** (0.021)	0.156*** (0.021)
Woman	-0.154*** (0.013)	-0.170*** (0.014)
Chief relation	0.053*** (0.013)	0.033** (0.014)
Asset ownership	0.062*** (0.013)	0.037*** (0.014)
Minority ethnicity	0.005 (0.018)	-0.048** (0.019)
Intercept	0.038 (0.080)	0.353*** (0.069)
N	5472	5475

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. <sup>†</sup>  $p \leq 0.11$ , \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . All models include block and enumerator fixed effects and random effects at the commune and village levels.

survey index may thus be a result of a treatment effect on norms rather than actual behavior. Indeed, treatment makes people more likely to report civic participation on the survey than on the register. I test this by creating a dishonesty index in which I subtract the total number of events reported on the register from the Survey activity index calculated from the survey. The greater this difference, the more likely they say they engaged in civic activity on the survey without backing it up with reported events on the register. Treatment is positively correlated with dishonesty. For this reason, I henceforth use only the civic activity register.

In all cases, the relationship between the control variables and civic participation go in the expected direction. Schooling, leadership, relationship to the chief, and economic assets are all positively and significantly correlated with civic engagement. Conversely, membership in a marginalized group such as women, youth, and minority ethnicities is negatively and significantly associated with civic engagement. Age has the expected quadratic relationship where middle aged individuals are more likely to participate and elderly individuals are less likely to participate.

## 6.1 Heterogeneous treatment effects by gender

Though we see no aggregate treatment effects, I examine whether treatment has effects conditional on gender in Table 2. Column 1 regresses the Civic event indicator on both treatment indicators and their interactions with an indicator for Woman. The coefficients



Table 2: Heterogeneous treatment effects on civic events

	Full sample	Men	Women
Treatment	0.048** (0.021)	0.048** (0.019)	-0.057** (0.025)
Treatment x Woman	-0.104*** (0.026)		
Woman	-0.101*** (0.022)		
Intercept	0.329*** (0.069)	0.346*** (0.087)	0.177* (0.096)
N	5475	3229	2246

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . All models include individual-level controls, block and enumerator fixed effects and random effects at the commune and village levels.

on both interaction terms are large, negative and significant implying that treatment was significantly less effective at improving civic participation among women than men.<sup>15</sup> Re-running the analysis on subsamples of the data by gender explicitly shows the direction, size and significance of the effect on men and women. While treatment has a positive effect on men, the effect on women is negative. These countervailing effects offset each other in the aggregate analysis, explaining the lack of a net effect.

This evidence reveals the civics course has different impacts on citizens depending on gender. From a baseline of 60 percent among men, treatment increases participation in civic activity by 4.8 percentage points. In contrast, from a baseline of 42 percent, treatment *decreases* participation by 5.7 percentage points among women.

While the information intervention did not succeed in reducing gender disparities in civic participation, it does not necessarily follow that the information intervention failed to close information gaps between men and women. I examine treatment effects on civic and political knowledge of local government, and whether these effects differ across genders, using a *Knowledge index*. This mean effects measure equally weights 15 component questions from the survey testing knowledge of which public services fall under local government jurisdiction, the local budget, the name of the commune, the name and party of the mayor, the names of commune councilors, who selects the mayor, what town hall meetings should cover, and events in the commune.

Column 1 of Table 3 shows treatment significantly improves knowledge, and that this effect is not conditional on gender. Columns 2 and 3 show that treatment significantly increases knowledge in both gender groups. Because women start out with less knowledge about government, treatment actually closes the gender gap in civic and political information.

<sup>15</sup>Similar results obtain with the count variable (see Appendix B) and with the full civic event register (see Column 1 of Appendix A).

Table 3: Heterogeneous treatment effects on civic and political knowledge

	Full sample	Men	Women
Treatment	0.037** (0.018)	0.041*** (0.016)	0.042* (0.023)
Treatment x Woman	0.013 (0.020)		
Woman	-0.253*** (0.017)		
Intercept	-0.138** (0.062)	-0.172** (0.067)	-0.395*** (0.089)
N	5475	3229	2246

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . All models include individual-level controls, block and enumerator fixed effects and random effects at the commune and village levels.

## 6.2 Why women participate less

The heterogeneous treatment effect on civic participation by gender is not driven by differences in comprehension of the course. Even if it were, this would not explain the negative effect on female participation. The theoretical discussion proposed two explanations for why women might participate less than men: they face higher material and social costs and they have less information and skills. The treatment clearly did not decrease information or skills among women. This section investigates whether it increased costs, thus undermining any informational benefit.

To identify mechanisms underlying the findings of the quantitative analysis, I bring qualitative evidence to bear on the fate of women in treated villages. Data are collected during follow-up visits completed two years after implementation of the civics course in 16 treated villages distributed proportionally among the five sample districts. Follow-up visits consist of a focus group with the women’s group leader, female course participants, and nonparticipants, as well as interviews with several male course participants and village chiefs. A total of 112 people were interviewed: 64 women, 33 men and 18 village chiefs (or their proxies).

Transcribed texts from the focus groups and interviews (~110 pages) were repeatedly reviewed to discern patterns in responses about gender norms and discrimination from the male and female perspective. A thorough review then identified participant responses that reflected major themes in the texts. Where possible, I quantify these responses. Oftentimes, however, I use illustrative quotes that the interviewer suspects are representative of broadly-shared but unspoken beliefs about gender norms and experiences of gender discrimination. Given its sensitive nature, these beliefs or experiences expressed openly by some respondents are likely under-reported or misrepresented by others. For instance, many women said they

were at ease during the course, but later confided the opposite in private conversation with the interviewer. Similarly, men often claimed to support gender equality during the interview but later made remarks to the contrary in informal conversation. I use direct quotes from respondents to demonstrate

Because I am interested in mechanisms that explain the decrease in female participation, I target villages where this phenomenon is most evident: where women report no civic participation and at least half of men report participation. As a counterfactual, follow-up visits are conducted in four outlier villages,<sup>16</sup> or places where women participate as much or more than men.<sup>17</sup> If the cost explanation holds, these villages should not exhibit signs of increasing costs to participation for women. Further, outlier villages can help identify scope conditions for the cost argument.

### **6.2.1 Course exacerbates discriminatory norms, increasing costs for women**

For the differential cost explanation to substantiate the findings of the field experiment, treatment would have had to increase the cost of civic participation for women (as opposed to just decreasing the cost for men). This could have happened if the course made civic activity more salient, given pre-existing norms against female participation. In this case, community members might pay closer attention to acts of local civic participation, increasing the likelihood that women's participation would be noticed and sanctioned. Costs for women could also have increased if the course angered men or traditional authorities who disapprove of the equal and joint participation of both genders in the civics course. In this case, the course might have produced a backlash against female course participants, decreasing the likelihood of future participation by women in civic life. Qualitative evidence uncovers evidence of both mechanisms – women fail to participate out of fear of the increased attention paid to them, and because of overt threats or sanctions from men.

Underlying both scenarios is a commonly held belief among both men and women that politics and civic life fall under the purview of men. Chiefs in only 2 of the 16 villages say they ever ask a woman's opinion when making decisions about the village. A man from a treated village in Segou district said, "Women have nothing to do with civic or political activities, on the other hand, they should only busy themselves with taking care of their home – that's their place."<sup>18</sup> This sentiment is explicitly echoed by 10 other male participants and five chiefs.<sup>19</sup> One man from Macina district said, "In the home, man is chief, so it follows

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<sup>16</sup>Villages 5, 6, 14, and 15.

<sup>17</sup>Two are villages with a minority of Muslim respondents to investigate the role of religion.

<sup>18</sup>Interview M2, Village 1.

<sup>19</sup>Interviews M1-2, Village 2; M1-3, C1-2, Village 3; C1, Village 6; M1-2, Village 8; C1, Village 12; M1-2, Village 15; M1, C1, Village 16.

that outside the home, men and women are not equal; in other words, men should always be in front.”<sup>20</sup> The chief’s proxy in another village added, “Whatever the education level of the woman, she remains inferior to men.”<sup>21</sup> And the chief himself stated, “according to our tradition, in all decisions taken here, women do not have a word to say.”<sup>22</sup> Women in this village internalize this belief. As expressed in the focus group: “We think it is not our role to engage in communal activities, we think it is for men to do.”<sup>23</sup>

In five cases in which men say that women play an important role in the community, they later admit they would never discuss civic matters with their wives. This contradiction can be explained, in part, by the fact that certain income-generating activities fall in the women’s domain such as gardening and trading low-cost goods at market. While this custom substantiates the claim that women play an important role in the development of the community, it does not follow that women should be engaged in decision-making that affects the community. As one village chief explains, women should engage in activities proper to their gender, and in doing so, the village would advance; however, when it comes to decision-making regarding the village as a whole, women have no place.<sup>24</sup>

Anecdotal reports from civics course instructors further confirm the commonly held belief that women have no place in civic affairs. Many village chiefs in treated villages resisted the inclusion of female participants in the course. While course instructors were generally able to overcome such resistance to female participation by enlisting the help of a female leader in the village to recruit other women, the challenge to traditional authority and existing norms may well have produced a backlash.

When asked directly why women participate less, men blame it on women who “lack ambition to develop the community” and “who think it’s the men’s job to conduct such activities” as well as a lack of authorization from the village chief.<sup>25</sup> They also cite women’s lack of time due to household chores, incapacity to comprehend, laziness, lack of authority and charisma, spirit too weak to defend their interests, and poor ideas. In fact, one woman even said her husband was surprised by her participation because he thought she “was unable to take a decision” on her own.<sup>26</sup>

Many women agree that household chores and a lack of authorization from their chief or household head prevent them from engaging more, but few say they are constrained by a lack of understanding, spirit or good ideas. In addition to household chores, women cite

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<sup>20</sup>Interview M1, Village 8.

<sup>21</sup>Interview C2, Village 3.

<sup>22</sup>Interview C1, Village 3.

<sup>23</sup>Focus group, Village 3.

<sup>24</sup>Interview C1, Village 6.

<sup>25</sup>Interviews M1-2; Village 3.

<sup>26</sup>Focus group F2, Village 8.

the need to undertake revenue-generating activities to feed their children as a priority over civic activities.<sup>27</sup> More frequently though, women cite religion or tradition as impeding their participation<sup>28</sup>; they learn from a young age that their place is behind their husbands. Many say the course made them want to participate more, but they are not adequately consulted on decisions or invited to participate in fora where decisions are taken.<sup>29</sup> Others blame the illiteracy of their husbands who refuse to let them participate.<sup>30</sup> Some women who physically attended meetings say their husbands speak for them or intimidate them, undercutting their ability to autonomously express themselves.<sup>31</sup>

Responses from both men and women indicate that the course heightened the salience of these discriminatory gender norms, thus increasing costs to participation for women. Some women report implicit threats of sanctions for engaging in civic life following the course. One reports shying away from civic activity after the course: “We are scared of imposing ourselves in civic affairs for fear that our husbands will think we have surpassed our limits because we took a course on democracy.”<sup>32</sup> Another woman says she felt ill at ease during the course itself and, in particular, was afraid to speak in front of men. A village chief in the Segou region substantiates these fears: “Women’s participation in these activities should have its limits...an educated woman will forget that she is inferior to men and could even fail to obey her husband. Our custom requires total submission of women to men.”<sup>33</sup> Similarly, in the Koulikoro region, another chief says men were angry about female participation in the civics course because they were threatened by the idea of women being their intellectual equals. One male participant expressed unhappiness that women were invited to participate in the course saying, “men are different in terms of competence, intelligence, courage and perseverance.”<sup>34</sup>

More explicit attempts by men – both husbands and village elders – to repress women’s participation are reported as well. One female focus group participant said, “After the civics course, some women and I decided to approach the mayor to install a mill in our village, but the men wanted it to be them who handled it instead of us doing it ourselves.”<sup>35</sup> In the same village, women reported getting together to acquire a bank loan for development activities until the effort was shut down by their husbands.<sup>36</sup> In another village, the chief would not

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<sup>27</sup>Focus group, Village 12.

<sup>28</sup>Villages 2, 5, 6, 7, 14.

<sup>29</sup>Focus groups L, Village 1; L, F2-3, Village 8; Village 10.

<sup>30</sup>Focus group L, Village 13.

<sup>31</sup>Focus group, Village 2. Focus group P1, Village 10.

<sup>32</sup>Focus group F2, Village 1.

<sup>33</sup>Interview C1, Village 6.

<sup>34</sup>Interview M2, Village 8.

<sup>35</sup>L, Village 3.

<sup>36</sup>Focus group F1, Village 3.

authorize women to lobby the mayor following the course because he said it was the men's job to defend the interests of the village.<sup>37</sup> In one case, men were not opposed to women's participation in the course at the outset, but felt threatened once they saw women trying to take action. Opposed to this breach in tradition, men reported disliking the implication of women in activities that are none of their business.<sup>38</sup>

The course may have even improved the capacity of male elites to enforce traditional norms. Indeed, the course had a significantly greater impact on the three male leaders surveyed than the three male non-leaders. Leaders also participated in the course at higher rates. Because these village leaders are significantly more likely to be related to the chief, they are also more likely to defend traditional norms in the village.

The explanation that the course made female participation more salient has an observable implication that can be tested in the data. The negative impacts of treatment should be more apparent in the categories of events that were discussed during the course and less apparent for other categories of events, e.g. the excluded ones. In Table 2, the coefficients on the interaction terms between treatment and gender are large and negative. However, when the dependent variable is replaced with each of the three excluded categories of civic activity – religious, economic and NGO-sponsored – the coefficient on the interaction term is either positive or zero. The fact that the civic activities discussed during the civics course are the ones driving the disparate outcomes for men and women supports the explanation that the intervention made civic activity more salient, heightening norms against female participation in certain public activities.

### 6.2.2 Alternative explanations

One competing explanation for the decline in female participation is men and women are optimizing activities at the household level. Rather than experiencing a perverse effect of treatment, women may be doing what is instrumentally best for their family. Believing that men are more adept at participating in the public sphere, a household might decide to re-allocate its time budget such that men spend more time engaging in civic life and women spend less time in order to dedicate more time to activities in the private sphere. Because such a mechanism requires discussion of civic life by men and women in the same household, one observable implication of this phenomenon would be a convergence of local priorities across genders.

The survey asks respondents to rank several common needs in the village – water, health, education, roads, agricultural products, telecommunication and village gardens – by priority

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<sup>37</sup>Village 16.

<sup>38</sup>Village 2.

level. Women are significantly more likely than men to prioritize water and significantly less likely to prioritize education and roads. If priorities by gender converged somewhat following treatment, this would be evidence in favor of the idea that men and women discussed civic life in the home. There is, however, no evidence for this in the survey data. Regressing indicators for treatment, gender and their interaction on the priority level for each local need reveals no significant impact on convergence in priorities across gender. The qualitative evidence does not support the household optimization mechanism either as women in 15 of the 16 villages report either discussing the course with other women in the village or not discussing the course with anyone. The only exception is an outlier village where one woman reports discussing the course with her husband and another with her brother – but in this village, women participate more, not less than men.<sup>39</sup>

Another competing explanation for the differential treatment effect on civic participation is that women exit the formal system and instead engage more in the informal system. As one test, I examine how women’s attitudes and behavior changes with respect to their customary village chief as compared to the elected mayor. If it were the case that women were exiting the formal system in favor of the traditional system, treatment should increase the extent to which women trust in or contact the chief relative to the mayor. Using survey responses, I find no evidence that treatment causes women to trust or contact the chief strictly more, or more relative to the mayor. Women are also no more likely to report membership in associations as a result of treatment. Further, discussion in female focus groups did not generate evidence of disillusionment in the formal system. To the contrary, there are several examples of women attempting to engage in civic activity following the course but being thwarted by husbands or male leaders.

Finally, the course may have had a crowding out effect. If participation is a zero-sum game, then more participation by men implies less participation by women. While there is no direct evidence of this, I cannot rule it out with available data. If true, one solution to mitigate the perverse impact on women would be to provide the course to women only. Since this may further anger male elites, such an intervention would require further research.

## 7 Conclusion

Examining the impact of an information intervention on civic engagement demonstrates that the provision of civic and political information is insufficient to improve aggregate levels of civic participation. While information deficits proved a surmountable obstacle to participation among men, women faced additional constraints to civic participation that

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<sup>39</sup>F1-2, Village 5.

overshadowed any informational benefit they might have received. In fact, the particular information intervention actually increased existing gender disparities in civic participation in Mali. This perverse effect is caused, in part, by the intervention making civic participation more salient and thus more costly for women.

Using a decision-theoretic framework, I derived two explanations for gender disparity in civic participation. First, differential costs – both material and social – impede women and other marginalized groups from participating. Second, civic and political information deficits are more likely to affect women because of reduced access to information and lower levels of education. I tested the second of these explanations with a field experiment in which random assignment of a civic education treatment allowed for rigorous identification of the effect of information on civic engagement. The experiment yielded no significant effects in the aggregate and even decreased civic activity among women. The error in prediction comes from treating the decision to engage in civic activity as a choice-theoretic problem without recognizing the strategic aspects and preferences of other actors.

To better understand these strategic aspects, I use qualitative evidence on men and women’s responses to treatment. In the rural setting in which the information intervention was rolled out, women are typically unwelcome actors in the public sphere. Religion and custom prescribe a separate and unequal role for women in the community and civic and political activity fall outside the domain of women. The civics course made civic participation more salient and thus more costly for women. Women report both implicit and explicit threats of sanctioning in response to attempts to engage in civic activity following treatment.

Higher social costs dampening women’s civic participation is a more general phenomenon. Determinants of gender discrimination in the Malian context help identify scope conditions and explain cross-country variation in gender disparity on the African continent. An analysis of why the four outlier villages in the qualitative study exhibit less gender discrimination than the rest of the sample generate several explanations: underdevelopment, strength of cultural traditions, and strength of Islam. Proxy measures underdevelopment and strength of Islam are strongly correlated with a greater gender differential in civic participation<sup>40</sup> among the 19 countries in the Afrobarometer (see Figure 1).<sup>41</sup>

The divergent effects of the civics course render a nuanced policy prescription. On the one hand, an information intervention increased civic participation among a higher status group, male leaders, and raised civic and political knowledge among both men and women. On the

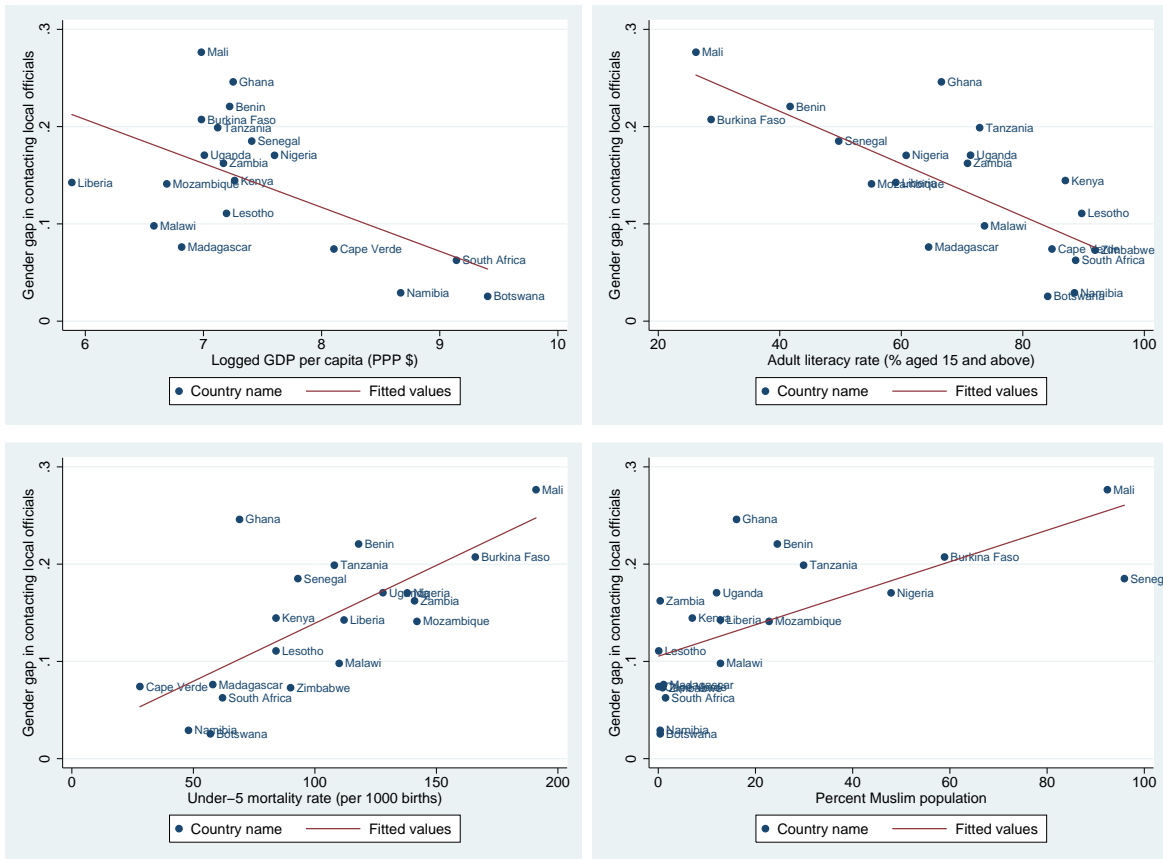
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<sup>40</sup>Gender differential in civic participation is measured by taking the mean gender difference in frequency of contacting local councilors and normalizing by the mean for men. There is a significant positive correlation of 0.75 between this measure and UNDP’s Gender Inequality Index.

<sup>41</sup>Correlations are statistically significant, and when the four variables are regressed on the measure of the gap in civic participation, about 70 percent of the variation in the dependent variable is explained.



Figure 1: Correlates of the gender gap in civic participation



Sources: UNDP Human Development Indicators 2009; Pew Research Center 2010.

other hand, treatment perversely affected civic participation among lower status groups, in this case, women. Evidence of normatively divergent impacts of democracy interventions from this and other studies suggests future attempts should be more attuned to the social constraints faced by women and other marginalized groups. One immediate and low-cost remedy would be to deliver democracy promotion interventions to women only or to women and men separately – an idea advocated by men in treatment villages who said custom and religion are intolerant of the mixing of genders in public. This will not, however, mitigate the deeper issue of repressive gender norms. That a civic education course failed to instill democratic ideals such as equal opportunity casts doubt on the ability of brief external interventions to alter social norms. Such a shift will likely require a combination of grassroots mobilization<sup>42</sup> and longer-term investment from outside actors.

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<sup>42</sup>Tripp (2001) describes the success of Uganda’s strong women’s movement in pressuring the state to improve female civic and political participation.

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## A Treatment effects on different categories of civic events

Table 4 analyzes average treatment effects on different categories of civic events. Column 1 shows that as in the restricted sample of events, there is a significant heterogeneous treatment effect by gender in the unrestricted sample. Columns 2-4 investigate treatment effects on the three categories of events excluded from the dependent variable. There is a negative and significant treatment effect on the reporting of economic or profit-seeking activities as shown in Column 2. One explanation is treatment caused people to interpret the meaning of civic activity in a different way and thus report less on profit-seeking activities they did not deem civic in nature. There is a positive treatment effect on participation in activities sponsored by external NGOs until I remove mention of activities relating to the civics course or treatment. Excluding these events, Column 3 depicts the negative and significant effect of treatment on participation in NGO-sponsored activities. This is consistent with the explanation that individuals possess a time budget for participating in activities sponsored by external NGOs. The results suggest that if people participate in treatment, they are less likely to participate in activities sponsored by other external actors. Contrary to my expectation, there is no treatment effect on religious activities as shown in Column 4. I hypothesized that treatment would have a negative effect on religious activities because people in the treated group would no longer consider religious issues as falling within the definition of civic activities and thus report less of them than people in the control group.

Table 4: Average treatment effects on civic activity

	Full register	Economic	NGOs	Religion
Treatment	0.012 (0.023)	-0.069*** (0.015)	-0.041*** (0.015)	-0.003 (0.010)
Treatment x Woman	-0.056** (0.025)			
Woman	-0.095*** (0.021)			
N	5475	5475	5475	5475

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . All models include individual-level controls, block and enumerator fixed effects and random effects at the commune and village levels.

## B Treatment effects using count dependent variable

Table 5 below replicates Table 2 using the count dependent variable (the raw number of events each respondent reported in the event register) rather than the binary dependent variable (whether or not the respondent reported at least one event). The first three columns in the table use the same multi-level mixed linear regression model as in Table 2. While this is helpful for comparing across the two dependent variables, it is not the best model to fit event count data. A less biased and more efficient model for fitting event count data is the negative binomial regression used in columns 4 through 6. Poisson models are more commonly used, but the over-dispersion of the data in this case indicates the negative binomial model is more appropriate. In all 6 columns, extreme outliers, those occurring in the top one percentile, are dropped from the data.

Table 5: Average treatment effects by gender

	Linear regression			Negative binomial regression		
	Full sample	Men	Women	Full sample	Men	Women
Treatment	0.076* (0.046)	0.084* (0.050)	-0.106** (0.041)	0.070 (0.050)	0.072* (0.043)	-0.132* (0.071)
Treatment x Woman	-0.171*** (0.063)			-0.209** (0.089)		
Woman	-0.326*** (0.054)			-0.387*** (0.064)		
N	5388	3152	2236	5388	3152	2236

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . All models include individual-level controls and block and enumerator fixed effects. The linear regression includes random effects at the commune and village levels. The negative binomial regression clusters standard errors at the commune level.