

**The Hillary Effect?
The Impact of the 2016 Presidential Election on Adolescents' Political Engagement**

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Abstract

What has been the effect of the 2016 presidential election on the political engagement of American adolescents? Did Hillary Clinton serve as a political role model for young people, girls especially, inspiring them to be highly engaged? Or did the negativity of the 2016 campaign, coupled with the victory of a candidate widely criticized as sexist, lead adolescent girls to withdraw from politics? Using a unique panel survey of parents and adolescents from 2016 to 2017, we find that adolescent Democratic girls in particular became more engaged in the wake of the 2016 presidential election. The biggest jump in engagement is found in their likelihood of participating in political protest. We further show that adolescent Democratic girls became disillusioned with the responsiveness of the American political system, and that this disillusionment fuels their interest in protest.

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And to all the little girls who are watching this, never doubt that you are valuable and powerful and deserving of every chance and opportunity in the world to pursue and achieve your own dreams.

Hillary Clinton concession speech
November 9, 2016

In 2016, Hillary Clinton became the first woman nominated for president by a major American party. Many commentators and the candidate herself speculated that breaking the “highest, hardest glass ceiling” would advance and inspire women and girls in politics more generally. And for good reason: Past research has shown that young women become more politically engaged when exposed to female candidates who are viable, visible, and novel. Clinton, who ultimately won the popular vote, was certainly a viable candidate and unquestionably visible. While Clinton has been a fixture in American politics for more than 25 years, her role as presidential nominee was novel as well. We might expect, then, that the Clinton candidacy spurred greater interest in political activity among adolescent girls.

Clinton did not run for president in a vacuum, however, and the 2016 presidential election was unprecedented for reasons other than her glass-breaking candidacy. Many other qualities of the election also might have influenced the political intentions and interests of women and girls. Clinton’s opponent, Donald Trump, made disparaging and sexist comments about women, including his political opponents, throughout the primary and general election seasons and was caught on tape boasting about sexual assault. The heated campaign, characterized by personal insults and attacks, might have turned off women and girls in particular from political competition. Clinton’s loss, particularly to a candidate who disdained women publicly, might well be expected to have generated political disillusionment and disengagement among adolescent girls.

Did the unprecedented 2016 presidential election spur greater political engagement

among women, particularly adolescent girls? Did Clinton's loss and Trump's success lead to political disillusionment? Is there a connection between disillusionment and engagement—does becoming disheartened by the political status quo ignite or dampen political involvement? This paper uses a nationally-representative panel study of adolescents (age 15-18) and their parents, to examine the effects of the 2016 presidential campaign on both political engagement and disillusionment, with a focus on whether those effects differ by gender and partisan identity.

Expectations

There are a number of reasons to expect Clinton's unprecedented candidacy to have encouraged greater political engagement among women in general, and adolescent girls in particular. Clinton herself might have served as a "role model" to other women and girls. Observing women in political roles may challenge stereotypes about politics as a masculine endeavor. The presence of women candidates and office-holders can indicate that the political system is fair, equitable, open, legitimate, and representative, encouraging those who have been traditionally excluded to view political activity as a worthwhile endeavor (Mansbridge 1999; Phillips 1995). To the extent that women politicians emphasize and work on issues and concerns of particular interest to women (Dolan 2008; Swers 2013), women and girls may find politics more relevant and interesting, and thus an attractive arena for engagement, when women are candidates and office holders (but see Stokes-Brown and Neal 2008a,b).

Clinton's candidacy in 2016 was widely interpreted and discussed as a disruption of male dominance of politics. While women have made considerable strides in American politics, they remain dramatically under-represented in positions of political power; fewer

than 20 percent of the members of Congress are women. No woman had ever been nominated for president by a major party, much less served as president. From white suits harkening back to the suffrage movement to the “I’m with her” slogan, the Clinton campaign framed her candidacy as a sign of progress for American women and American politics. Clinton highlighted her positions on issues of particular relevance to women, responding to Trump’s disparaging comment that she was playing the “woman’s card,” for example, by declaring, “If fighting for women’s health care and paid family leave and equal pay is playing the woman card, then deal me in!”¹

Previous research suggests that the presence of female politicians is associated with greater political engagement among women and girls, particularly under certain conditions (but see Dolan 2006, Lawless 2004). For example, women politicians spur engagement when they run viable campaigns; non-competitive candidates are unlikely to draw the attention or press necessary to influence behavior (Atkeson 2003, Dolan 2006). Female politicians are most likely to inspire engagement amongst other women and girls when they are visible, including when they are visible because of the uniqueness of their gender, such as the public attention devoted to the so-called Year of the Woman in 1992 (Hansen 1997, Koch 1997).

As their presence in politics has increased, we might expect that women are less notable and unique as women, and thus may be less likely to shape views of the political system or women’s place in it, and thus have an impact on engagement (Broockman 2014; Gilardi 2015; Mariani et al. 2015). Our recent work shows that the presence of women

¹ Parker, Kathleen. 2016. “Trump Deals Clinton a Winning Card.” *Washington Post*, April 29. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trump-deals-clinton-a-winning-card/2016/04/29/7e38d436-0e39-11e6-a6b6-2e6de3695b0e_story.html?utm_term=.d42861fb2774>

candidates alone does not spur engagement among young women, but rather the presence of *novel* women candidates, women running in districts without a previous woman office holder (Wolbrecht and Campbell 2017). Finally, we might expect women politicians to have a particularly significant impact on women and girls who share their partisanship (Andersen and Thorson 2010; Dolan 2006; Lawless 2004; Lühiste and Karp 2011; Mariani et al. 2015; Reingold and Harrell 2010; Stokes-Brown and Neal 2008b; Wolak 2015). Particularly in a hyper-partisan political era, women and girls may be more likely to respond to the presence of those on their side of the political aisle.

Clinton, who ultimately secured three million more votes nationwide than did Trump, was certainly a viable candidate in 2016. Like all major party nominees, Clinton was clearly visible, and that visibility was heightened as a result of her gender. As we have noted, Clinton herself highlighted her uniqueness as a female candidate, her opponent repeatedly called attention to her status as a woman, and the press also emphasized the gender dynamics of the campaign. Clinton was undoubtedly novel by our definition; the first woman to run as a major party nominee for an office that has only been held by men. Finally, Clinton is also unquestionably a partisan actor; Clinton and her husband have long been prominent symbols of the Democratic party. The Clinton candidacy in 2016 thus meets virtually all the conditions for an expected role model effect among women and girls, particularly for her fellow Democratic women.

We are particularly interested in the potential impact of Clinton on *young* women. Many fundamental political behaviors and attitudes can be traced to political socialization experiences in childhood (Beck and Jennings 1982; Campbell 2008; Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers 2009). Events and individuals, such as female role models, are more likely to shape

the behavior of younger who are still learning about the political world, developing their political habits, and more open to change. The attitudes and behaviors of older people are likely more “crystalized” and thus resistant to alteration (e.g., Alwin et al. 1991; Beck and Jennings 1991; Mannheim 1952; Sears 1983; Stoker and Jennings 2008). Previous research finds evidence of a role model effect among younger citizens in both the U.S. and cross-nationally (Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006; Mariani et al. 2015; Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007, 2017). Clinton herself often spoke of the positive impact she hoped to have on younger women in particular. When she secured the Democratic party’s nomination in June 2016, for example, she tweeted out a picture of herself dancing with a young girl outside of a campaign event with the text, “To every little girl who dreams big: Yes, you can be anything you want—even president. This night is for you.”²

While we have reasons to expect that Clinton had a role model effect on other women in 2016, we also expect that the broader context of the election might have been particularly significant for women. Indeed, the nature of the 2016 presidential election makes it virtually impossible to isolate the impact of Hillary Clinton from the effects of her opponent and of their interactions. Donald Trump’s candidacy was exceptional in many ways, including his use of gendered language and attacks. During the primary, he ridiculed opponent Carly Fiorina’s looks³ and suggested journalist Megyn Kelly’s work was influenced by her menstrual cycle.⁴ Trump claimed Clinton did not have “a presidential

² Clinton, Hillary (@HillaryClinton). “To every little girl who dreams big: Yes, you can be anything you want—even president. Tonight is for you. –H.” June 7, 2016, 8:08 p.m. Tweet.

³ Rappeport, Alan. 2015. “Donald Trump’s Uncomplimentary Comments About Carly Fiorina.” *The New York Times*, September 10 <<https://www.nytimes.com/politics/first-draft/2015/09/10/donald-trumps-uncomplimentary-comments-about-carly-fiorina/>>

⁴ Rucker, Philip. 2015. “Trump says Fox’s Megyn Kelly had ‘blood coming out of her wherever.’” *The Washington Post*, August 6 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/08/07/trump-says-foxs-megyn-kelly-had-blood-coming-out-of-her-wherever/?utm_term=.8fe41479410b>

look,”⁵ lacked the physical “stamina” to do the job,⁶ and that he “wasn’t impressed” when Clinton walked in front of him on the debate stage.⁷ In the infamous Access Hollywood tape, he was recorded boasting about sexually assaulting women.

We might expect that for many people, the 2016 election confirmed and reinforced every negative stereotype about politics as nasty and divisive. For women and girls, the 2016 election, including Trump’s attacks and Clinton’s loss, may have verified that the political world is hostile to and biased against women and that women are subject to harsh judgment and criticism when they enter the political arena. Whereas the presence of female politicians has long been expected to encourage greater trust and confidence in representation amongst women, Clinton’s defeat and Trump’s victory might alternatively be expected to undermine women’s faith in democratic responsiveness and representation.

Sex role socialization and gender norms are already expected to discourage women and girls from political action in various ways that are relevant to the 2016 presidential election. According to both sex role stereotyping and psychological research, women are more collaborative and communal, while men are more independent and competitive, for example.⁸ To the extent that politics is characterized by conflict, risk, and competition, these traits may discourage political participation among women. Both boys and girls also continue to be socialized to view politics as a male domain. Experiences that can be viewed

⁵ Parker, Ashley, “Donald Trump Says Hillary Clinton Doesn’t Have ‘a Presidential Look,’” *New York Times*, September 6, 2016, < https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/07/us/politics/donald-trump-says-hillary-clinton-doesnt-have-a-presidential-look.html?_r=0>

⁶ Cillizza, Chris. 2016. “Why Donald Trump’s attack on Hillary Clinton’s ‘stamina’ fell flat, in 1 picture.” *The Washington Post*, September 27 https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/09/27/why-donald-trumps-attack-on-hillary-clintons-stamina-fell-flat-in-1-picture/?utm_term=.b4fd87d8ab32

⁷ Diaz, Daniella. 2016. “Trump: I ‘wasn’t impressed’ when Clinton walked in front of me at debate.” CNN.com, October 15 <<https://www.cnn.com/2016/10/14/politics/donald-trump-hillary-clinton-appearance-debate/index.html>>

⁸ Socialization and structural situation may be reinforcing; for example, women may be averse to conflict because their greater likelihood of interdependence makes the costs of conflict particularly high (Atkeson and Rapoport 2003).

as confirming men's advantages in and women's exclusion from the political arena also might discourage interest in political participation among girls (Bennett and Bennett 1989; Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 1995; Croson and Gneezy 2009; Greenstein 1969; Lips 1995, Lizotte 2017). Women are consistently less likely to report that they feel personally capable of affecting or understanding politics, and these perceptions of limited personal political efficacy have long been viewed as helping to explain women's lesser tendency to political participation (Atkeson and Rapoport 2003; Bennett and Bennett 1989; Campbell et al. 1960; Conway 1985).⁹ Again, experiences which reinforce women's inability to effectively influence politics might depress political engagement among girls.

Previous research finds that women perceive gender bias in the political world, and that those beliefs likely contribute to women's underrepresentation in various political roles. Women in professions that tend to produce political candidates are more likely than similarly-situated men to perceive gender bias in the political arena and to view themselves as insufficiently "thick skinned" for political competition, and less likely to be willing to engage in negative campaigning or to give up privacy in a way a campaign requires. These views are associated with a lesser likelihood of considering running for political office (Lawless and Fox 2010). In experimental research, women are equally likely as men to volunteer for leadership, but less likely to do so if the leader is chosen by election, suggesting a general aversion to the competitive nature of elections among women (Kanthak and Woon 2015). The 2016 presidential election, which many viewed as

⁹ Baxter and Lansing (1980, 51) noted that "Instead of interpreting the difference [in personal political efficacy] as an inadequacy of women, we suggest that given the very limited number of issues that citizens can affect, the lower sense of political efficacy expressed by women may be a perceptive assessment of the political process. Men, on the other hand, express irrationally high rates of efficacy."

confirmation of continuing gender bias against women in politics and characterized by fierce and ugly competition, might be expected to depress engagement among girls.

Initial reports focused on how little women seem to have responded to the uniquely gendered aspect of the 2016 presidential election. Forty-one percent of women voted for Donald Trump, down just two points from the 43 percent who voted for Republican Mitt Romney just four years earlier, while 54 percent of women voted for the first woman nominee, more or less identical to the 55 percent who voted for Barack Obama in 2012. The eleven-point gender gap was similar to other recent gender gaps, such as the ten-point gap in 2012 (CAWP 2017). There were important racial differences in the vote choice of American women (a majority—52 percent—of White women voted for Trump, while over 90 percent of Black women voted for Clinton) but these were generally similar to the patterns in other recent presidential elections (Junn and Musuoka 2017).

Yet, a closer look suggests that the gendered nature of the 2016 presidential campaign had an important impact on voting behavior. Contrary to a popular narrative that emphasizes economic dissatisfaction, research finds it is sexism and racism that explain the important new gap in party preference between non-college-educated and college-educated Whites in 2016 (Schaffner, MacWilliams, and Nteta 2018). Similarly, other work finds that sexism, particularly when motivated by anger, more powerfully predicts presidential vote choice in 2016, compared to authoritarianism motivated by economic and racial fear. Importantly this finding is unique to the 2016 election; in other recent presidential contests, sexism does not predict presidential vote choice (Valentino, Wayne, and Oceno 2018). The specific characteristics of the election—a path-breaking female nominee and an opponent who was at least insensitive and at most hostile to women—

activated sexism as a factor in that election. Might those same characteristics also have influenced the political engagement of young women?

The expectation that the 2016 election has spurred greater engagement among young women also is supported by the groundswell of activism observed since the inauguration of Donald Trump, including the Women’s Marches and the record number of women running for office. A recent survey, for example, found that women age 15-24 are far more politically engaged than men of the same age, a departure from the typical pattern of lower engagement among women (with the notable exception of voter turnout).¹⁰

Hypotheses

Based on the previous literature and the characteristics of the 2016 election, we examine three hypotheses in this paper. First, we hypothesize that adolescent women have become more politically engaged than young men in the wake of the 2016 election. Specifically, we expect to observe individual-level change among young women—greater engagement in 2017 than 2016—with no corresponding increase among adolescent men. We refer to this as the *Gender Hypothesis*.

Second, we anticipate that the increase in engagement is refracted through the lens of party as well as gender. Political perceptions are shaped by partisanship, especially so in our current period of intense polarization (Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013). Party and gender attitudes are related in various ways; Democrats are more likely to favor equal roles for women (Huddy and Willmann 2017), for example, and less likely to believe that

¹⁰ Deckman, Melissa. 2018. “A new poll shows how younger women could help drive a Democratic wave in 2018,” The Monkey Cage blog, *The Washington Post* <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/03/05/a-new-poll-shows-how-younger-women-could-help-drive-a-democratic-wave-in-2018/?utm_term=.b574b600efa0>

men are better suited for politics.¹¹ In the period examined here, the Democratic candidate was a female role model while the Republican candidate was widely criticized for sexist rhetoric and behavior. Given how partisanship interacted with gender in the 2016 election, our second hypothesis is that it is young women who lean Democratic were especially likely to become more politically engaged, even when compared to Democratic boys and Republican or Independent girls, in the wake of 2016. This is the *Partisan Hypothesis*.

Assuming that we do find a higher level of engagement among adolescent girls, and Democratic girls especially, we then turn to the mechanism behind that outcome. While psychological and material resources have long been understood as the dominant determinants of political activism, recent research suggests that personal interest, grounded in personal situation or status, may motivate some citizens, particularly those who lack traditional participatory resources, to political activism. Issues for which individuals experience a personal connection in particular can drive some people to overcome barriers to participation (including psychological barriers) and engage in politics (Han 2009). In this case, some women may have perceived Clinton's loss and Trump's victory as a threat to the rights, status, and equality of women, either revealing the fundamentally unequal status of women and/or threatening to undermine women's gains and status. Women may have felt frustrated and even aggrieved with the political system, concluding that their interests are not well represented.

The *Disillusionment Hypothesis* predicts that (Democratic) girls have become increasingly disillusioned with the political system in the wake of 2016 and this disillusionment with the political system has spurred an increase in political engagement

¹¹ General Social Survey Data Explorer, Accessed March 28, 2018 <
<https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/trends/>>

among adolescent girls, especially Democrats. We can imagine a different effect; in general, a sense that the political system is unresponsive or unrepresentative is traditionally associated with less political engagement and interest (e.g., Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1960). In this case, however, we predict that disillusionment does not dampen engagement but rather is a spark igniting greater political activity.

Data

Our analysis draws on a nationally-representative, two-wave panel survey of adolescents and parents: the Family Matters Study. In the first wave of the study, conducted in summer and early fall of 2016, nearly one thousand (997) adolescents ages 15-18 completed an online survey. In each household, one parent also filled out an accompanying survey. Much of the content in the two surveys is identical, although some items were adapted to be suitable for either adults or teens. The second wave was conducted one year later, in the summer and fall of 2017. The same respondents—both adolescents and their parents—again completed surveys, which repeated the bulk of the content from wave 1. The reinterview rate between the two waves is 60 percent, comparable to panel studies in the ANES and GSS.¹² In most households, the respondent parent is the mother (70%).

With a two-wave panel, we can measure individual-level change. With data from both adolescent and their parents, we can model teens' political behavior while controlling for influences in the home. Both features are critical for understanding the potential effects of the 2016 campaign, and its aftermath, on the political engagement of both male and female adolescents.

¹² 60% is the rate for completed interviews with both parents and teens. Owing to partially completed surveys, in some models the number of cases is slightly higher.

To measure political engagement among adolescents we rely on a battery of items that ask if they have ever engaged in a number of political activities or, if not, how likely they are to participate in them in the future. The items we focus on are:¹³

- Vote in a public election
- Write to public officials
- Work in a political campaign
- Give money to a political candidate or cause
- Participate in a lawful demonstration

For each item, respondents had their choice from a range of options:

- I will certainly not do this
- I will probably not do this
- I will probably do this
- I will certainly do this
- I have already done this
- Don't know

“Don't know” responses were coded as a neutral, midpoint category, although results are substantially unchanged if they are instead coded as missing. “I will certainly do this” and “I have already done this” were grouped together into one category.

Such measures of “anticipated engagement” are often used in studies of adolescents, since their age makes it unlikely that they have participated in any of these activities. By asking youth whether they envision themselves as being politically active, these items reflect the political development of young people, specifically whether active citizenship is part of their psychological identity (Hart and Youniss 2017).

Gender and Partisan Hypotheses

We begin with testing the hypothesis that the 2016 presidential election caused young women to become more politically engaged. To do so, we compare the levels of

¹³ The index also includes “boycott certain products or stores,” which we have omitted because it is less directly related to presidential campaigning and the aftermath of the 2016 election.

anticipated political engagement for both girls and boys in 2016 and 2017. The first step is to model female-male differences in political engagement in 2016, the baseline of the study. Since we have a five-category ordinal dependent variable, we employ ordered logit as the estimator. Critically, all of the models we present control for parental political engagement with an index of their political participation, thus capturing the degree to which these adolescents are exposed to political role models in the home. Each model also controls for demographic characteristics that might plausibly impact political engagement, including the adolescent's race and ethnicity (African American or Hispanic), age, and self-reported grades, as well as the highest level of education of either parent. The critical independent variable is Female, a dummy variable coded 1 for Female, 0 for Male. The 2016 models are straightforward to interpret, as the coefficient for Female reflects the difference in that specific form of engagement between females and males.

Step two is to model change between 2016 and 2017. For the models of change, the dependent variable is a measure of engagement from 2017, with the identical 2016 measure included as a control. This means that the coefficients for the other variables are interpreted as their impact on change in the dependent variable. As an example, consider the model for anticipated participation in a lawful demonstration. The dependent variable is anticipated involvement in 2017, while the same variable measured in 2016 is included on the right-hand side of the equation. The coefficient for Female thus reflects the impact of being female on a *change* in willingness to engage in such protest activity.

Table 1 reports the results from our first set of models, while the results are presented graphically in Figures 1A-E.¹⁴ The figures present the probability of the top category: “have done/will certainly do” each activity. We find no gender differences in anticipated political activity in 2016, with one exception. Girls are modestly more likely to say that they will participate in protest activity (“lawful demonstration”). However, while the coefficient for Female is significant at $p < .10$, the predicted values displayed in Figure 1E suggest that gender differences were substantively small, with a lot of overlap in the 95 percent confidence intervals. On the whole, girls and boys enter the 2016 election season expressing similar levels of interest in political activity.

It is a different story for the change in political engagement from 2016 to 2017. Across our five political actions, girls on the whole become more likely to anticipate making political contributions and engaging in protest. In each of these change models, the coefficient for Female is significant at $p < .001$. Among girls, there was a notable increase in engagement in the wake of the 2016 election. We also see a slight rise in intention to vote among both genders, but for neither girls nor boys does the increase reach statistical significance.

In short, we have some evidence in support of the Gender Hypothesis. For two forms of anticipated political engagement (donating and protesting) there was an unambiguous increase specific to young women, but we do not find a general effect among women for other forms of political activity. In no case do we see increased engagement concentrated among males from 2016 to 2017.

¹⁴ All of the predicted values presented in this paper were generated using the margins command in STATA 15.

We next ask whether the highly partisan nature of contemporary politics and the 2016 presidential campaign concentrated the increased engagement amongst Democratic girls. Again we include the same control variables. To test whether change is conditioned by party identification, Female is interacted with a dummy variable for Democratic party identification. The model also includes a dummy variable for Independents, making male Republicans the comparison category.¹⁵ The interaction between Female and Democrat is interpreted as the change in female Democrats' engagement relative to male Republicans. A positive coefficient means that Democratic girls became more engaged relative to Republican boys. We also present the results graphically, in order to highlight the changes in each of the four party-gender groups: female Democrats, male Democrats, female Republicans, and male Republicans.

We do indeed find that the increased engagement is largely concentrated among female Democrats, thus confirming the Partisan Hypothesis. The results reported in Table 2, with the effects presented graphically in Figures 2A-E, indicate unique and significant effects for Democratic girls, distinct from Democratic boys and from Republicans of either gender, for campaign work, writing to elected officials, and protest. There are often smaller effects on Democratic boys, but no comparable effects on Republican girls, suggesting the engagement effects of the 2016 campaign were highly partisan and gendered.

We look at each political activity in turn. The effect for campaign work is complicated. Figure 1B shows that there was a general decline in adolescents' intention to volunteer for a political campaign between 2016 and 2017, as one might expect when comparing an election year when campaigns are in full swing to a post-election year when

¹⁵ Party identification was coded using the standard 7-point scale. Partisans include "independent leaners."

campaigns are less central. The drop for Democratic girls, however, is smaller and the resulting level of their anticipated engagement is higher, suggesting that after the experience of the 2016 election, Democratic girls were slightly more likely to maintain an interest in campaigning than other party-gender groups (Figure 2B). Three of the four party-gender groups become less likely to expect to give money to candidates after the 2016 election (Figure 2C). The exception is Democratic girls who are more likely to anticipate contributing to political campaigns, although the effect is not statistically significant. For writing to elected officials, Democratic girls are the only group which experience an increase from 2016 to 2017 (Figure 2D). The 2016 election did not lead to a statistically significant increase in the likelihood of voting amongst any party-gender group (Figure 2A).

The strongest evidence for the Partisan Hypothesis is found for protest activity (Figure 2E). Republicans (both girls and boys) show a slight drop; Democratic boys show a small increase. Only Democratic girls become notably more likely to engage in protest—an effect that is both substantially large and statistically significant. Democratic girls are ten points more likely to say that they will engage in a lawful demonstration than Democratic boys, the next highest group.

Disillusionment Hypothesis

As we have noted, we might expect that the historic candidacy of Hillary Clinton would inspire other women and girls to greater political engagement. On the other hand, the nasty and sexist aspects of the 2016 campaign might have led to disillusionment with the democratic system. It is unclear whether such disillusionment should be expected to catalyze or quell political activity.

We test the Disillusionment Hypothesis with a question that taps perceptions of democratic responsiveness, asking respondents to react to the statement “the political system in this country helps the public with their genuine needs.” Response options were a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, with a neutral middle category. We collapsed the categories to create a three-part division: Strongly agree/Agree; Neither agree or disagree; Strongly disagree/Disagree. We interpret disagreement as an expression of frustration with the political system, while agreement can be understood as a measure of satisfaction. This item is comparable to measures of external efficacy, although because it uses a different wording than standard measures of efficacy we refer to it as democratic disillusionment.

We first ask: Did Democratic girls become more pessimistic about the American political system? To answer this question, we model change in adolescents’ feelings about democracy with the same type of model used previously, including a control for their attitude in 2016 and their parent’s response to the identical question. As seen in Table 3, the results are clear: the 2016 presidential election context changed some adolescents’ views of the political system’s responsiveness to people’s needs, and in a negative direction. In particular, note the significant and negative interaction between Female and Democrat, which indicates that Democratic girls became more disillusioned with democracy. Figure 3 shows the probability of disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that the political system helps people with their needs, and thus expressing a pessimistic view toward democratic responsiveness. Republican boys and girls both became slightly less inclined to view the system negatively, no doubt as a result of their candidate’s success in 2016, although differences are not significant. Democratic boys, on the other hand, became

more pessimistic after their candidate's defeat, although the change is substantively small and misses significance.

Democratic girls become significantly and substantially more inclined to political disillusionment in the wake of the 2016 presidential election. Whatever pride, interest, or confidence in the political power Clinton's candidacy may have engendered—attitudes that, unfortunately, we are unable to measure—some combination of her loss, the content of the campaign, and Trump's victory appear to have generated substantial doubt about the capacity of the American political system to address people's needs among girls who identify with the Democratic party.

The second half of the Disillusionment Hypothesis asks whether this pessimism has driven the increased propensity for political activism among Democratic girls we observed above. The answer is yes—for political protest. In models for the other forms of participation, there is no clear relationship between disillusionment and a change in anticipated engagement (results not shown but available upon request).

We determine the link between disillusionment and protest activity with two sets of models. The first set predicts political engagement in 2016 as a function of democratic discontent. Recall that the question at hand is whether (a) disillusionment affects political engagement for (b) girls who (c) identify as Democrats. The combination of a, b, and c therefore requires a triple interaction term: Female X Democrat X Democratic Disillusionment. Note that Democratic Disillusionment is coded so that a higher number means that the respondent sees the system as more responsive; a negative coefficient thus means that democratic disillusionment leads to greater engagement. The second models examine change in views on whether the political system is responsive, with a variable that

subtracts the value in 2016 from that in 2017. The variable ranges from 5, a maximum increase in satisfaction with democracy, to -5, a maximum decrease. A negative coefficient for this interaction term means that a rise in disillusionment (that is, a decrease in perceived democratic responsiveness) toward democracy leads to greater engagement. In addition to the triple interaction term, the models also include interactions with every other combination of the interactive variables, e.g. Female X Democrat, Female X Democratic Disillusionment, Democrat X Democratic Disillusionment. This is to ensure that we have isolated the impact of the combination of gender, party, and feelings about American democracy.

Because complex interactions are difficult to interpret, Figure 4 displays the results graphically. The darker bars on the left show the propensity for protest amongst those who expressed satisfaction with the American political system in 2016. Among those who were optimistic about democratic responsiveness in 2016, gender and party differences in propensity to protest can be observed: Democratic boys were the least interested in protest and Democratic girls were the most, but there is little statistical significance between Democratic girls and Republican girls or boys.

The lighter bars show the propensity to protest among a subset of those who were politically sanguine in 2016 (darker bars) but became disillusioned in 2017. Recall that Democratic girls were much more likely to shift in a pessimistic direction from 2016 to 2017. The difference as a result of becoming disillusioned is dramatic. For Republican boys and girls, becoming more dissatisfied after the 2016 campaign is associated with a considerable decline in the likelihood of expected protest. The negative effects for these respondents is consistent with work that finds that frustration or lack of external efficacy is

associated with less interest in political engagement. If you do not believe the system is responsive to people's needs, why participate?

Yet, for Democrats increased dissatisfaction in response to the 2016 election appears to drive increased political participation. We see an increase in anticipated protest among both Democratic boys and girls, but the level for Democratic girls is much higher. Furthermore, the model confirms that the effect is concentrated among Democratic girls, as the interaction term that combines gender, Democratic party ID, and attitudes toward American democracy is negative (indicating greater disillusionment) and significant at $p < .10$. Girls who became disillusioned in 2017 became *more likely* than any other group to expect to engage in political protest after Clinton's loss and Trump's election. For these young women, their sense that the political system does not represent the needs of most people did not lead to disengagement, but rather seems to fuel a commitment to participating. Given their dissatisfaction with the status quo and partisan allegiance, we can assume their political activity is driven toward political change.

Protest is typically understood as the behavior of those who are frustrated with traditional political channels as means for influencing political outcomes. That the largest and most significant effects are found for protest might be understood as an expression of frustration and an acknowledgement that some external pressure is required to bring about political change.

Conclusion

Following the surprise outcome of the 2016 presidential race, two threads have been common in post-election commentary. One is focused on young people's

disenchantment with democracy (Mounck 2018),¹⁶ the other on a heightened level of political activity among Democrats and liberals.¹⁷ We find evidence for both. To our knowledge, this is the first study to show individual-level change among young people in the wake of 2016, demonstrating there has been an increase in both dissatisfaction with democratic responsiveness and political engagement. In particular, we find that Democratic-identifying girls are far more likely to say that they intend to participate in protest activity. Although past studies of role model effects, including our own, have focused on the consequences of female politicians, these results suggest a different type of role model. Rather than (or in addition to) young women being inspired by the candidacy of Hillary Clinton, they have been activated in the wake of her loss and a campaign in which gender was very much an issue. Not only did her opponent deride Clinton using highly gendered language, but he is widely associated with offensive behavior toward women. This has not surprisingly led to concerns about the democratic system among young women, particularly young Democratic women.

This increased disillusionment is associated with an increase in anticipated protest, again among Democratic girls, a finding that challenges the current literature on political participation. Typically, mass surveys find that discontent with the political system is associated with lower levels of political engagement. As we have seen throughout history, however, grievance can be the spark that helps ignite the flame of political engagement, particularly for unconventional and elite-challenging forms of participation. Our finding

¹⁶ Mounck, Yascha and Roberto Stefan Foa. 2016. "Yes, people really are turning away from democracy," The Monkey Cage blog, *The Washington Post*, December 8 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/12/08/yes-millennials-really-are-surprisingly-approving-of-dictators/?utm_term=.658bcc151ee4>

¹⁷ "Since Trump's Election, Increased Attention to Politics—Especially Among Women," Pew Research Center, July 20, 2017 <<http://www.people-press.org/2017/07/20/since-trumps-election-increased-attention-to-politics-especially-among-women/>>

suggest that for Democratic girls, the 2016 election was a case in which frustration with the democratic status quo was channeled into greater engagement rather than a retreat from the public sphere.

At the same time, grievance is almost never sufficient for political action; opportunities and resources are the necessary conditions for individuals to translate dissatisfaction into political action. We understand our finding of increased protest among Democratic girls not only in response to the 2016 election but in the context of the wave of activism that emerged immediately following. The Women's Marches that took place in Washington, D.C. and around the world on the day after the inauguration of Donald Trump in January 2018 were the largest mass demonstrations recorded in American history. One out of every 100 Americans is estimated to have participated.¹⁸ Organizing and protests have continued through groups such as Indivisible, Swing Left, and others, many of which (like the Women's March) are led by women and/or have super-majority female membership.¹⁹ In addition to viewing women politicians as role models, Democratic girls have had other prominent role models—women marchers and organizers—for how to channel their political frustration after 2016. Thus, rather than a “Hillary Effect,” what we find is more accurately characterized as a “Women's Effect.”

It remains an open question whether the effects we have observed between 2016 and 2017 will endure, or if this is a short-lived surge in interest and activity. The Family Matters Study is scheduled to conduct a third wave in the fall of 2018, which will enable a

¹⁸ Chenoweth, Erica and Jeremy Pressman, “This is what we learned by counting the women's marches,” *The Monkey Cage* blog, February 7, 2017 < <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/02/07/this-is-what-we-learned-by-counting-the-womens-marches/> >

¹⁹ Alter, Charlotte, “A Year Ago, They Marched. Now a Record Number of Women are Running for Office,” *Time*, January 29, 2018.

test of whether the increased engagement persists. Should these effects endure, it suggests that we are witnessing a critical moment of generational “imprinting,” in which young Democratic women are being socialized to an amplified level of political engagement, directed specifically toward political protest. If so, they would parallel the “protest cohort” that came of age during the social tumult of the 1960s (Jennings 1987; 2002), except in this case the heightened political activity is found primarily among women. One lasting consequence of the Trump era may be a cohort of politically active women, whose entrée into politics was caused by not just inspiration, but also indignation.

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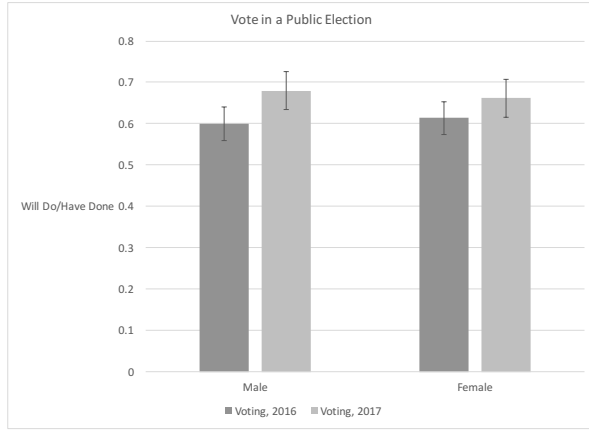
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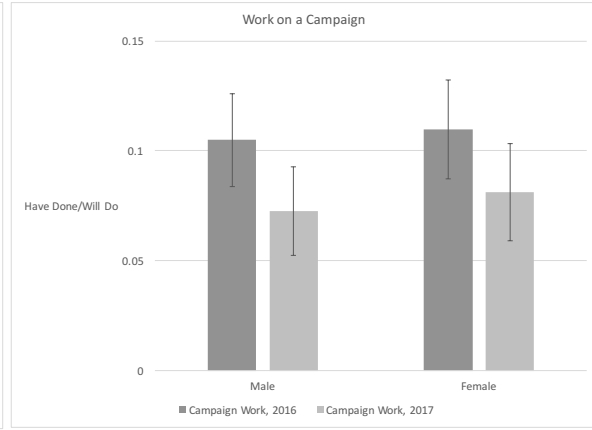
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Figure 1. Political Engagement by Gender

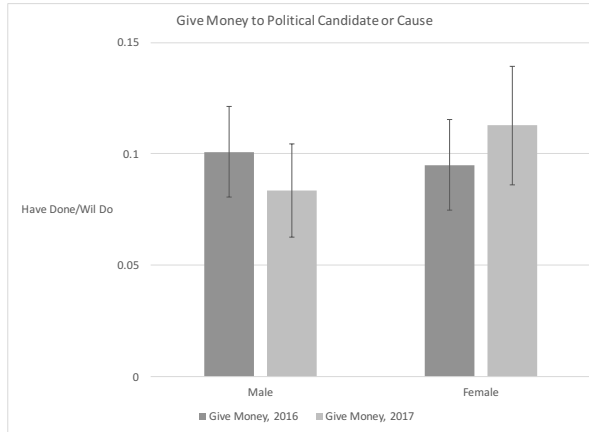
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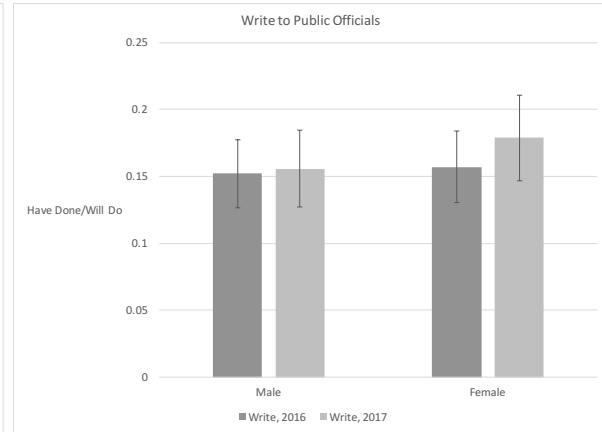
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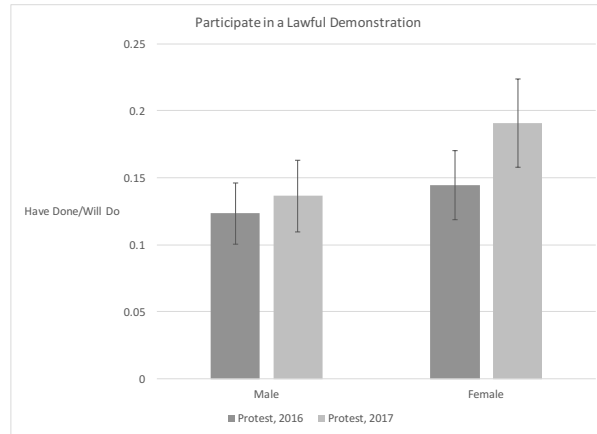
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Values calculated from models in Table 1. Bars are 95% confidence intervals.

Table 1. Political Engagement by Gender
Results from Ordered Logistic Regression

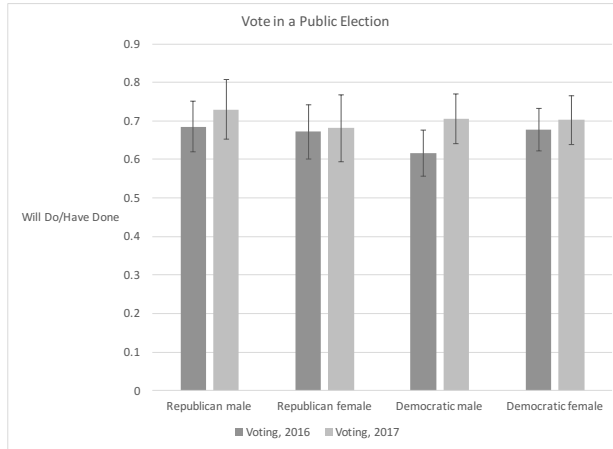
	Vote, 2016	Vote, 2017	Campaign, 2016	Campaign, 2017	Give Money, 2016	Give Money, 2017	Write, 2016	Write, 2017	Protest, 2016	Protest, 2017
Political Activity, 2016¹	0.44*** (0.06)	0.20*** (0.08)	0.41*** (0.05)	0.33*** (0.06)	0.49*** (0.05)	0.39*** (0.06)	0.39*** (0.05)	0.39*** (0.06)	0.42*** (0.05)	0.34*** (0.06)
Parental Political Participation	0.06 (0.13)	-0.10 (0.17)	0.05 (0.12)	0.14 (0.14)	-0.07 (0.12)	0.39*** (0.15)	0.04 (0.12)	0.20 (0.14)	0.19* (0.11)	0.49*** (0.14)
Female	0.13* (0.07)	0.21** (0.09)	-0.04 (0.06)	0.03 (0.08)	0.06 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.08)	0.13** (0.06)	0.05* (0.08)	0.03 (0.06)	0.04 (0.08)
Parental Education	0.11 (0.09)	0.01 (0.11)	0.08 (0.08)	0.05 (0.09)	0.03 (0.08)	0.09 (0.09)	-0.04 (0.08)	0.29* (0.10)	-0.07 (0.08)	0.13 (0.11)
African American	-0.26* (0.16)	-0.47*** (0.20)	-0.30** (0.15)	-0.12 (0.19)	-0.18 (0.15)	-0.14 (0.18)	-0.31** (0.15)	0.06 (0.18)	0.05 (0.15)	0.14 (0.18)
Hispanic	-0.02 (0.08)	0.12 (0.11)	-0.04 (0.07)	0.12 (0.09)	-0.16** (0.07)	0.13 (0.09)	-0.11 (0.07)	0.05 (0.09)	-0.06 (0.07)	0.03 (0.09)
Age	0.09** (0.02)	0.00 (0.03)	0.03 (0.02)	0.02 (0.03)	0.03 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.04* (0.02)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.02 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.03)
Grades in School	0.09** (0.02)	0.00 (0.03)	0.03 (0.02)	0.02 (0.03)	0.03 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.04* (0.02)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.02 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.03)
N	997	663	981	657	980	658	975	655	981	659
Pseudo-R2	0.04	0.07	0.03	0.11	0.04	0.12	0.03	0.11	0.03	0.12

Standard errors in parentheses
* p < .10 ** p < .05 *** p < .01

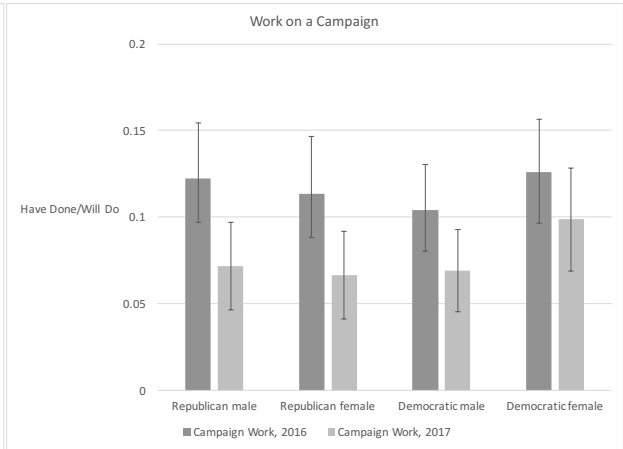
¹ This variable is the baseline measure of the political activity that corresponds to the dependent variable, e.g. for Vote, 2017 it is Vote, 2016; for Campaign, 2017 it is Campaign, 2016.

Figure 2. Political Engagement by Gender and Partisanship

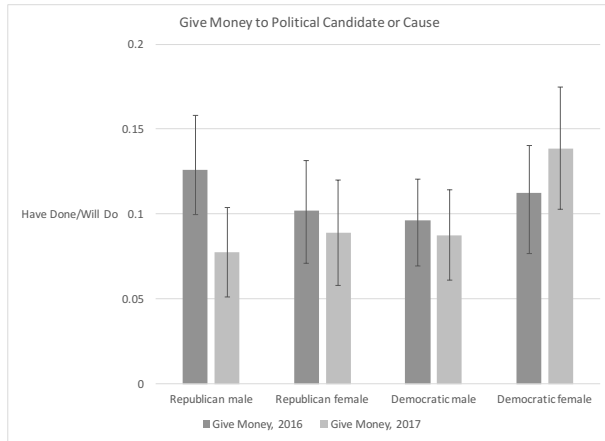
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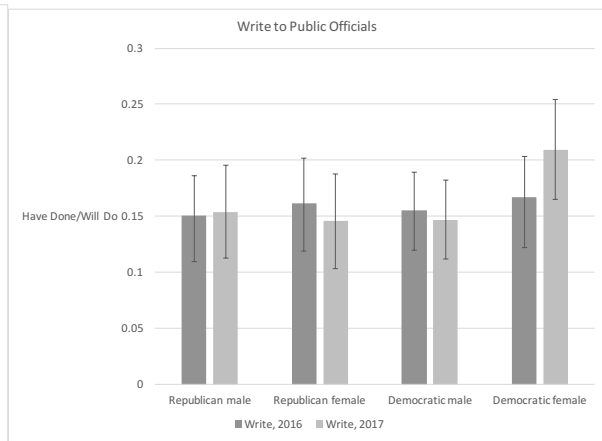
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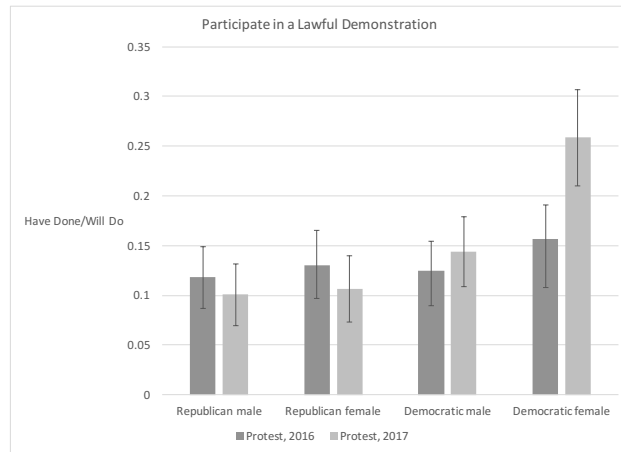
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Values calculated from models in Table 2. Bars are 95% confidence intervals.

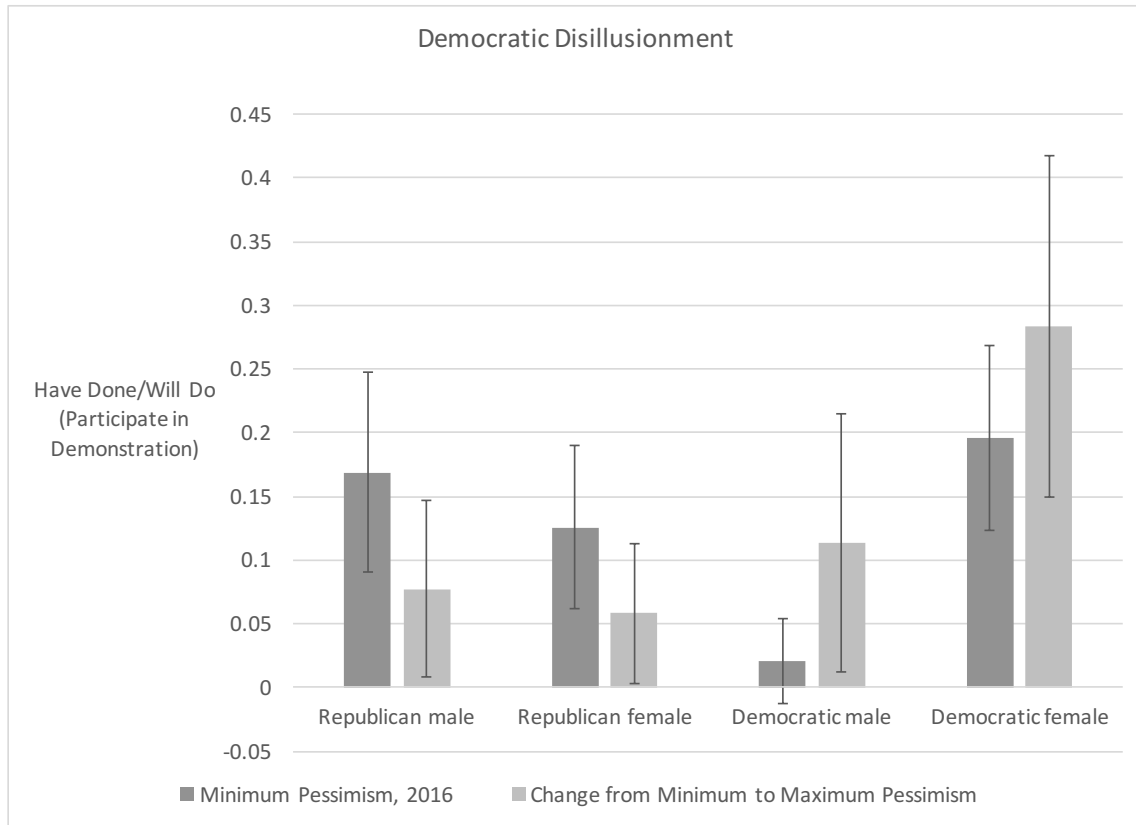
Table 2. Political Engagement by Gender and Partisanship
Results from Ordered Logistic Regression

	Vote, 2016	Vote, 2017	Campaign , 2016	Campaign, 2017	Give Money, 2016	Give Money, 2017	Write, 2016	Write, 2017	Protest, 2016	Protest, 2017
Political Activity, 2016²	0.45*** (0.07)	0.14* (0.08)	0.39*** (0.05)	0.32*** (0.06)	0.49 (0.05)	0.38 (0.06)	0.38*** (0.05)	0.38*** (0.06)	0.41*** (0.05)	0.39*** (0.07)
					0.74*** (0.07)	0.76*** (0.07)		0.69*** (0.06)		0.82*** (0.07)
Parental Political Participation	0.40*** (0.07)	0.14* (0.08)	0.39*** (0.05)	0.32*** (0.06)	0.49 (0.05)	0.38 (0.06)	0.38*** (0.05)	0.38*** (0.06)	0.41*** (0.05)	0.39*** (0.07)
Female	-0.07 (0.19)	-0.27 (0.25)	-0.09 (0.17)	-0.10 (0.21)	-0.26 (0.17)	0.17 (0.21)	0.09 (0.17)	-0.08 (0.21)	0.12 (0.17)	0.07 (0.21)
Democrat	-0.32 (0.22)	-0.14 (0.29)	-0.19 (0.18)	-0.05 (0.23)	-0.32 (0.18)	0.15* (0.23)	0.04 (0.18)	-0.07 (0.23)	0.07 (0.18)	0.49** (0.23)
Independent	-0.85*** (0.20)	-0.60** (0.26)	-0.56*** (0.18)	0.07 (0.22)	-0.57 (0.18)	0.05 (0.22)	-0.21 (0.17)	0.20 (0.22)	-0.03 (0.17)	0.62*** (0.21)
Female X Democrat	0.35 (0.27)	0.25 (0.35)	0.31 (0.24)	0.54* (0.30)	0.44 (0.24)	0.44 (0.30)	0.01 (0.24)	0.61** (0.29)	0.16 (0.24)	0.85*** (0.30)
Parental Education	0.07 (0.07)	0.19*** (0.10)	-0.06 (0.07)	0.05 (0.08)	0.03 (0.07)	-0.04 (0.08)	0.10 (0.06)	0.06 (0.08)	0.05 (0.06)	0.03 (0.08)
African American	-0.15 (0.09)	0.01 (0.12)	0.09 (0.09)	0.04 (0.11)	0.00 (0.08)	0.01 (0.11)	-0.10 (0.09)	0.24** (0.11)	-0.07 (0.09)	-0.06 (0.13)
Hispanic	-0.22 (0.17)	-0.67*** (0.21)	-0.20 (0.16)	-0.25 (0.20)	-0.16 (0.15)	-0.29 (0.19)	-0.23 (0.15)	-0.02 (0.18)	0.15 (0.16)	-0.07 (0.19)
Age	0.05 (0.08)	0.11 (0.11)	0.01 (0.07)	0.11 (0.09)	-0.12 (0.07)	0.17* (0.09)	-0.06 (0.07)	0.01 (0.09)	-0.02 (0.07)	0.08 (0.09)
Grades in School	0.09*** (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.04 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.03)
N	921	624	914	621	913	622	908	619	914	623
Pseudo-R2	0.05	0.08	0.03	0.11	0.05	0.13	0.03	0.10	0.03	0.14

Standard errors in parentheses
* p < .10 ** p < .05 *** p < .01

² This variable is the baseline measure of the political activity that corresponds to the dependent variable, e.g. for Vote, 2017 it is Vote, 2016; for Campaign, 2017 it is Campaign, 2016.

Figure 3. Democratic Disillusionment by Gender and Partisanship



Values calculated from models in Table 3. Bars are 95% confidence intervals.

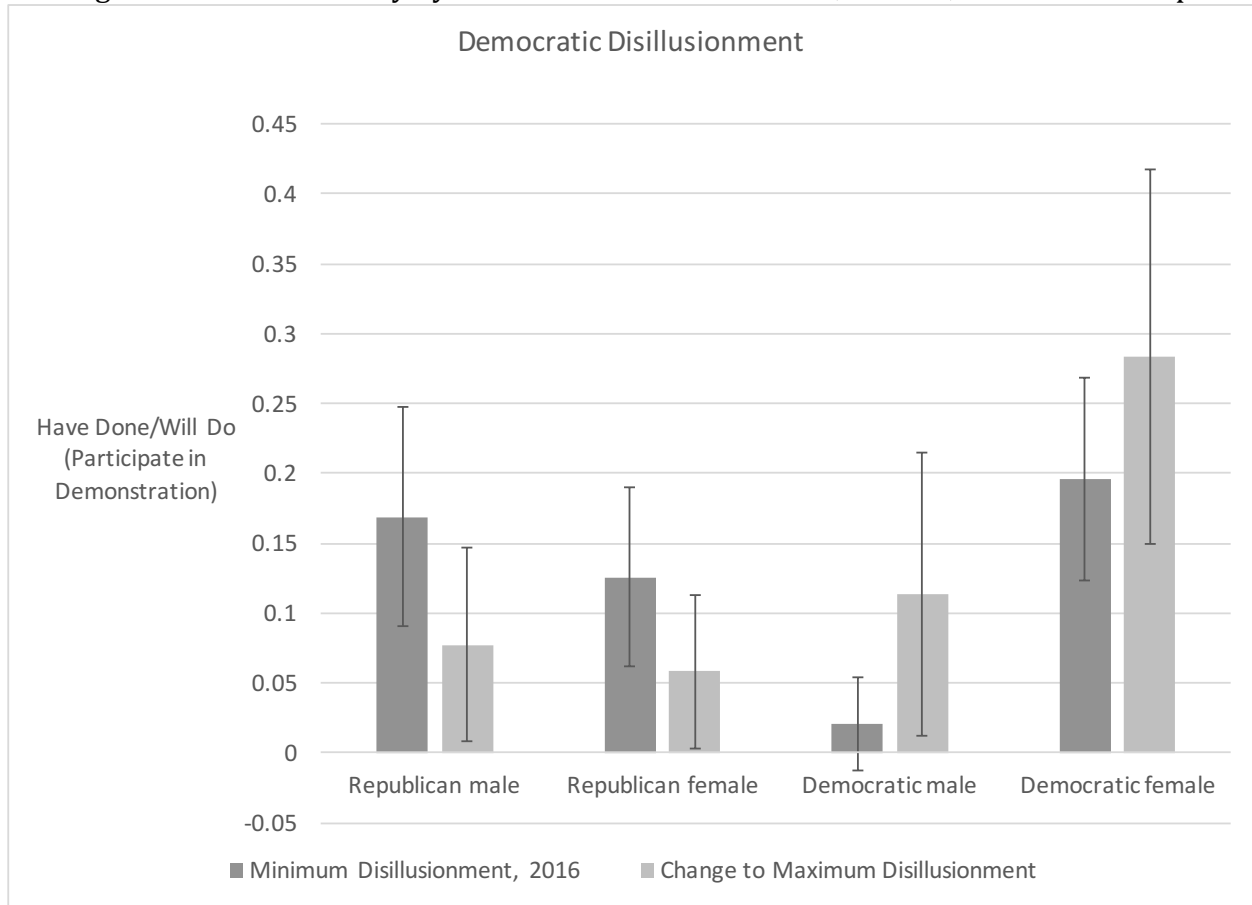
Table 3. Democratic Disillusionment by Gender and Partisanship
Results from Ordered Logistic Regression

	Democratic Disillusionment, 2016	Democratic Disillusionment, 2017
Democratic Disillusionment³, 2016		0.48*** (0.11)
Parental Democratic Disillusionment	0.72*** (0.06)	0.21*** (0.08)
Female	0.09 (0.18)	0.03 (0.22)
Democrat	0.39** (0.20)	-0.16 (0.24)
Independent	-0.14 (0.19)	-0.43** (0.22)
Female X Democrat	-0.22 (0.26)	-0.65** (0.31)
Parental Education	-0.05 (0.07)	-0.05 (0.08)
African American	0.03 (0.08)	0.02 (0.11)
Hispanic	0.45*** (0.17)	0.07 (0.20)
Age	-0.08 (0.08)	0.10 (0.10)
Grades in School	0.00 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)
N	899	612
Pseudo-R2	0.09	0.04

Standard errors in parentheses
* p < .10 ** p < .05 *** p < .01

³ Democratic Disillusionment is coded so that a higher value means respondents have a more positive assessment of democratic responsiveness (agree that the “the political system in this country helps the public with their genuine needs”). A negative sign thus reflects greater *disillusionment*.

Figure 4. Protest Activity by Democratic Disillusionment, Gender, and Partisanship



Values calculated from models in Table 4. Bars are 95% confidence intervals.

Table 4. Protest Activity by Democratic Disillusionment, Gender, and Partisanship
Results from Ordered Logistic Regression

	Protest, 2016	Protest, 2017
Protest, 2016	0.81*** (0.07)	
Parental Political Participation	0.42*** (0.05)	0.39*** (0.07)
Female	0.67 (0.47)	0.00 (0.21)
Democrat	1.29*** (0.52)	0.57*** (0.24)
Independent	-0.03 (0.17)	0.61*** (0.22)
Democratic Disillusionment	0.19* (0.11)	
Change in Democratic Disillusionment (2016-17)		0.11 (0.13)
Female X Democratic Disillusionment	-0.21 (0.16)	0.09 (0.18)
Democrat X Democratic Disillusionment	-0.41*** (0.17)	0.22 (0.19)
Female X Democrat	-1.57*** (0.71)	0.79*** (0.31)
Democrat X Female X Democratic Disillusionment	0.58*** (0.23)	
Democrat X Female X Change in Democratic Disillusionment		-0.43* (0.25)
Parental Education	0.05 (0.06)	0.03 (0.08)
African American	-0.06 (0.09)	-0.06 (0.13)
Hispanic	0.16 (0.16)	-0.02 (0.19)
Age	-0.02 (0.07)	0.10 (0.09)
Grades in School	0.00 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.03)
N	904	612
Pseudo-R2	0.03	0.14

Standard errors in parentheses
* p < .10 ** p < .05 *** p < .01