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Beyond Gender: Exploring the Intersectional Dynamics in Political Interest Among Youth

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Abstract

One of the most persistent and puzzling inequalities across Western democracies is that women are less interested in politics than men. We know that political interest is developed—or not—at an early age, and that it becomes a key determinant of political involvement during adulthood. Due to its early development, recent research suggests focusing on gendered political socialization patterns to understand why women display lower levels of political interest than men. A recent systematic literature review on political interest confirms that the gap is already present at an early age. In addition, the review shows that research and evidence on the potential intersectionality of inequalities on young people's political interest is surprisingly scarce. In this article we present novel evidence on the interaction of gender with an additional source of political inequality: immigration background. In doing so we use the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey in Four European Countries (CILS4EU) dataset, a longitudinal survey that follows a sample of adolescents with foreign-born parents that can be compared to natives in four countries. The analyses follow the latest recommendations regarding the use of interactions to evaluate claims of intersectionality. The results of our preliminary tests indicate that girls with an immigrant background are more interested in politics than girls without personal or family immigration background. Furthermore, the results are compatible with an intersectional approach by which being both a girl and having an immigration background has an independent positive relationship with political interest. Finally, we do not find significant differences between first- and second-generation immigrant girls.

Keywords

gender gap; immigration background; intersectionality; political attitudes; political interest; youth

1. Introduction

Political interest is often depicted as the number one precursor of political participation (Deth & Elff, 2004; Milbrath, 1965, p. 40; Verba et al., 1995, p. 334), also for young people (García-Albacete, 2014). Citizens require a sense of curiosity in political affairs to spend their limited time catching up with political news or monitoring what the government does. Similarly, the motivation required to devote resources to political donations or participate in costly political actions, such as attending a demonstration or strike, is high. Keeping up to date with political events is, simultaneously, a key requirement to make representative institutions accountable, and therefore for a healthy functioning of democracy (Adserà et al., 2003). As a precursor of an active citizenry, researchers have approached the origins and development of political interest from perspectives as diverse as political socialization (e.g., Neundorf et al., 2013), education (e.g., Hoskins & Janmaat, 2019), political psychology (e.g., van Deth et al., 2011), and even genetic studies (e.g., Hatemi & McDermott, 2012).

From a political behavior perspective, political interest is particularly important to explore among young people. Extant research has shown that political interest develops—or not—at an early age (Kinder & Sears, 1985; Verba et al., 1995) and tends to be a stable political orientation over a person's lifespan (Neundorf et al., 2013; Prior, 2010). Among the key factors correlating with political interest is political socialization at home, as the family has direct effects by, for instance, talking politics, but also indirect effects by providing a concrete socioeconomic status and a specific context to grow up in (Jennings et al., 2009; Neundorf et al., 2013). Also important are tools deliberately developed in school, such as citizenship education (García-Albacete, 2013; Hoskins & Janmaat, 2019; Neundorf et al., 2016), as well as overall levels of education achieved. Researchers have pointed to other influences, such as peers, during adolescence (Dostie-Goulet, 2009; Quintelier, 2015), or the context in which young adults grow up, such as exceptionally mobilized periods (García-Albacete & Lorente, 2021). There are influences that are more difficult to capture such as the media and, nowadays, social media (Boulianne, 2011). Furthermore, previous studies show that these influences vary for the two social categories explored here: gender and immigration background. Similarly to adults, significant gaps in favor of boys have been found at an early age (Bos et al., 2021). Scholars have also found gaps between citizens with immigration backgrounds in comparison to those born in the country of residence, but research is inconclusive regarding potential gaps among youth with and without an immigration background.

Understanding the political interest of young people with an immigration personal/family background is equally, if not more, important. To start with, political participation is costlier for immigrants as they are likely to have comparatively less resources than non-migrants (de Rooij, 2012; Verba et al., 1995). In some cases, political rights are not even available to immigrants (Bauböck, 1994). Even when political rights are available, the use of these rights among immigrants is substantially below the level of natives (Council of Europe, 1999; Ramakrishnan & Espenshade, 2001; Verba et al., 1995). Furthermore, for young people, political interest can be useful to form one's identity as a citizen and to fight alienation from the political system. Finally, immigrants, like any other societal group, may have specific demands or areas of interest that would not be represented if lower levels of political interest result in lack of political engagement.

When it comes to gender, research has shown over time and across countries that women are systematically less interested in politics than men (Bennett & Bennett, 1989; Burns et al., 2001; Fraile & Gomez, 2017), despite the incorporation of women into political, economic, and social public spheres. To understand the

persistence of the gap we need to disentangle dynamics that take place in the continuing gendered political socialization of children (Bos et al., 2021).

Considering previous knowledge regarding inequalities in political interest due to immigration background and gender, and following research on intersectionality in political involvement, it is easy to expect that inequality accumulates, or interacts, among girls/women with an immigrant background. In the words of Crenshaw, who coined the term decades ago, intersectionality is described as follows:

> Basically a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other. We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality or immigrant status. What's often missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts (Steinmetz, 2020; see also Crenshaw, 1991).

Despite its relevance and previous studies, a recent systematic literature review (Kleer et al., 2023) found a paucity of quantitative empirical evidence available to corroborate the expectation.

Our study makes the following contributions. First, we explore the differences in political interest of girls and boys with and without immigrant background, as well as the potential interactive effect of this background and gender in four different European countries. Secondly, most quantitative research looking at the potential intersection of gender and immigration focuses on adults, while we look at adolescents and young adults. Finally, we focus on political interest, a key determinant of young people's future political involvement since, due to their age, participation may not be accessible to them yet.

We use the unique data provided by the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey in Four European Countries (CILS4EU) project that included a political interest question in a study of young people, and incorporated an oversample of adolescents with foreign-born parents, thus providing enough statistical power for a preliminary test. As discussed below, and given the complex nature of intersectionality, our contribution is necessarily exploratory. However, identifying the extent to which the two broad elements analyzed here interact, and in which direction, is key to further exploring the trajectories and constraints found by young people to develop a curiosity in politics. The results indicate that, while girls are always less interested in politics, girls with an immigrant background are more engaged than girls without that background. Furthermore, the results are compatible with an intersectional approach by which being both a girl and having an immigrant background has an independent positive relationship with political interest. Finally, we do not find significant differences between first- and second-generation immigrant girls.

2. Gender-Based Inequalities in Political Interest

Women's relatively low interest in politics, compared to men's, is a well-known finding in political behavior research. A systematic literature review (Kleer et al., 2023) found that, out of 28 studies exploring differences between men and women in political interest, 21 reported a statistically significant gap in favor of men. Another group of six studies reported either non-significant effects or a gender gap in particular countries only.

What is it about being a woman that results in less interest in politics? Traditional explanations for these differences in political engagement can be categorized into three major groups. The first group centers on the social division of labor between men and women, which can be seen as an additional consequence of the socialization process. If women identify more strongly with, or are relegated to, the private and familial sphere, they may be less politically involved. Alternatively, they may find the costs of catching up with politics higher. In fact, evidence shows that women assume greater responsibility for household chores than men, even among youth (Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Milkie et al., 2009; Negraia et al., 2018; Sieppi & Pehkonen, 2019). As a result, the amount of time available for activities outside work or domestic responsibilities is significantly less for women. Previous studies have shown that women with children tend to be less interested in and knowledgeable about politics, and participate less politically (Ferrín, Fraile, & García-Albacete, 2019; Parry et al., 1992; Quaranta, 2016).

The second group of explanations refers to the socio-structural disadvantages faced by women. Despite recent progress, women continue to experience evident economic disadvantages, such as lower wages, less representation in high corporate hierarchies (e.g., boards of directors), and, in general, more limited access to the labor market than men (European Commission, 2024). Previous studies have attributed the unequal political engagement between men and women to the historical disadvantages women have faced in terms of education, salaries, and, more broadly, their material and cognitive resources (Burns et al., 1997, 2001).

Thirdly, a classic explanation that has gained renewed attention is what is known as gendered political socialization (Bos et al., 2021). This explanation focuses on the differences in the socialization processes of boys and girls. Traditional social norms depict men as the primary actors in the political sphere, while women are more oriented (or relegated) to the private sphere. In shaping these roles, society emphasizes the communal dimensions for girls, which involve a strong sense of empathy and interconnectedness with others. In contrast, boys are encouraged to develop traits such as independence and assertiveness (Eagly & Wood, 1991). This gendered socialization has significant consequences for how women and men position themselves in society in general, and in the political world in particular (Jennings, 1983). The gap is surprisingly resistant to societal changes and is also visible among young people (Cicognani et al., 2012; Donbavand & Hoskins, 2021; García-Albacete & Hoskins, 2024; Wolak & McDevitt, 2011; Wray-Lake & Abrams, 2020). For example, three studies of youth in the US show that while boys are attracted to partisan political conflict, girls prefer the consensual dimension of politics (Bos et al., 2021; Fridkin & Kenney, 2007; Wolak & McDevitt, 2011). Similar results were found among German children (van Deth et al., 2011).

3. Migration-Background-Based Inequalities in Political Interest

Citizens with an immigrant background also tend to show lower levels of political interest and engagement than the rest of the population (Morales & Giugni, 2011). To explain immigrants' political participation, de Rooij (2012) and Morales and Giugni (2011) provide comprehensive accounts of arguments on why their participation differs from that of non-migrants. First, immigrants often have less resources that enable participation. The resource deficit includes, among others, social networks, socioeconomic status, civic abilities, and mobilization networks (de Rooij, 2012; Verba et al., 1995). Newcomers may also have less information on how the political system works. Moving to a new country may imply less civic skills due to, for example, a different mother tongue or because of more difficult access to high-responsibility positions at work. Furthermore, they often have less economic resources, little job security, and higher financial

instability, which are all significant constraints to political involvement. A second group of factors relates to integration, language, social networks, regulations, etc. On the one hand, we can expect immigrants to have fewer social networks, on the other, studies have shown that both for adults and adolescents with foreign-born parents, social networks and legal rights are key to predicting and understanding their political involvement (de Rooij, 2012; Dollmann, 2021; Eggert & Giugni, 2011; Gatti et al., 2024; Gidengil & Stolle, 2009; Morales & Pilati, 2011; Terriquez, 2017; Terriquez & Kwon, 2015), although effects and mechanisms vary across the country of origin (Togeby, 2004). Finally, the context is an important source of factors that affect the relationship of citizens with an immigrant background and the political world. By "context" we refer to the origin of citizens and the country of reception (i.e., Spierings & Vermeulen, 2024), but also to all the institutional factors that surround them and the structure of political opportunities they encounter (Kim & Seltzer, 2024; Morales & Giugni, 2011), both at the national and local level (Kassam & Becker, 2023; Morales & Pilati, 2011).

Do adolescents with foreign-born parents find the same constraints to get involved in politics? Partially they do. Terriquez and Kwon (2015, p. 427) show that barriers to political engagement experienced by immigrant parents suppress the political engagement of their children. After all, parents serve as role models in shaping basic political orientations, determining socioeconomic status, and providing the context in which children and adolescents socialize politically (Jennings et al., 2009). However, when youth are equipped with civic skills and political information, due to college or involvement in civic associations, they can promote the political integration of their families via political engagement (Terriquez & Kwon, 2015). Similarly, children with undocumented parents in the US are more likely to protest on immigration issues and be more positive about the potential of protest action to induce political change (Street et al., 2017). When it comes to political interest, we can also expect adolescents with foreign-born parents to have awareness of inequalities, as their families and themselves confront a larger number of obstacles than natives. Experiences of discrimination, for instance, have been shown to mobilize citizens with an immigrant background (Spierings & Vermeulen, 2024). Additionally, among young adults with an immigrant background, a sense of belonging to the nation has a positive effect on their political interest that is not yet visible for children without an immigrant background (Hochman & García-Albacete, 2019). Following political socialization research, we can also expect that political saliency is particularly relevant for those adolescents with foreign-born parents who come from homes where politics is often discussed. All in all, there is mixed evidence regarding (young) immigrants' political involvement. Whereas scarcity of resources might impede them from political engagement, their sometimes precarious position in society can also politically mobilize them.

4. Migrant and Gender-Based Inequalities

To date, scholars have confirmed that both sex and immigration background can significantly impact both political behavior and political attitudes. Regarding a potential intersection of gender and immigration background on political interest among adults, there is evidence that a gender gap also exists within the migrant population, with migrant women feeling less capable of understanding politics, showing less interest (Montoya et al., 2000), participating less (Gatti et al., 2024; Kam et al., 2008), and having different partisan preferences (Lien, 1998), compared to both native women and immigrant men. Most studies apply the traditional explanations to the gender gap in politics among the general population to explain migrant women's relatively low interest and political engagement. However, other factors show a positive effect on

the political engagement of women compared to men following the migration experience. Jones-Correa (1998) discussed the status inconsistency before and after migration, a disparity experienced by men but not by women. Typically, migrant women, upon arriving in the new country, must seek work outside the home. Although these jobs are often low-status, they do not experience downward mobility because many of them were not working outside the home in their countries of origin (Jones-Correa, 1998). This role outside the home allows them to assume a new role within the household. Moreover, as they are often responsible for their children, migrant women tend to establish more connections with the wider population, such as in school settings. This leads to greater involvement in the host country and strengthens their civic participation (Jones-Correa, 1998; McIlwaine & Bermúdez, 2011). In fact, recent studies indicate that participation in communities and organizations has a greater positive effect on the political participation of migrant women than that of migrant men (Gatti et al., 2024).

Although most quantitative studies on inequalities in political engagement focus on adults, there are several reasons to focus on gender, on origin, and on the interaction between gender and origin among young people. First, literature that explores this question quantitatively seems to be particularly scarce for young adults, as Kleer et al. (2023) concluded in a recent systematic review. Our proposal is a first step in this endeavor by providing evidence on the potential interaction between gender and origin among young people in levels of political interest. Additionally, findings about adult migrants' political interest might not apply to young people. For instance, contrary to their parents, adolescents with foreign-born parents have socialized in the country, although they still probably perceive discrimination, which creates a differentiated situation. They might also have internalized different standards and norms as they have socialized in a different country than their parents. Furthermore, particularly for girls, new gender roles might have impacted their political interest. Finally, focusing on how young people in general and girls with immigration backgrounds in particular relate to politics is essential to understanding their future political engagement and to designing policies directed to compensate for potential inequalities.

Overall, we expect girls to show less political interest than boys, but: Can we expect girls from immigrant backgrounds to be more politically involved than boys with the same background or than girls born in the country of residence? Due to the scarcity of evidence, and to previous contradictory findings, our first hypotheses are rather exploratory and alternative. On the one hand, we expect that the combination of gender and immigration background will have a negative effect on political interest due to the accumulation (or rather intersection) of inequalities. After all, as said, research has repeatedly shown that immigration background and gender are two important sources of inequalities when it comes to political engagement in general and political interest in particular. Having "both instead of one" could imply a unique set of experiences and inequalities. If this is the case, we would find that girls with personal or family immigration stories are less interested in politics than boys with immigration backgrounds, and less interested than girls without an immigration background. In the form of hypotheses:

> H1a: The negative effect of being a girl on political interest is stronger among youth with an immigrant background than among youth without.

On the other hand, among the few studies focusing on youth, Alozie et al. (2003) studied 10-year-olds in the US, comparing boys and girls from native and migrant backgrounds, and found that it was precisely the girls who showed greater political engagement across all groups than the boys, although there were

variations among groups, with the Hispanic and Black cohorts showing the smallest gender gap but also the lowest levels of political engagement. In another study by Jugert et al. (2013), analyzing offline and online civic engagement among adolescents from different ethnic groups in Germany, neither gender nor ethnicity-based differences were found. If anything, young people from the Turkish minority group showed relatively stronger engagement. The unique effect of the combination of gender and immigration might result in higher levels of political awareness due to, for instance, the development of one's self-perception in the community or even to experiences of discrimination. In addition, following previous literature on adults, the political socialization of migrant-background girls may be influenced by shifts in their mother's roles—both in terms of increased status outside the home and a relaxation of traditional gender roles—making politics seem more approachable. Mechanisms may vary, but these previous findings and arguments mean we expect that:

> H1b: The negative effect of being a girl on political interest is weaker among youth with an immigrant background than among youth without.

First-generation migrant women often bear a heavy domestic burden that hinders their political participation (Gatti et al., 2024; McIlwaine & Bermúdez, 2011). However, other studies suggest that women might gain higher status within the household after the migration experience, as they begin to work outside the home (Jones-Correa, 1998) and change their views on gender roles (McIlwaine & Bermúdez, 2011). Coherently, as said, empirical evidence shows that there are differences in political engagement between first- and second-generation migrants among women, but not among men (Gatti et al., 2024). Using this rationale, a second expectation can be drawn from the generational change perspective. Specifically, we expect that daughters of immigrants will develop higher levels of political interest for various reasons. First, adolescents with foreign-born parents may overcome the constraints faced by their parents due to improved language proficiency, as well as the education they receive in the host country, which may help them adopt the norms of that country (Terriquez & Kwon, 2015). Secondly, adolescents with foreign-born parents are likely to perceive discrimination because of their immigration family histories, which can make them aware of the importance of politics early in life. Furthermore, they may be exposed to gender roles at home, and particularly see that their mothers, as noted, have to some extent moved from traditional roles due to their experiences in the host country (Jones-Correa, 1998; McIlwaine & Bermúdez, 2011). Reinforcing this maternal effect, previous studies highlight the strong transmission of political engagement and ideology between mothers and daughters (Acock & Bengtson, 1980; Cicognani et al., 2012; Gidengil & Stolle, 2009; Kestilä-Kekkonen et al., 2023; Weiss, 2023). Based on this, and comparing the four different groups "daughters of immigrants," "sons of immigrants," "girls born in a foreign country," and "girls with no immigration background," we expect that:

> H2: Daughters of immigrants will show higher levels of political interest compared to the other three groups: girls born in a foreign country, sons of immigrants, and girls without an immigration background.

5. Data and Methodology

The data used in this study come from the CILS4EU project (Kalter et al., 2017). The first wave was collected during the 2010/2011 school year, when most of the respondents were 14 years old. Subsequent waves were collected annually over the following two years. The question on political interest was included in

waves 2 and 3. Among the two waves available, we opted to analyze wave 2 because panel attrition is lower than in wave 3. Attrition was a significant issue by the third wave, as many of the original respondents were no longer attending the schools where the sample was recruited. Most variables used in this analysis were gathered during the 2011/2012 academic year, a period marked by economic crisis, prior to the 2014 refugee crisis. CILS4EU is, to our knowledge, the only dataset with an international focus and an overrepresentation of adolescents with a migrant background, which allows for the study of political interest in relation to immigration background and gender with a sufficiently large sample.

The data were collected in Germany, England, the Netherlands, and Sweden. Of the four, Sweden has the policies most favorable to migrants' integration according to the Migrant Integration Policy Index (Solano & Huddleston, 2020). Germany and England are next, scoring around the average in the same index, with 56 and 55 points out of 100, respectively. The Netherlands lagged somewhat behind with an index of 49. Examining specific dimensions, the four countries perform best in labor market mobility and the effectiveness of their anti-discrimination policies. Regarding political participation, the focus on ensuring free and effective engagement for migrants shows consistent average scores across the four countries analyzed. The countries under study also differ in overall levels of political interest among their populations. According to data from the Round 6 of the European Social Survey, political interest ranged from 2.39 out of 4 in England to 2.78 in Germany. A consistent gender gap is observed in all cases, with women showing lower levels of political interest compared to men (ESS, 2012). In the CILS4EU sample, a consistent gender gap in political interest is observed across all countries, with women consistently reporting lower levels than men. On a scale from 1 to 5, women's average political interest is 2.23, while men's is 2.45 ($p \leq 0.001$). This gender gap appeared in all countries, with the widest gap observed in Germany, where women scored 2.62 and men scored 3.00 ($p \leq 0.001$), and the smallest gap in Sweden, where women scored 2.04 and men scored 2.21 ($p \leq 0.001$). Additionally, individuals born in the country of residence exhibited the lowest levels of political interest, averaging 2.29, compared to 2.36 for immigrants and 2.45 for adolescents with foreign-born parents ($p \leq 0.001$). This trend was consistent in all countries except Germany, where natives showed greater political interest than immigrants and children of immigrants ($p = 0.391$). Sweden was the only country where immigrants scored the highest in political interest.

5.1. Operationalization

Although most research into gender or immigrant-based political inequalities focuses on political participation, the main outcome of this study is political interest. Political interest can be understood as a prerequisite for participation. As previous research suggests, to overcome the costs of political participation both adults and young people need to be interested in politics, even if—once interested—their preferred mode of participation differs (García-Albacete, 2014). On the other hand, interest alone may not be sufficient as political participation also requires other resources such as time, money, and/or recruitment networks. Additionally, young people may not have access to some forms of political participation yet (e.g., voting) and therefore may not be as exposed as adults to mobilizing recruitment networks.

The dependent variable, political interest, is measured on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*very little or not at all*) to 5 (*very much*). Although this measurement is strictly speaking ordinal, we applied linear regressions, as done by other researchers in the field. In comparison, probit models are more difficult to interpret, so we treat political interest as a pseudo-metric (see Neundorf et al., 2013). Furthermore, Hellevik (2009) showed

that the results of linear and logistic regression with a binary dependent variable (in this case interested vs. uninterested) showed nearly identical results.

The two main independent variables are gender and immigration background. Gender was coded as a binary variable, where 1 indicates girls and 0 boys. Immigration status was coded in two ways. First, we create a variable that differentiates between children with immigrant background (either migrants or with migrant parents) and all others. The second variable differentiates between natives, first-generation migrants (respondents not born in the survey country), and second-generation migrants (respondents born in the country of residence with at least one parent not born in the survey country). In addition to gender and migration background, control variables are included in the models to test the robustness of the findings. First, we control for country of origin, grouped into substantively meaningful regions: Europe and North America, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Africa and the Middle East. The reference category for this variable is having been born in the country of the survey. Secondly, having the country's nationality is key for political integration. Nationality was asked for in the first wave and we applied it to the second wave. The categories are "only survey country nationality," "survey country and other nationality," and "only other nationality." In Sweden, no respondents reported dual nationality, likely due to Sweden's prohibition of dual citizenship prior to 2001, when the respondents were born.

Age was calculated based on the year of birth. In general, research shows that political interest increases with age, although the growth is steeper during adolescence and young adulthood than during adulthood (Neundorf et al., 2016; Prior, 2010). The question of whether young adults have developed sufficient curiosity and maturity to participate in politics has recently been raised in the debate on the effects of voting at 16 (i.e., Rossteutscher et al., 2022).

Furthermore, parental political engagement is included as a well-known predictor of early development of political interest in children (Jennings et al., 2009). Respondents reported how often their parents discuss political and social issues with them, on a scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*every day*). Regarding cultural capital, we use the number of books respondents reported having at home, on a scale from 1 (*0–25 books*) to 5 (*more than 500 books*) as proposed by Sieben and Lechner (2019). The variable parental education resulted in a substantial loss of data, with nearly half of the sample missing (7,161 out of 15,790). Moreover, the reliability of this variable was questionable, as 17% of respondents who answered this question changed their response from one year to the next, likely due to it being reported by students rather than parents. Additionally, it introduced collinearity issues in the model.

The next two control variables refer to social capital, as social connections facilitate political involvement in the host country for immigrants (de Rooij, 2012; Dollmann, 2021; Gatti et al., 2024; Morales & Giugni, 2011). Formal social capital is measured through associational and religious participation, and operationalized by two questions: "How often do you spend time in a sports, music, drama, or other club?" and "How often do you visit a religious meeting place?" Both were measured on a five-point scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*every day*). Informal social capital is measured through friendship patterns and is assessed using a dichotomous variable where 1 represents having "half or more friends from another group" and 0 represents having "half or more friends from the same group."

5.2. Method

To answer our research questions, we utilize multivariate linear regression models with interaction terms. As recommended by Block et al. (2023), our strategy consists in running the models with interaction terms and then relying on postestimation techniques to be able to say something about intersectionality. For each model, we first calculate five quantities of interest: the effect of gender among young people without an immigration background; the effect of gender among young people with an immigration background; the effect of immigration background for boys; the effect of immigration background for girls; and, finally, the interaction effect between gender and immigration background. The last quantity, the interactive effect, we can interpret as preliminary evidence compatible with an intersectional effect. Additionally, and for illustrative purposes, we provide predictions about the levels of political interest of the groups we are interested in.

6. Results

Our expectations are tentative, as we found arguments for both relatively higher and relatively lower levels of political interest among girls with an immigrant background in comparison to other groups. Model 1 in Table 1 shows the results of a linear regression equation with the outcome "political interest and gender" and "immigrants vs. natives" as main independent variables. It shows that while being a girl is negatively associated with political interest, having an immigration background implies higher levels of political interest.

To address the potential intersectionality between gender and migration background, we follow mainstream advice on how to explore intersectionality quantitatively (Block et al., 2023). We first incorporate in the previous equation the multiplicative term "gender and immigrant" (Model 2 in Table 1). The interaction is positive and statistically significant (see Model 2 in Table 1), but interpreting the positive coefficient correctly requires postestimation calculations (Block et al., 2023, p. 14). As discussed above, to test intersectional claims, we need to calculate five predictions (see Figure 1): the effect of gender among young people without an immigration background; the effect of gender among young people with an immigration background; the effect of immigration background for boys; the effect of immigration background for girls; and, finally, the interaction effect between gender and immigration background. In Figure 1, each of the effects is shown with its two-tailed 95% confidence interval that helps us conclude whether the effects are significantly different from zero if they do not cross the dashed vertical line. The results show that being a girl has a negative effect on levels of political interest for both natives and immigrants, but that the effect is larger among natives (Figure 1). An immigration background, for its part, is accompanied by higher levels of political interest for both boys and girls, and the positive effect is larger for girls (see Figure 1). Finally, the interaction is positive (0.12), which indicates that "immigration background and gender," beyond their individual effects, have a differentiated effect when encountered together. In this case, they interact positively to increase political interest. We can conclude that the evidence is compatible with intersectionality, but in a positive way.

Table 1. Political interest for girls and boys with and without an immigrant background.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Girl	−0.228*** (0.022)	−0.275*** (0.028)	−0.237*** (0.025)
Immigration background (ref = Non-immigration background)	0.139*** (0.023)	0.076** (0.033)	0.031 (0.045)
Europe and North America (ref = Survey country)			−0.011 (0.038)
Asia (ref = Survey country)			0.024 (0.048)
Latin America and the Caribbean (ref = Survey country)			−0.011 (0.056)
Africa and Middle East (ref = Survey country)			0.171*** (0.048)
Survey country and other nationality (ref = Only survey country nationality)			0.028 (0.043)
Only other nationality (ref = Only survey country nationality)			−0.005 (0.039)
Age			0.182*** (0.017)
Books at home			0.083*** (0.009)
Parents' political talk			0.376*** (0.008)
Associationism			0.045*** (0.007)
Religious participation			0.057*** (0.010)
Mixed friendship			0.134*** (0.030)
Girl*Immigration background		0.122*** (0.046)	0.158*** (0.041)
Constant	2.415*** (0.018)	2.438*** (0.020)	−2.035*** (0.264)
Observations	10,726	10,726	10,726
R^2	0.013	0.014	0.224
Adjusted R^2	0.013	0.013	0.222
Residual std. error	1.149 (df = 10723)	1.149 (df = 10722)	1.020 (df = 10710)
F statistic	71.225*** (df = 2; 10723)	49.890*** (df = 3; 10722)	205.576*** (df = 15; 10710)

Notes: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Source: Adapted from Kalter et al. (2017).

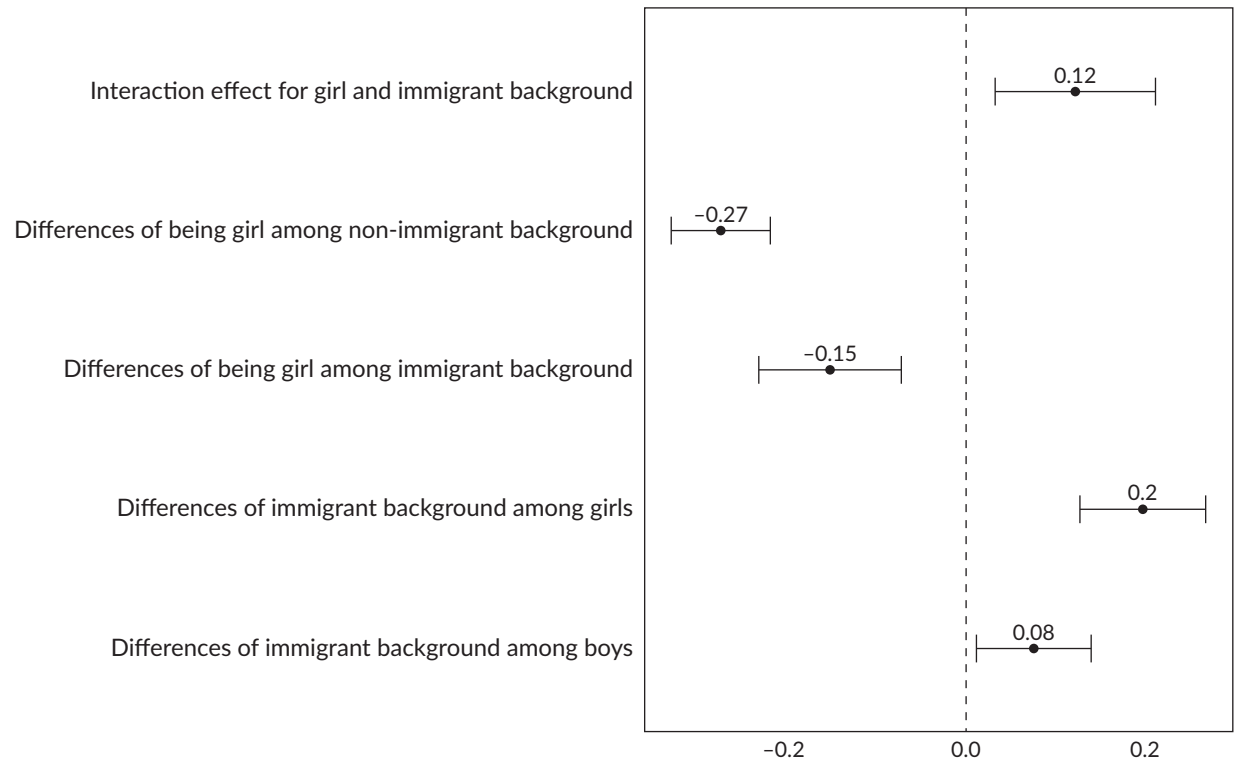

Figure 1. The conditional differences of gender and migration background on political interest. Note: Estimates come from Model 2 in Table 1.

The intersectional effect does not imply that girls with personal or family immigration background are more interested in politics than other groups. To further illustrate the results, we use a second postestimation strategy. We present predictions of political interest levels for each group. Figure 2 shows the predicted marginal effects of being an immigrant for girls and boys on political interest (Brambor et al., 2006). The figure illustrates the negative effect of being a girl on political interest. The predicted level of political interest is always higher for boys (black markers) than for girls (grey markers). The positive immigration effect is also visible in that levels of political interest are higher for boys with an immigrant background compared to boys without an immigrant background and for girls with an immigrant background in comparison to girls without an immigrant background. The interaction between being a girl and having a personal or family immigration history is visible in the smallest gender gap among adolescents with an immigrant background. The gender gap among immigrants even disappears when control variables are included in the estimation (Figure A3 in the Supplementary File).

To further corroborate the results, Model 3 in Table 1 provides the results of replicating the interaction equation adding the control variables presented above. The interaction term remains positive and significant when the controls are included; furthermore, the computation of the interactive terms confirms the positive significant effect of being a girl and having a migrant background (see Figure A2 in the Supplementary File). Other coefficients remain significant and in the same direction, with the only exception being the effect of being an immigrant among men, which loses statistical significance (see Figure A2 in the Supplementary File). Control variables mostly show the expected relationship with political interest. Regarding the country of origin, only those from Africa and the Middle East show a significant coefficient, indicating that having origins in these regions, compared to the survey country, increases levels of political interest. In connection

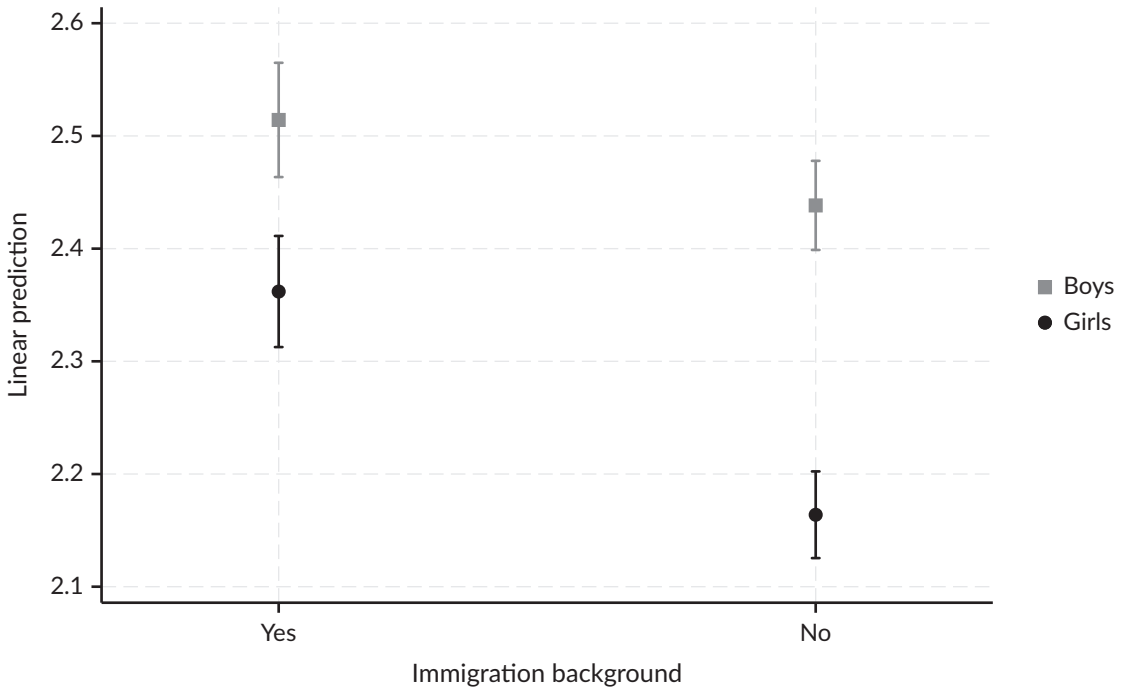

Figure 2. Predicted political interest of boys and girls with and without immigration background. Note: Estimates come from Model 2 in Table 1.

with this, nationality was added, assuming it captures inclusion in the host country. However, holding nationality or not has no significant effect on political interest. Age shows a positive relationship with interest. Although the age range in the sample is relatively narrow (between 13 and 20 years), the result aligns well with the literature, as interest grows exponentially during these formative years (Neundorf et al., 2013; Quintelier, 2015). Additionally, the number of books at home, used as a proxy for socioeconomic status, has a positive effect on levels of political interest. Likewise, the frequency of political discussions at home is positively correlated with political interest. The same applies to participation in associations and religious activities. In this regard, establishing community networks and having friendships across different backgrounds also raises declared levels of political interest.

Do the results hold across countries? Mainly they do. Replicating the models and calculations for each country shows that the positive interactive term "women and immigrant background" is visible in all four countries (see Tables A1 and A2 in the Supplementary File). The interaction loses significance, however, in England and Germany, and to some extent in Sweden (see Table A1 and Figure A5 in the Supplementary File). Nevertheless, the replication with control variables shows the robustness of the intersectional finding for the Netherlands, Sweden, and Germany (see Table A2 and Figure A6 in the Supplementary File). England remains the only country where there is no evidence compatible with a positive intersectional effect. An additional main variation when replicating the analyses across countries refers to the coefficient of having immigration background among boys, as the positive effect observed is again found for England and the Netherlands, but it turns negative and significant in Germany and loses significance in Sweden (see Tables A1–A2 and A4–A5 in the Supplementary File). Furthermore, the model with control variables shows that the significant positive effect is only clearly visible in the Netherlands, suggesting that control variables can take care of the variance. Overall, we find that the intersectional dynamic composed of gender and

immigration is robust across countries even if it varies from the statistically non-significant coefficient in England (0.06) to the largest coefficient in Germany (0.28; see Figure A6 in the Supplementary File).

To address our second expectation, which states that that girls born in the country of residence but with migrant parents have higher levels of political interest than girls born in other countries, we replicate the empirical strategy used above modifying the migrant variable to capture whether a respondent was born in the country of residence, whether they were born in another country, or whether their parents were born in another country. As before, the models show a significative positive interaction, in this case between both being a child of immigrants and a girl and between being an immigrant and a girl (see Model 2 in Table 2). We follow the same strategy used above to decompose the interaction. The results show again a significant intersectional effect for girls but, contrary to our expectations, the effect is the same for both adolescents with foreign-born parents and for migrants (see Figure 3). Furthermore, the calculation of the coefficient of being a daughter of immigrants vs. an immigrant girl is statistically non-significant (see Figure 3). That is to say, the results do not support our expectation because the intersectional positive effect is visible for both groups. As before, the main results show robustness when control variables are added (see Model 3 in Table 2).

Following our second strategy to illustrate the results, Figure 4 presents the marginal effects of the interaction, that is, the predicted levels of political interest for each group. Migrant girls are significantly more interested in politics than girls born in the country of residence. While it is true that daughters of immigrants show the highest levels of interest within the group of women, the difference is only significant when compared to girls born in the country of residence, but not when compared to migrant girls. In addition, we expected second-generation migrant girls to show higher political interest than second-generation migrant boys (H2) which again is not compatible with our findings. On the contrary, sons of immigrants show the highest level of political interest in the sample, significantly higher than daughters of immigrants and higher than boys born in the country of residence, although the difference is reduced when other antecedents of political interest are included.

Replicating the equations across countries (see Tables A3 and A6 in the Supplementary File) confirms that there are only small differences between the interaction of being a girl with being a child of immigrants or being a migrant. The interaction is positive in all four countries, with or without controls, but not always significant (see Figures A5 and A6 in the Supplementary File). A note of caution is necessary here regarding potential issues of statistical power due to the more limited number of foreign-born youths in the sample, particularly when running country-specific models (see Table A5 in the Supplementary File for descriptive information on the sample).

Table 2. Political interest of first- and second-generation immigrants and of girls and boys.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Girl	−0.228***	−0.275***	−0.237***
	(0.022)	(0.028)	(0.025)
Immigration background (ref = Non-immigration background)	0.088**	0.011	−0.038
	(0.039)	(0.055)	(0.062)
Adolescents with foreign-born parents (ref = Non-immigration background)	0.156***	0.098***	0.048
	(0.025)	(0.036)	(0.047)
Europe and North America (ref = Survey country)			−0.013
			(0.038)
Asia (ref = Survey country)			0.027
			(0.048)
Latin America and the Caribbean (ref = Survey country)			−0.009
			(0.056)
Africa and Middle East (ref = Survey country)			0.167***
			(0.048)
Survey country and other nationality (ref = Only survey country nationality)			0.032
			(0.043)
Only other nationality (ref = Only survey country nationality)			0.020
			(0.041)
Age			0.184***
			(0.017)
Books at home			0.083***
			(0.009)
Parents' political talk			0.376***
			(0.008)
Associationism			0.045***
			(0.007)
Religious participation			0.056***
			(0.010)
Mixed friendship			0.134***
			(0.030)
Girl*Immigration background		0.149*	0.163**
		(0.077)	(0.069)
Girl*Adolescents with foreign-born parents		0.113**	0.156***
		(0.050)	(0.045)
Constant	2.415***	2.438***	−2.060***
	(0.018)	(0.020)	(0.264)
Observations	10,726	10,726	10,726
R^2	0.013	0.014	0.224
Adjusted R^2	0.013	0.014	0.223
Residual std. error	1.149	1.149	1.020
	(df = 10722)	(df = 10720)	(df = 10708)
F statistic	48.381***	30.504***	181.694***
	(df = 3; 10722)	(df = 5; 10720)	(df = 17; 10708)

Notes: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Source: Adapted from Kalter et al. (2017).

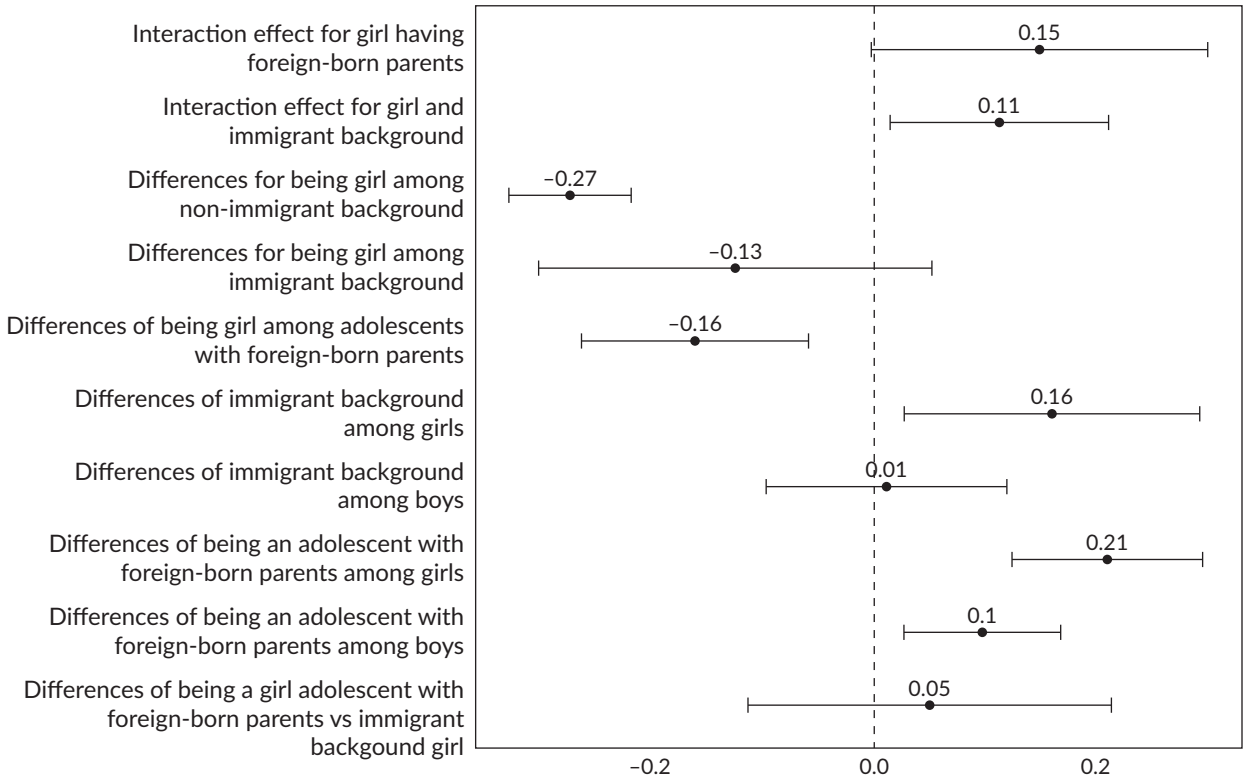

Figure 3. The conditional differences of gender and immigration background on political interest. Note: Estimates come from Model 2 in Table 2.

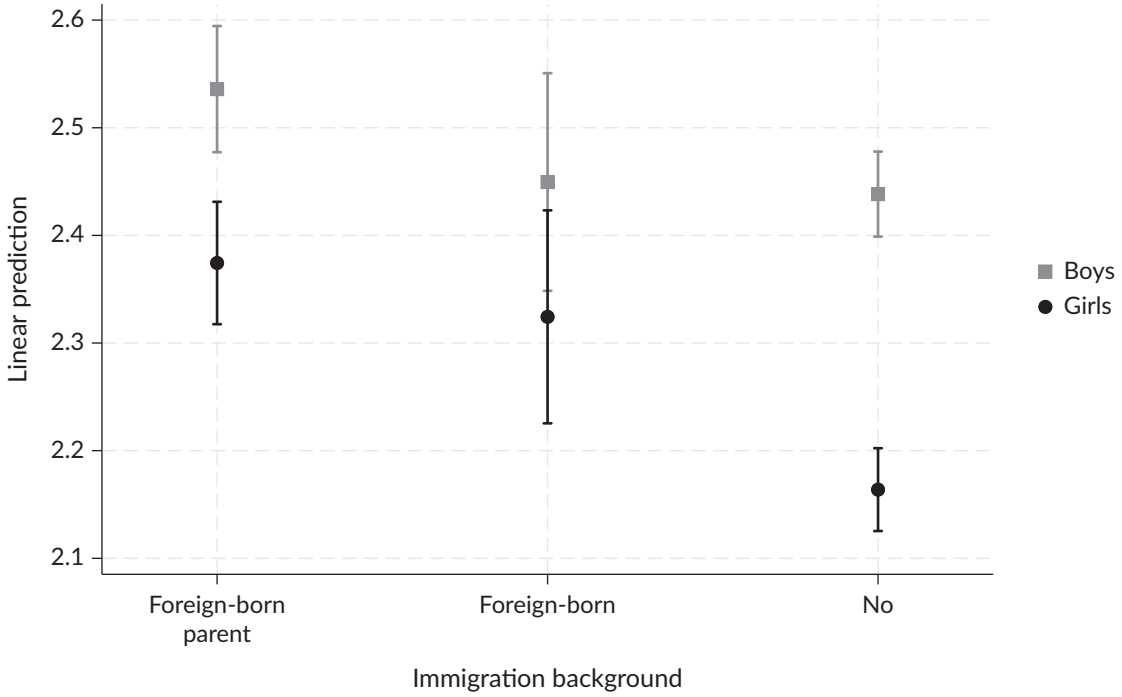

Figure 4. Predicted political interest of boys and girls with and without immigration background. Note: Estimates come from Model 2 in Table 2.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

Despite the relevance of developing political interest early in life, and the known constraints migrants and women encounter to fully integrate politically, empirical evidence is relatively scarce regarding the potential interaction between gender and immigration background on political interest. There are several reasons why this is the case. First, intersectionality implies complex and multiple processes and, to be studied, requires, especially, qualitative methods that can explore the dynamics between many elements. Secondly, the diversity of countries of origin and of structures of political opportunity across reception countries is huge, and capturing all potential combinations would require equally vast datasets. Due to the complexity, in this article we have set a modest goal: to provide some quantitative evidence on whether gender and immigration background interact, and if they do, in which direction. Our findings show a positive intersectional dynamic, that is, being both women and having an immigration background implies a unique positive addition to levels of political interest. Although intersectional approaches were developed to address inequalities and discrimination patterns, an intersectional perspective also expects that a group may be empowered in one specific context or outcome (Hughes & Dubrow, 2018). In this case, the additional constraints encountered when being both a girl and an immigrant can result, for instance, in higher levels of awareness on how important politics is, and thus motivation to understand and get involved in politics.

The interaction is visible across all countries except in England, and robust when adding known sources of inequality as control variables. We have, however, failed to explain it. Our expectation was that second-generation girls would have learned from a combination of new household dynamics at their home and the country of residence's gender norms to show a significantly higher level of political interest than other groups. However, the positive intersection of gender and migration background is found for both migrants and adolescents with foreign-born parents.

This finding will have to be further addressed for specific origins and countries. However, if confirmed, it has several implications. Firstly, the group "left behind" in their levels of political interest, according to our findings, are native women. Secondly, the immigration background comes with a boost in political interest for boys; however, for boys, known antecedents of political interest were able to explain the variance in the models presented above. When it comes to girls with an immigrant background, the potential intersectional effect identified here provides grounds to expect political engagement as adults, although with the important qualification that political participation requires not only interest, but also resources. We should also stress that the gender gap persists across natives and immigrants, although its magnitude varies and it is most pronounced among natives, as native women are the least interested in politics. Thus, our findings are compatible with previous studies highlighting inequalities in political engagement among women with an immigration history.

This study is a first step and has at least three important limitations that are also future avenues for research. First, it sticks to a potentially narrow definition of politics. As previous work has shown, when prompted to think about politics in a survey, most respondents immediately think about traditional politics, such as parties and the electoral process. Party-related politics may however not include topics in which some groups are interested politically. This has been shown to be the case for women (Ferrín & García-Albacete, 2023). In related research on political knowledge, studies have shown that the gender gap, the Latino gap, or the Black gap in knowledge is reduced when a broader, more inclusive set of items is used (Abrajano, 2015; Cohen & Luttig, 2020; Ferrín et al., 2018). Similarly, a broader set of indicators on political interest reduces the standard

gender gap observed (Ferrín, Fraile, García-Albacete, & Gómez, 2019). Adding additional indicators on political issues to capture youth's interest would allow a better understanding of the development of the gender gap.

Secondly, our research is limited in its contextualization. Intersectional approaches place emphasis on structural sources of disadvantage, and thus the need to attend to the histories and context of the interconnected categories studied (Cho et al., 2013). In that sense, to start thinking about dealing with such sources, a careful study of national contexts, where subordinate groups are stratified, sources of economic exploitation, and historical events are important. Extensive research is needed in this direction that goes beyond the scope of this article. Future work should aim to provide a comprehensive contextual and historical examination of the inequalities identified here, most likely starting with a qualitative perspective.

Third, and most importantly, immigration status is a crude simplification of several potential sources of inequality. Although some have been indirectly controlled for, such as socioeconomic status, most have not been accounted for here. Emigration stories, institutional constraints, differences in immigration statuses according to the host society, consequences on family and social networks composition, historical legacies of discrimination, and many more, vary significantly according to the country of origin and the country of reception. Both quantitative and qualitative work that focuses on specific population groups might start by decomposing the development of political integration and identify potential constraints encountered by particular groups.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Data Availability

We used the data from the CILS4EU project (https://www.cils4.eu). We used a combined data set of all three waves (version 3.3.0). The data has restricted access and is available at the GESIS repository under the identifier ZA5656: https://doi.org/10.4232/cils4eu.5656.3.3.0. Replication materials with data preparation and data analyses scripts are available at the Harvard Dataverse (https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/PQ3QH0).

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the authors (unedited).

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