The Political Consequences of the Mental Load*

Ana Catalano Weeks†

July 19, 2024

Abstract

How do levels of cognitive household labor – the "mental load" involved in anticipating, fulfilling, and monitoring household needs – affect political interest? The mental load is distinct from the physical tasks of e.g., cooking and cleaning, and thought to be disproportionately undertaken by women. I argue that while low levels of mental load can foster political interest, at high levels the mental (over)load crowds out cognitive space for political issues, especially issues seen to be distant from family life. To test this argument, I field a novel survey on politics and household work to a sample of parents in the United States. I find a large gender gap, with mothers reporting primary responsibility for 72 percent of cognitive household labor, compared to fathers' 45 percent. Low levels of mental load are positively linked to political interest, while high levels of mental load decrease interest in certain issues, including national politics and inflation. I report similar effects for fathers and mothers, but due to the gendered distribution of mental load (mothers carrying more load, on average), negative consequences are more common among mothers. The findings offer new evidence about a gender gap too often hidden, and its consequences for political life.

---

*I thank Rachel Bernhard, Hilde Coffé, Allison Daminger, Moa Frödin Gruneau, Alex Kuo, Bonnie M. Meguid, Mona Morgan-Collins, Diana O'Brien, Chris Hanretty, Helen Kowalewska, Torben Iversen, Anke Plagnol, Soledad Prillaman, Jaclyn Wong, and participants at research seminars at Durham University, Gothenburg University, the Institute for Public Goods and Policies (IPP-CSIC), Keio University, Lund University, Nuffield College and the Department of Social Policy and Intervention, Oxford University, Trinity College Dublin, the University of Bath, University of Reading, University of Southampton, ECPR joint sessions 2024, APSA annual meeting 2022, EPSA annual meeting 2022, and the UK PSA's Methodological Conference 2020 for helpful comments on previous versions of this paper. I am grateful to the Moms of Camberville 2.0 Facebook group for valuable feedback on survey design, and to the Harvard Digital Lab for the Social Sciences for pilot testing. I thank the Carrie Chapman Catt Prize, Iowa State University, Bath's Institute for Policy Research and and the Department of Politics, Languages & International Studies at the University of Bath for funding that enabled this research to be conducted.

†Senior Lecturer, Department of Politics, Languages & International Studies at the University of Bath. a.c.weeks@bath.ac.uk.

Gender gaps in political life are intractable. In the United States, women report less interest in politics, are less likely to participate in political discussions, are less likely to participate in public forms of political actions, and report less political ambition than their male counterparts (Burns, Schlozman & Verba 2002; Lawless & Fox 2010; Preece 2016). Studies from Africa to Asia, Europe, and Latin America, report similar findings (Coffé & Bolzendahl 2010; Desposato & Norrander 2009; Kittilson & Schwindt-Bayer 2012; Prillaman 2023). Recently, scholars have begun rethinking the role of gender in the household as a key determinant of political activity (Bernhard, Shames & Teele 2021; Iversen & Rosenbluth 2010; Naurin, Stolle & Markstedt 2022). To date, however, these studies have yet to consider one potential source of political inequalities that is too often hidden: the "mental load".

The mental load is the cognitive labor involved in anticipating, fulfilling, and monitoring household needs (Daminger 2019). It includes remembering schedules and deadlines, arranging goods and services, household financial management, finding child care solutions, and juggling priorities (Robertson et al. 2019). The mental load can often involve not only the cognitive labor of managing these tasks, but the emotional labor of worrying about completing them (Dean, Churchill & Ruppanner 2022). This concept gained traction as a cultural touch point with the publication of the French feminist cartoonist Emma's comic about the issue in 2017,[1] and path-breaking research from sociology uses in-depth interviews to define the phenomenon conceptually (Daminger 2019). So far, few studies measure the mental load quantitatively (but see Haupt & Gelbgiser 2023; Helgøy & Weeks 2023), and no studies investigate the link between mental load and one of the first forms of political engagement, political interest. This matters because we might be underestimating gender gaps in household labor and their implications for equality in public life.

As a first step, I field an original survey to a sample of 3,000 parents in the United

[1] "You Should've Asked," by Emma, 20 May 2017.

States to shed light on the following research questions. First, how do levels of the mental load differ across gender? Second, how does the mental load affect political interest among mothers and fathers? The United States, a liberal welfare state with scant federal support for parents, offers an extreme case. I expect the gender gap in the mental load to be large. Building on Greenlee's (2014) conception of 'politicized motherhood' as a complex identity that can both reinforce traditional gender norms and create new, politically relevant skills and interests, I argue that the relationship between domestic mental load and political engagement is nonlinear. Taking some responsibility for mental tasks can build certain skills, social capital, or efficacy relevant to political life. However, such cognitive labor has diminishing returns and eventually leads to overload, crowding out space for political interests and discussion.

I find evidence of a large gender gap in cognitive household labor among parents. Mothers report primary responsibility for 72 percent of cognitive household labor, while fathers report responsibility for 45 percent. This gender gap of 27 percentage points is larger than the gender gap estimated in share of physical household labor, and it has important implications for politics. As expected, I find that high levels of the mental load are linked to decreases in certain forms of political interest among parents, such as interest in national issues and inflation. Because mothers take on the majority of mental load work, these negative consequences tend to impact mothers more than fathers. At the same time, the mental load can have positive impacts as well. Among mothers, for example, it is positively linked to interest in gun control – an issue with clear links to family care given the US epidemic of school shootings. And at low levels, I find that the mental load is often positively linked to political engagement among both mothers and fathers.

In summary, the main contributions of the study are: 1) to offer a new quantitative method of measuring the mental load; 2) to deepen our understanding of the political con-

sequences of gendered household work by examining the link between the mental load and political interest, and; 3) to consider how the impacts of the mental load vary by the nature of the political issue. Overall, the results highlight the enduring relevance of the household division of labor to equality in political life and the need to move beyond time-based measures in order to measure such unpaid labor accurately.

Gender and the Mental Load

Women continue to do the bulk of household labor across nearly every context in the world. According to data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), globally women spend between two and ten times more time on unpaid care work than men. These gender gaps narrow with women's education and employment, relative income in the household, and when the gender wage gap is relatively smaller (Ferrant, Pesando & Nowacka 2014; Fuwa 2004; Iversen & Rosenbluth 2010). According to household bargaining theories, when women have greater outside options, they have more negotiating power at home, and men begin to take on some of the physical household work (e.g., Becker 1985; Iversen & Rosenbluth 2010).

The same dynamics might not hold for gender gaps in cognitive household labor. This is because cognitive labor is harder to outsource than physical household labor, and it does not require women's physical presence in the home. Instead, it can always be in the back of one's mind. Even very affluent families with full-time child care, cleaning and other household help require someone to manage all of the services and the day-to-day schedules of family members – most often, the mother (Sherman 2017). Further, the work itself tends to be invisible. As Daminger (2019) explains, cognitive labor is "diffuse, disjointed, and often invisible even to the doer" (p. 9). This could make it more difficult to identify and reallocate

within households than physical labor, even if very gender-egalitarian partners want to do so.

In addition, the rise of intensive mothering has affected middle and upper class women in particular (Hays 1996). This dominant paradigm in Western democracies suggests that 'good' mothers ought to be highly involved in all aspects of their children's lives, but the same social pressures are not placed on fathers (Damaske 2013). Women but not men are socialized to be the ones ultimately responsible for family life – and they are likely to be judged by their peers if they do not adhere to these norms (Thébaud, Kornrich & Ruppanner 2021).

Men, conversely, face different social pressures. The role of fatherhood is shifting quickly in recent times; many fathers want to be more involved in their children's lives (for a recent overview, see Grau Grau, las Heras Maestro & Riley Bowles 2022). Yet men still face intense pressure to be 'ideal workers' and breadwinners, and often feel unable to take up policies such as flexible working or parental leave (when available) due to risks of stigmatization (Tanquerel & Grau-Grau 2020).

In other words, although norms might be changing, women and men still face different social pressures about how much to engage at home versus in public life. One study highlights that men and women even have different patterns of perception about domestic tasks, with women seeing more possibilities for action ("affordances") related to their households than men (e.g., women might see a floor and think it needs sweeping, but this might not occur to men) (McClelland & Sliwa 2022). Some research argues that maternal 'gatekeeping' reifies such gender divisions (Allen & Hawkins 1999), while other scholars suggest that men strategically perform incompetence in order to avoid such work (Miller 2018). While the drivers of ongoing inequalities in household work are thus debated, scholars agree that it tends to take up more of women's attention and cognitive space. For all

these reasons, gender gaps in the mental load are likely to be especially sticky – meaning that current time-based estimates of physical household labor could be underestimating gender gaps. The first hypothesis is thus:

H1: Women report higher mental loads than men.

The Mental Load and Political Engagement

In the current study, I concentrate on how cognitive household labor might impact interest in a range of political issues. Like cognitive household labor, political interest is a mental state. If the mental load affects individuals' engagement with political life, I would expect to observe it first in feelings about wanting to pay attention to politics, an important first step that sets the stage for further political participation (Verba, Burns & Schlozman 1997).

Previous studies find consistent gender gaps in political interest in a range of countries around the world, with women reporting less interest than men (Bennett & Bennett 1989; Burns, Schlozman & Verba 2002; Fraile & Gomez 2017; Fraile & Sánchez-Vítores 2020; Verba, Burns & Schlozman 1997; Wolak 2020). Scholars have long theorized that gender-based inequalities in the division of household labor are part of the explanation: if women spend more time on household tasks, this leaves them with fewer opportunities to engage with politics. Yet, the few studies that link household labor to political participation directly report mixed findings. Burns, Schlozman, and Verba (1997; 2002) find no link between the percentage of housework done and political activity for men or women in the United States; however, having more leisure time is associated with greater participation for men. Sartori, Tuorto, and Ghigi (2017)'s study of Italy reports a negative link between time spent in domestic work and political activities for women, but not for men. Finally, in the study perhaps most closely related to the current investigation, Helgøy and Weeks (2023) take an

experimental approach, priming some survey respondents to to think about their own mental loads. They find a strong negative effect of mental load priming on intentions to engage in politics and at work among parents in the UK.

Other studies show that becoming a parent and the presence of young children affect mothers and fathers in different ways – potentially, due to gender differences in unpaid work following the birth of a child. Analysis of political engagement in 27 European countries finds that gender differences in political interest are largest among couples with children (Quaranta & Dotti Sani 2018). Having a child is associated with less voting frequency for women but not men (Voorpostel & Coffé 2012). Even becoming pregnant leads to significant declines in women's levels of political participation, but this is not true for their partners, expectant fathers (Naurin, Stolle & Markstedt 2022). The dampening effect of parenthood for women is also seen at higher levels of political participation, like running for office. For example, mothers with breadwinning responsibility, who despite this still tend to undertake more housework than their partners, are especially unlikely to run for office (Bernhard, Shames & Teele 2021).

While previous studies have perceived household constraints mainly in terms of time spent in physical household labor or parenthood, I propose that cognitive household labor also matters to political engagement. Building on Greenlee's (2014) theory of 'politicized motherhood', I argue that the relationship between the mental load and political engagement is complex and nonlinear. Greenlee claims that motherhood can both reify traditional, feminine identities through gendered social expectations regarding care and housework, and at the same time create new politically relevant skills and interests. For example, taking responsibility for household financial management builds knowledge about the family's economic situation which can inform policy attitudes related to e.g., economic security, employment, health, and education (Hacker, Rehm & Schlesinger 2013). The work of maintaining social

relationships or 'kinkeeping', as well as mental work related to child care and scheduling (organizing, "for instance, the 'school run', childcare 'swaps', baby-sitting, shared childrens outings, emergency care, and the taking and fetching and watching of children in their school and club activities" (Lowndes 2000, p.534) can create networks, trust, and social capital, and form the basis of community organization (Lowndes 2000; Sapiro 2013). While I expect that the mental load is disproportionately done by women, I see no reason to believe that men and women who carry similar mental loads respond to this differently. For both men and women, then, I expect:

H2: At low levels, the mental load is positively linked to political interest.

However, at a certain point such benefits diminish and cognitive overload can decrease political engagement. High levels of mental load can "crowd out" cognitive space for other activities, including but not limited to engaging with political life. The notion of "bounded rationality" holds that individuals have only limited knowledge and computational capacity, and therefore must be selective in searching for information (Simon 1956). Similarly, cognitive load theory suggests that humans have finite working memory, and so there are constraints on how much new information individuals can register and use in conscious activities (Miller 1956). The mental load, as one form of cognitive fatigue, could reduce the desire to acquire new information – particularly if politics is considered a hobby or leisure activity (Hjermitslev & Johnston 2023). With more of one's head space taken up by household management, it could be more difficult, and less rewarding, to follow political issues.

Because cognitive household labor is a relatively new concept, I find little previous evidence directly related to how it might affect political interest. However, in focus groups preceding the 2005 British general election, Campbell and Winters (2008) report that several women mentioned "the responsibility of child-rearing" as a reason why they do not keep up with politics, whereas no men mentioned it (p. 55). Interestingly, these women brought up

mental work related to care. One said, "I think after two kids my brain kind of goes funny. I swear you know I've lost half of it," and another said, "I felt that when I had children and they were young I just really had no time to think about anything else" (p. 71). These remarks are consistent with the idea that mental (over-)load demands can drain energy and attention away from taking an interest in politics:

H3: At high levels, the mental load is negatively linked to political interest.

Further, I expect that H3 is conditioned by the nature of the specific political issue. Gender gaps in political interest often do not persist when considering interest in local issues, as opposed to national or international issues (Campbell & Winters 2008; Coffé 2013). This might be because women's greater involvement in household work gives them more exposure to certain kinds of local politics, like schools and local health issues. Studies also find that women report higher levels of political interest and knowledge when asked about specific political issues, especially those that are particularly relevant to women's lives, such as abortion, as opposed to more general issues (Ferrín et al. 2020; Kraft & Dolan 2023; Tormos & Verge 2022). Further evidence comes from the mothers interviewed in Greenlee's (2014) study. For example, one mother said, "... I used to subscribe to Ms. Magazine, and it was all about national politics, And I think wow, I used to read that? Like, I had time to be worried about that. And I still do, but its on the back burner to the local stuff" (Greenlee 2014, p180). Others brought up public schools, the right to breastfeed, and gun control as political issues activated by different stages of parenthood. I thus expect:

H4: High levels of mental load are more likely to decrease political interest in general political issues perceived to be distant from family life than local political issues well-connected to family life.

In summary, I argue that the effects of the mental load are curvilinear: while low levels of the mental load are generally positive for political interest, high levels of mental

load crowd out cognitive space for political issues, especially general issues perceived to be distant from family life. Given the unequal distribution of mental load in households (women carrying more load than men, on average), these negative political impacts ought to affect more women than men.

An Original Survey on Politics and Household Work

In order to understand the role of the mental load in politics, the first step is measuring it. Few existing studies measure the mental load quantitatively (but see Haupt & Gelbgiser 2023, which uses questions from the Generations and Gender survey, and Helgøy & Weeks 2023 which takes an experimental approach). This type of labor is not captured well by time-use studies which ask respondents to indicate how many minutes they spend on different tasks, because the planning and monitoring that goes into managing a household are often secondary or tertiary activities. It is very hard to identify how much time such nebulous and ongoing work takes, but easier to identify who tends to do different mental tasks.

To make progress on this, I designed a novel task-based measure of the mental load, which was fielded to a sample of parents in the United States. As the liberal welfare state offering the lowest level of state support for parents among its peers (White 2009), the United States is an extreme case. This is useful for studying a relatively new and invisible concept like the mental load, because I expect to find larger mental loads in a context where the state provides virtually no support for caring work. The current study focuses on parents, while acknowledging that the mental load endures throughout the life course (Dean, Churchill & Ruppanner 2022). Gender gaps in pay and promotion intensify on the birth of a child (e.g., Goldin 2021), making it a critical life stage for understanding gender-based inequalities.

The survey was fielded in February and March of 2023 via the survey firm Dynata.

The sample of 3,000 respondents was selected to mirror the US population of parents with respect to age, race/ethnicity, gender, and education. Unlike previous work which tends to focus on different-sex couples, the sample includes individuals from same- and different-sex couples, as well as single parents. It thus offers new evidence that mirrors the diverse population of US parents on certain Census-based characteristics; at the same time, because the data is not drawn from a probability-based sample it might be unrepresentative on other variables. Tables A1 and A2 in the SM provide an overview of the representativeness of the sample and summary statistics.

The survey starts by asking respondents a series of questions about their interest in different political issues. I ask the political questions first because questions about household labor might prime gender and parenthood status, affecting responses to political questions in an undesirable way (Klar 2013). After the questions about political interest, I introduce the idea that household work can have physical and mental aspects. I ask respondents to estimate the hours they spend doing care and other types of household work on a typical day, and to estimate the share of physical household labor that they personally do within their household. These questions allow me to assess how gender differences in household physical labor compare to those in cognitive household labor.

Next I instruct respondents, "Now think about the **mental** work involved in managing your household and caring for children, not the physical aspect." To measure the mental load, I draw on previous qualitative research describing the cycle of cognitive labor in the household: anticipating needs, identifying options and making decisions, and monitoring progress (Daminger 2019).[2] The questionnaire asks a series of task-oriented questions that correspond with each of these three components, for seven different types of cognitive household labor: scheduling, child care, social relationships, cleaning, food, finances, and home

[2]I collapse Daminger's four main components to three for the sake of survey length.

maintenance (21 items in total).[3] These categories are not exhaustive, but represent the majority of the nine cognitive labor domains identified by Daminger (2019).[4] Respondents are asked, "In your family, who typically handles" each task, with a range of options given: "Mostly me", "Mostly my partner", "Partner and I share equally", "Someone else (Includes friends and family)", and "NA". For example, the questions related to scheduling ask who typically handles: Remembering to schedule appointments, such as dentist appointments (*anticipating*); Planning a family event, like a birthday party (*identifying options and making decisions*); and Keeping track of the family calendar, such as kids' medical appointments (*monitoring*).[5]

I then construct a composite measure of the mental load for each person by summing the total number of items that an individual says is done by "Mostly me" and dividing this number by the number of items overall (removing "not applicable" items from the denominator).[6] A similar approach has been found to be effective at measuring issue preferences (Ansolabehere, Rodden & Snyder 2008). The basic idea is that multiple questions – here of different aspects of the mental load, which mirror accounts from qualitative studies – reduce measurement error. The advantage of using the 'mostly me' response to operationalize the mental load, without including work reported as shared, is that it provides a straightforward measure of (perceived) individual responsibility for different types of cognitive labor. Cronbach's Alpha of the scale items is 0.92, indicating excellent internal consistency.

[3] I randomly vary the order of the seven types of cognitive household labor.

[4] To save space and avoid survey fatigue, I leave out "shopping/purchasing" and "travel/leisure." Importantly, both are domains which tend to be women-led (Daminger 2019), meaning that if anything my measure could underestimate the share of mental load done by women.

[5] See SM section A for the full list of mental task survey items.

[6] The average number of "not applicable" responses among the 21 items is 0.7, suggesting that the vast majority of items are relevant.

Describing the Mental Load among U.S. Parents

I begin by providing evidence to support the expectation that the mental load is highly gendered. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the mental load (share of relevant tasks reported to be done by "mostly me") among fathers and mothers. In line with H1, mothers report primary responsibility for 72 percent of the mental load on average, while fathers say that they are mostly responsible for 45 percent (a gender gap of 27 percentage points). A T-test shows that this gender difference is statistically significant. As Figure 1 shows, the distribution of mental load is skewed differently for fathers and mothers: for fathers, the median mental load (38%) is lower than the mean, while for mothers the median mental load (76%) is higher than the mean. The task-based measure of the mental load is also highly correlated with respondents' own assessments of their overall share of mental load (see section A of the SM for a discussion of this validation check).

How do gender gaps in cognitive household labor compare to gender gaps in physical household labor? On average, mothers report doing 75% of physical household labor compared to fathers' 62%, a gender gap of 13 percentage points. Considering instead time spent in both care and other household work, the mean gender difference in hours per week is 25 hours, which translates into 15 percentage points. While both gender gaps are thus sizable and statistically significant, they are smaller than the 27-percentage-point gender gap I report for cognitive household labor.[7] The gender gap in mental load work appears even larger than gender gaps in physical household labor.

[7]Welch Two Sample t-tests find that these gender differences are both statistically significant.

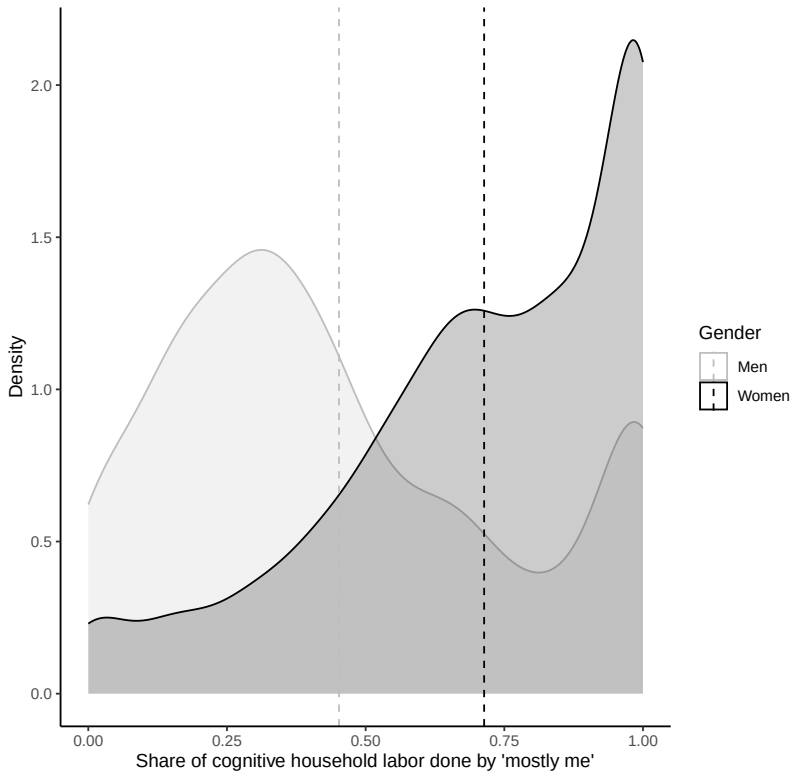

Figure 1: Gender differences in mental household labor

Notes: Vertical lines show means for fathers and mothers.

The Mental Load and Political Engagement: Empirical Strategy and Results

So far, I have established that gender gaps in the mental load among parents are large. How does this matter for political interest? To describe and compare average gender gaps in political life, I estimate OLS regressions separately for different types of political interest. Respondents are asked to indicate their level of political interest in different issues.[8] For ease of interpretation, I rescale these variables to range between 0 and 1, where higher values refer to greater interest. To measure baseline gender gaps in political engagement, I deliberately do not control for other covariates such as education or income because these can be considered "post-treatment," occurring after gender identity is "assigned" (Sen & Wasow 2016).

Figure 2 presents the gender differences in mean engagement, based on bivariate OLS regressions (see Table C1 in SM). Figure 2 shows that mothers report less interest in local, national, and international political issues, and inflation / prices compared to fathers, but more interest in abortion. No significant gender difference is reported for interest in gun control. These results are consistent with previous research showing that gender gaps narrow when respondents are asked about specific issues, especially those related to women's life experiences (Kraft & Dolan 2023; Tormos & Verge 2022).

Given the significantly different distributions of mental load observed for fathers versus mothers in Figure 1, I split the sample by gender in subsequent multivariate analyses. This approach also allows for the possibility that the determinants of political engagement, including the mental load, might matter differently for mothers and fathers and is often used by scholars of gender and politics for this reason (e.g., Burns, Schlozman & Verba 2002; Coffé

[8]The text of survey questions can be found in the SM, section A.

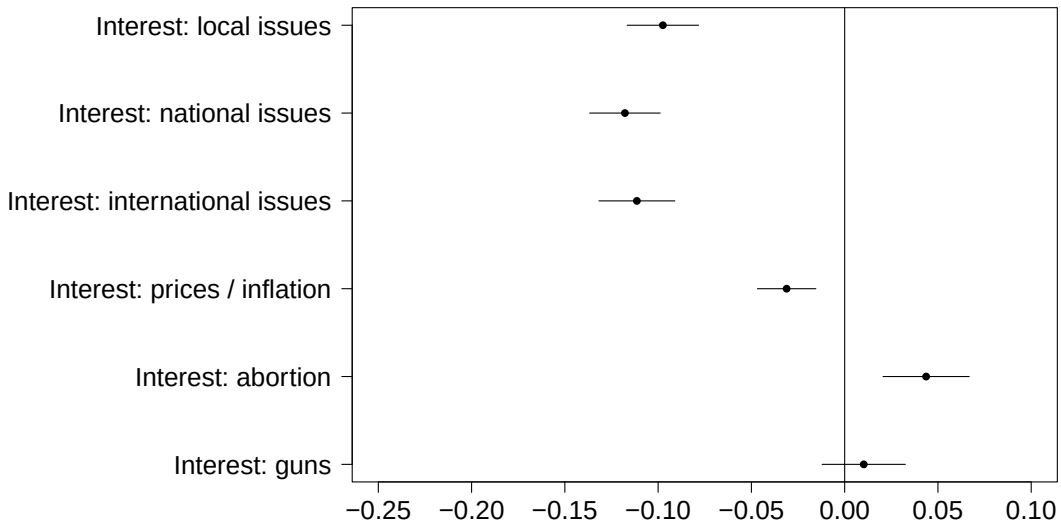

Figure 2: Impact of Gender (Woman) on Political Engagement Among U.S. Parents

Notes: Coefficients from OLS Analysis with 95% CIs (regressions shown in Table C1 of Supplemental Material).

& Bolzendahl 2010; Sartori, Tuorto & Ghigi 2017; Quaranta & Dotti Sani 2018). I estimate a series of OLS models regressing political interest on share of the mental load among mothers and fathers. To account for the curvilinear form of the relationship hypothesized, I include a quadratic transformation of the mental load variable for the majority of specifications. I confirm that the quadratic term improves model fit by comparing the AIC information criterion in models with and without this transformation.[9] This is the main explanatory variable.

My theoretical argument makes the case for a causal relationship between the mental load and political engagement which is very difficult to prove with observational data. While I cannot resolve this problem – and the analysis here should be interpreted as descriptive – I carefully identify and control for potential confounding variables which could affect

[9]Model fit improves for every issue except gun control for mothers and abortion for mothers and fathers. For these specifications, no quadratic transformation is included (see Tables C2 and C3 in SM). Scatterplots of the raw data further confirm the same curvilinear trends, and are available from the author on request.

both mental load and political engagement. These include significant determinants of the mental load among mothers and fathers: having a partner that lives in the same household, age, ethnic identity, having a young child, sexual orientation, and voting Democrat (to save space, analysis of the determinants of mental load is presented in section B of the SM). I also control for a battery of characteristics that previous studies suggest could impact political interest: the number of children in a household, employment, income, and higher education (Bennett & Bennett 1989; Coffé 2013; Verba, Burns & Schlozman 1997). Finally, I control for the self-reported share of physical household labor, as my argument makes the case that this is conceptually distinct from the mental load.[10]

In order to translate the results into meaningful quantities of interest (King, Tomz & Wittenberg 2000), I calculate the predicted values of the dependent variables – interest in different political issues – across values of the mental load. The predicted values plots shown in Figures 3 (mothers) and 4 (fathers) are calculated from OLS regression specifications that include all covariates listed above (regressions shown in Tables C2 and C3 of SM). The dot and lines at the bottom of the plots in Figures 4 and 5 display the median (dot), interquartile range (solid line; 25th to 75th percentile), and spread (dotted line; 5th to 95th percentile) of mental load.

Starting with mothers, in line with H2 Figure 3 suggests that at low levels the mental load is positively linked to several types of political interest. For example, the link between the mental load and interest in national politics is positive and significant until the share of the mental load reaches 54%.[11] Given the skewed distribution of mental load

[10]As with cognitive household labor, the relationship between physical household labor and political engagement is often curvilinear, particularly for mothers. In most specifications for mothers, model fit is improved on inclusion of a quadratic transformation, while this is the not the case for fathers (see SM section C for details).

[11]Thresholds are calculated from average marginal effects and associated confidence intervals at specified values of the mental load, holding all other covariates at their means or modes.

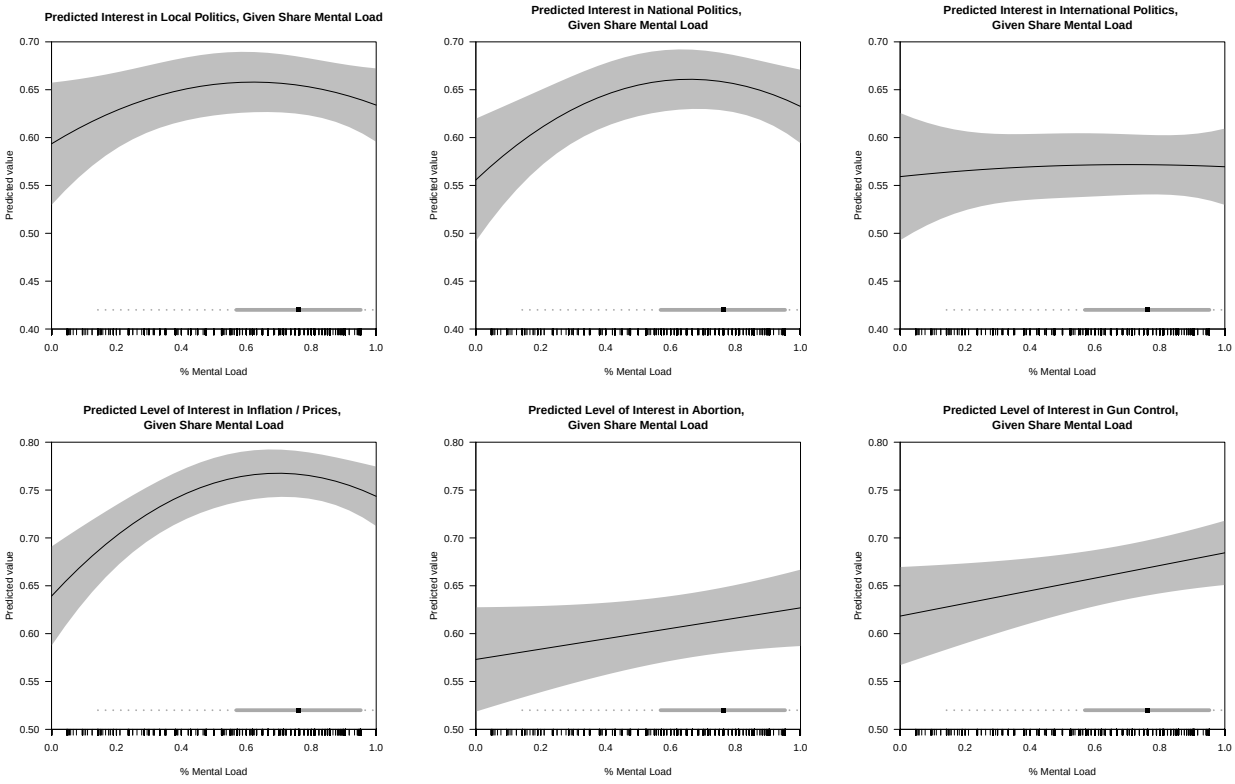

Figure 3: Predicted Values of Political Interest by Share of Mental Load, Mothers

Predicted values calculated from regression models shown in Supplemental Material Table C2. The dot and lines at the bottom of the figure display quantiles of the mental load for mothers. The dot in the center denotes the median, the end points of the thick bars denote the 25th and 75th percentiles, and the end points of the dotted lines denote the 5th and 95th percentiles.

among mothers (the median value is 76%), this finding applies to 24% of mothers who report such low mental loads. Turning to high levels of the mental load (H3), Figure 3 shows that high levels of the mental load are negatively correlated with some forms of mothers' political engagement. The slope at the median value of mental load for mothers is negative for 4 of the 6 forms of political interest (see also Table 1). This negative link becomes statistically significant at high levels for interest in national issues and prices / inflation. These significant negative effects emerge for levels of mental load of: 96% (interest in national issues) and 88% (interest in prices / inflation). Given the left-skewed distribution of the mental load among mothers, these shares of the mental load reduce political engagement for between 28% and 52% of mothers in my data. Partially confirming H3, high mental loads significantly decrease some types of political engagement among mothers.

To give a sense of relative effect size of cognitive 'overload', moving from the mean share of the mental load share to one standard deviation above reduces mothers' interest in national politics and inflation / prices by 2 percentage points each. Considering the size of the gender gap on these issues, such a change corresponds to 17% of the gender gap in interest in national politics and 66% of the smaller gender gap in interest in inflation / prices. It is important to note that high levels of physical household labor are also linked to lower political interest, particularly in local and national issues. However, the average marginal effects across values of physical household labor reveal no significant negative relationship even at high levels. While the relationship is in the expected direction, without including the mental load one would have an incomplete picture about the significant consequences of domestic work for political interest.

Figure 3 also demonstrates that high levels of the mental load are *positively* linked to interest in gun control. The regression on interest in gun control does not require a quadratic transformation of the mental load; the model fit is better without it. For interest

in gun control then, a one unit increase in mental load is associated with a 0.07 unit increase in interest. Gun control is an issue that resonates strongly with women's social roles as mothers as a child-protection measure, and this has spurred many U.S. mothers to political activism – see, e.g., the Million Mom March and Moms Demand Action (Goss 2003). It follows that mothers who bear the primary responsibility for the mental load, which likely includes thinking about their children's safety, would be all the more interested in gun control. Together, the results provide partial evidence for H4, that high levels of mental load decrease interest especially in general, abstract political issues (for mothers, effects are found for national issues and inflation) but not in those issues perceived to interconnected with family life (the reverse effect is found for gun control). Finally, no statistically significant link is reported between the mental load and interest in local issues, international issues, or abortion.

Turning to fathers, recall that for fathers the distribution of relative mental load is reversed – the median share is 38%. Keeping this in mind, as observed among mothers and in line with H2, at low levels the mental load is positively linked to political interest. The slope at the median value of mental load for fathers is positive for each of the 6 forms of political interest. Significant effects are observed for 4 of the 6: interest in local, national, and international issues, and inflation / prices.[12] Figure 4 shows that very high levels of the mental load also tend to decrease political interest, and among fathers this is statistically significant for interest in inflation / prices (above 72% of mental load) – offering partial evidence for H3. Finally, no significant link is observed between the mental load and interest in abortion or gun control among fathers.

Table 1 summarizes the results, reporting the average marginal effects (slopes) of the mental load at median and high values (here, I use 80th percentile), for mothers and fathers.

[12]The thresholds of mental load below which these positive effects are significant are as follows: local issues (65%); national issues (64%); international issues (73%); inflation / prices (47%).

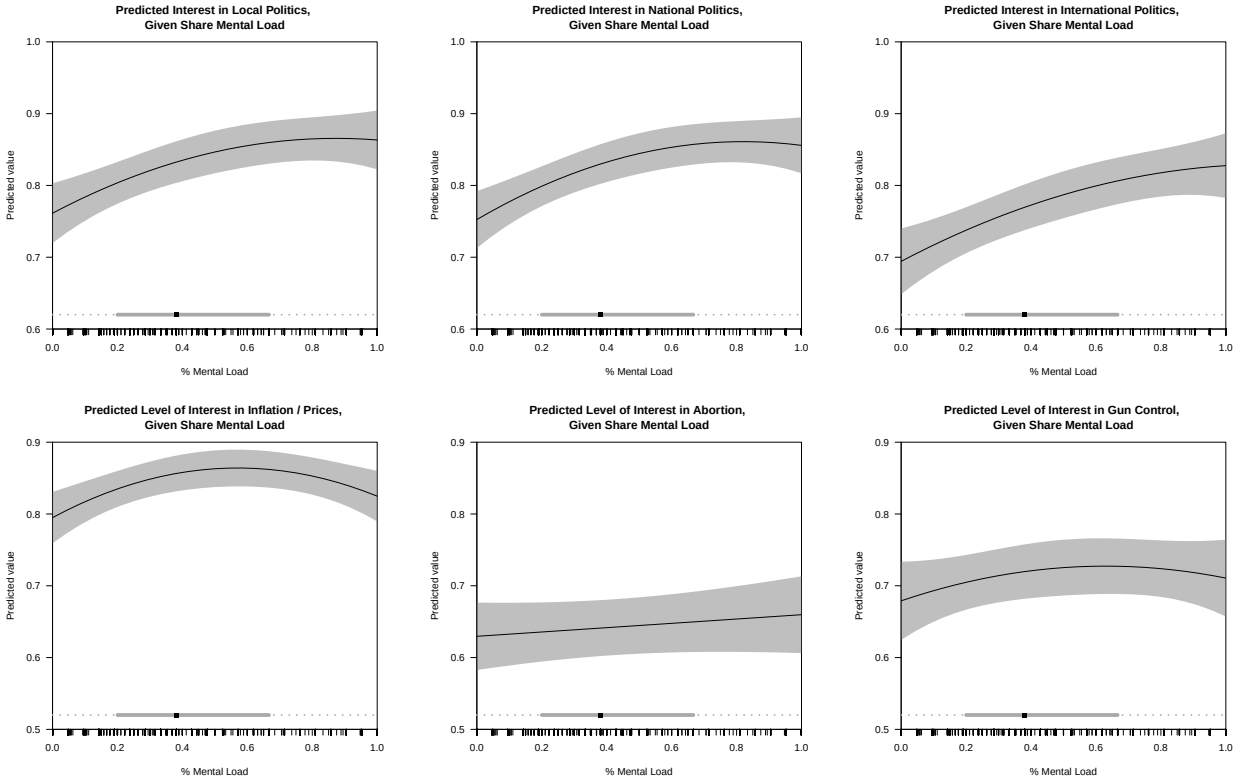

Figure 4: Predicted Values of Political Interest by Share of Mental Load, Fathers

Predicted values calculated from regression models shown in Supplemental Material Table C3. The dot and lines at the bottom of the figure display quantiles of the mental load for fathers. The dot in the center denotes the median, the end points of the thick bars denote the 25th and 75th percentiles, and the end points of the dotted lines denote the 5th and 95th percentiles.

For mothers, the median value of mental load is 76& and 80th percentile is 100%, while for fathers the median value is 38% and 80th percentile is 76%. Table 1 shows that, for mothers, the median mental load is negatively correlated with political engagement for 4 of the 6 types of engagement (exceptions are abortion and gun control, neither of which are characterized by a traditional gender gap). At high shares of the mental load, these these negative 'effects' become statistically significant for interest in national issues and inflation / prices, while high levels of mental load are positively linked to interest in gun control. However, among fathers the median mental load (which is half of the median load among mothers) is always positively associated with political interest. At high levels, these positive 'effects' of the mental load among fathers typically decrease in size and lose statistical significance. As with mothers, high mental load among fathers is negatively linked to interest in inflation / prices. These results suggest a nuanced relationship, whereby taking on some mental load can be positive for political interest – but the high levels of the mental load that are seen especially among mothers indeed reduce some forms of political interest. And, importantly, the highest levels of political interest for both mothers and fathers tend to be found at middling levels of mental load. This suggests that a more equitable mental load divide would have positive consequences for political engagement among both mothers and fathers.

Table 1: Average Marginal Effects of Median and High Mental Load on Political Engagement

	Median Mental Load		*High Mental Load (80th %ile)*	
	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Interest: local issues	-0.047	0.135***	-0.127	0.031
	(0.043)	(0.030)	(0.081)	(0.043)
Interest: national issues	-0.050	0.142***	-0.166*	0.0195
	(0.043)	(0.029)	(0.081)	(0.041)
Interest: international issues	-0.003	0.158***	-0.015	0.079
	(0.045)	(0.033)	(0.084)	(0.048)
Interest: prices / inflation	-0.033	0.081**	-0.160*	-0.081*
	(0.035)	(0.026)	(0.065)	(0.038)
Interest: abortion	0.054	0.003	0.054	0.003
	(0.033)	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.032)
Interest: guns	0.066*	0.061	0.066*	-0.032
	(0.031)	(0.040)	(0.031)	(0.057)

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

I conduct several sensitivity checks. First, results are robust to specifications excluding controls, showing that the findings do not rely on particular covariates (see SM Tables C4 C5). Second, results are robust to models that use ordered logistic regression instead of OLS (Tables C6 and C7). Third, I make the case that while the relationship between mental load and interest is curvilinear, mothers and fathers respond similarly to different levels of load. I confirm this by presenting models including interactions between gender and mental load (base and quadratic terms) in Table C8 of the SM. The interaction terms are never significant. Fourth, one concern might be that the findings are driven by single parents. Having a partner increases political engagement (e.g., Verba, Burns & Schlozman 1997), and is negatively correlated with mental load (see section B of the SM)). I control for this variable, but as an extra check I rerun all models showing significant effects with the subsample of mothers and fathers who have a partner. The findings are largely robust to

this test (SM Tables C9 - C10).[13]

Conclusion

Despite major advances in women's access to education and employment over recent decades, women still take on a "second shift" at home (Hochschild & Machung 2012). The contribution of this study is to offer a quantitative method of measuring the cognitive aspect of this labor and to explore its political consequences among parents. I find a large gender gap of 27 percentage points among U.S. parents, approximately double the size of the gender gap measured in physical household labor. Previous time-use studies which include some element of cognitive household labor find smaller gender gaps, on par with gender gaps in physical household labor (Lee & Waite 2005; Offer & Schneider 2011). As Daminger (2019) recognizes, this is likely because it is very hard to estimate the *time* spent doing ongoing, diffuse mental work. My task-based mental load scale affirms previous qualitative findings that women take on the vast majority of such work (Daminger 2019). Future studies can use the mental load measure developed here to investigate other topics, such as how the mental load impacts paid labor or leisure activities.

Examining how the mental load relates to political interest, I find a nuanced relationship. For both fathers and mothers low levels of cognitive household labor encourage political interest, suggesting that taking some mental load responsibility enhances certain skills and builds social ties. However, these returns diminish as the mental load grows, crowding out energy and mental space to engage with politics. Because fathers are distributed at the low end of the mental load, it tends to have a positive effect for them. Importantly, because mothers take on more mental load than fathers, the mental load tends to have the

[13]The exception is that the negative effect of high mental load on interest in national politics for mothers is significant at the 0.1 level.

opposite, negative impact on mothers' political engagement, particularly for general issues which might seem distant from family life. The highest levels of political interest tend to be found at middling levels of mental load. These results suggest that if fathers took on more of the load and mothers less, overall political engagement ought to increase.

The current study offers new evidence about the link between mental load, gender, and political engagement, but it has several notable limitations. First, the data are from individuals at a single point in time, and thus cannot speak to household-level measurement of the mental load (including for example the extent to which couples agree on who does different tasks), or within-individual change in mental load and how these relate to political interest. Because quantitative measures of the mental load are relatively new, such data is not yet available. The sample also does not include many variables of potential interest, such as urban/rural, state indicators, migration status, religion, family structure, parenting norms, and disability. Panel studies, partner studies, and surveys including a broader range of covariates thus offer promising ways to further advance knowledge of the mental load and its political impacts, which could differ across subgroups.

Second, the survey analyzed in this study measures the cognitive dimension of household labor, but the mental load also has an emotional dimension (Dean, Churchill & Ruppanner 2022). It is important for future studies to consider how we can render this emotional aspect of the mental load more visible. As one indicator of well-being, the survey asks how satisfied respondents are with the division of mental labor in their household. The results suggest that most mothers but not fathers are *not* satisfied. While 66 percent of fathers say that they are satisfied with the division of mental work in their household, only 42 percent of mothers agree.[14] Future research should continue to study whether and how inequalities in cognitive labor might cause distress, anxiety, and poorer well-being for women

[14]A Welch two-sample t-test finds that this difference is significant at conventional levels.

(Haupt & Gelbgiser 2023; Petts & Carlson 2023).

Finally, comparative studies are necessary to establish to what extent the gender gap in the mental load varies across different countries, cultures of care, and welfare state systems. Given that the United States can be classified as an extreme case for this study due to its lack of federally-mandated support for parents, how might the findings change in contexts with more generous state policies such as well-paid shared parental leave and subsidized child care? Research suggesting that direct exposure to paternity leave can increase fathers' participation in household work (Patnaik 2019) and gender-egalitarian norms (Tavits et al. 2023) offers promising evidence that such policies could make a difference. In order to pinpoint effective solutions to close gender gaps at home and in politics, an important first step is raising awareness about the mental load and measuring variation in how it shared across different contexts.

References

Allen, Sarah M & Alan J Hawkins. 1999. "Maternal gatekeeping: Mothers' beliefs and behaviors that inhibit greater father involvement in family work." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* pp. 199–212.

Ansolabehere, Stephen, Jonathan Rodden & James M Snyder. 2008. "The strength of issues: Using multiple measures to gauge preference stability, ideological constraint, and issue voting." *American Political Science Review* 102(2):215–232.

Becker, Gary S. 1985. "Human capital, effort, and the sexual division of labor." *Journal of labor economics* 3(1, Part 2):S33–S58.

Bennett, Linda LM & Stephen Earl Bennett. 1989. "Enduring gender differences in political interest: The impact of socialization and political dispositions." *American Politics Quarterly* 17(1):105–122.

Bernhard, Rachel, Shauna Shames & Dawn Langan Teele. 2021. "To emerge? Breadwinning, motherhood, and womens decisions to run for office." *American Political Science Review* 115(2):379–394.

Burns, Nancy, Kay Lehman Schlozman & Sidney Verba. 1997. "The public consequences of private inequality: Family life and citizen participation." *American political science review* 91(2):373–389.

Burns, Nancy, Kay Lehman Schlozman & Sidney Verba. 2002. *The Private Roots of Public Action*. Harvard University Press.

Campbell, Rosie & Kristi Winters. 2008. "Understanding mens and womens political interests: Evidence from a study of gendered political attitudes." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 18(1):53–74.

Coffé, Hilde. 2013. "Women stay local, men go national and global? Gender differences in political interest." *Sex roles* 69(5):323–338.

Coffé, Hilde & Catherine Bolzendahl. 2010. "Same game, different rules? Gender differences in political participation." *Sex roles* 62(5):318–333.

Damaske, Sarah. 2013. "Work, family, and accounts of mothers lives using discourse to navigate intensive mothering ideals." *Sociology Compass* 7(6):436–444.

Daminger, Allison. 2019. "The cognitive dimension of household labor." *American Sociological Review* 84(4):609–633.

Dean, Liz, Brendan Churchill & Leah Ruppanner. 2022. "The mental load: building a deeper theoretical understanding of how cognitive and emotional labor over load women and mothers." *Community, Work & Family* 25(1):13–29.

Desposato, Scott & Barbara Norrander. 2009. "The gender gap in Latin America: Contextual and individual influences on gender and political participation." *British journal of political science* 39(1):141–162.

Ferrant, Gaëlle, Luca Maria Pesando & Keiko Nowacka. 2014. "Unpaid Care Work: The missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labour outcomes." *Issues Paper, OECD Development Centre, www. oecd. org/dev/developmentgender/unpaid_care_work. pdf (accessed 12 October 2017)* .

Ferrín, Monica, Marta Fraile, Gema M García-Albacete & Raúl Gómez. 2020. "The gender gap in political interest revisited." *International Political Science Review* 41(4):473–489.

Fraile, Marta & Irene Sánchez-Vítores. 2020. "Tracing the gender gap in political interest over the life span: A panel analysis." *Political Psychology* 41(1):89–106.

Fraile, Marta & Raul Gomez. 2017. "Bridging the enduring gender gap in political interest

in Europe: The relevance of promoting gender equality." *European journal of political research* 56(3):601–618.

Fuwa, Makiko. 2004. "Macro-level gender inequality and the division of household labor in 22 countries." *American sociological review* 69(6):751–767.

Goldin, Claudia. 2021. Career and family. In *Career and Family*. Princeton University Press.

Goss, Kristin A. 2003. "Rethinking the political participation paradigm: the case of women and gun control." *Women & Politics* 25(4):83–118.

Grau Grau, Marc, Mireia las Heras Maestro & Hannah Riley Bowles. 2022. *Engaged fatherhood for men, families and gender equality: healthcare, social policy, and work perspectives*. Springer Nature.

Greenlee, Jill. 2014. *The political consequences of motherhood*. University of Michigan Press.

Hacker, Jacob S, Philipp Rehm & Mark Schlesinger. 2013. "The insecure American: Economic experiences, financial worries, and policy attitudes." *Perspectives on Politics* 11(1):23–49.

Haupt, Andreas & Dafna Gelbgiser. 2023. "The gendered division of cognitive household labor, mental load, and family–work conflict in European countries." *European Societies* pp. 1–27.

Hays, Sharon. 1996. *The cultural contradictions of motherhood*. Yale University Press.

Helgøy, Anna & Ana Catalano Weeks. 2023. "Crowded Out: The Influence of Mental Load Priming on Intentions to Participate in Public Life." *Paper presented at the European Political Science Association* .

Hjermitslev, Ida B & Christopher D Johnston. 2023. "Mixed evidence for a relationship of cognitive fatigue to political engagement." *Electoral Studies* 83:102621.

Hochschild, Arlie & Anne Machung. 2012. *The second shift: Working families and the revolution at home*. Penguin.

Iversen, Torben & Frances McCall Rosenbluth. 2010. *Women, work, and politics: The political economy of gender inequality*. Yale University Press.

King, Gary, Michael Tomz & Jason Wittenberg. 2000. "Making the most of statistical analyses: Improving interpretation and presentation." *American journal of political science* pp. 347–361.

Kittilson, Miki Caul & Leslie A Schwindt-Bayer. 2012. *The gendered effects of electoral institutions: Political engagement and participation*. Oxford University Press.

Klar, Samara. 2013. "The influence of competing identity primes on political preferences." *The Journal of Politics* 75(4):1108–1124.

Kraft, Patrick W & Kathleen Dolan. 2023. "Asking the Right Questions: A Framework for Developing Gender-Balanced Political Knowledge Batteries." *Political Research Quarterly* 76(1):393–406.

Lawless, Jennifer L & Richard L Fox. 2010. *It still takes a candidate: Why women dont run for office*. Cambridge University Press.

Lee, Yun-Suk & Linda J Waite. 2005. "Husbands and wives time spent on housework: A comparison of measures." *Journal of marriage and family* 67(2):328–336.

Lowndes, Vivien. 2000. "Women and social capital: A comment on Hall's social capital in Britain." *British journal of political science* 30(3):533–537.

McClelland, Tom & Paulina Sliwa. 2022. "Gendered affordance perception and unequal domestic labour." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* .

Miller, George A. 1956. "The magical number seven, plus or minus two: Some limits on our capacity for processing information." *Psychological review* 63(2):81.

Miller, Tina. 2018. "Paternal and maternal gatekeeping? Choreographing care." *Sociologica* 12(3):25–35.

Naurin, Elin, Dietlind Stolle & Elias Markstedt. 2022. "The Effect of Pregnancy on Engagement with Politics. Toward a Model of the Political Consequences of the Earliest Stages of Parenthood." *American Political Science Review* pp. 1–7.

Offer, Shira & Barbara Schneider. 2011. "Revisiting the gender gap in time-use patterns: Multitasking and well-being among mothers and fathers in dual-earner families." *American Sociological Review* 76(6):809–833.

Patnaik, Ankita. 2019. "Reserving time for daddy: The consequences of fathers quotas." *Journal of Labor Economics* 37(4):1009–1059.

Petts, Richard J & Daniel L Carlson. 2023. "Managing a Household during a Pandemic: Cognitive Labor and Parents Psychological Well-being." *Society and Mental Health* p. 21568693231169521.

Preece, Jessica Robinson. 2016. "Mind the gender gap: An experiment on the influence of self-efficacy on political interest." *Politics & Gender* 12(1):198–217.

Prillaman, Soledad Artiz. 2023. *The Patriarchal Political Order: The Making and Unravelling of the Gendered Participation Gap in India*. Cambridge University Press.

Quaranta, Mario & Giulia M Dotti Sani. 2018. "Left Behind? Gender Gaps in Political Engagement Over the Life Course in Twenty-Seven European Countries." *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 25(2):254–286.

Robertson, Lindsey G, Tamara L Anderson, M Elizabeth Lewis Hall & Christina Lee Kim.

2019. “Mothers and mental labor: A phenomenological focus group study of family-related thinking work.” *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 43(2):184–200.

Sapiro, Virginia. 2013. Gender, Social Capital, and Politics. In *Gender and social capital*. Routledge pp. 151–183.

Sartori, Laura, Dario Tuorto & Rossella Ghigi. 2017. “The social roots of the gender gap in political participation: The role of situational and cultural constraints in Italy.” *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 24(3):221–247.

Sen, Maya & Omar Wasow. 2016. “Race as a ‘Bundle of Sticks’: designs that estimate effects of seemingly immutable characteristics.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 19.

Sherman, Rachel. 2017. *Uneasy Street*. Princeton University Press.

Simon, Herbert A. 1956. “Rational choice and the structure of the environment.” *Psychological review* 63(2):129.

Tanquerel, Sabrina & Marc Grau-Grau. 2020. “Unmasking work-family balance barriers and strategies among working fathers in the workplace.” *Organization* 27(5):680–700.

Tavits, Margit, Petra Schleiter, Jonathan Homola & Dalston Ward. 2023. “Fathers leave reduces sexist attitudes.” *American Political Science Review* pp. 1–7.

Thébaud, Sarah, Sabino Kornrich & Leah Ruppanner. 2021. “Good housekeeping, great expectations: Gender and housework norms.” *Sociological Methods & Research* 50(3):1186–1214.

Tormos, Raül & Tània Verge. 2022. “Challenging the Gender Gap in Political Interest: A By-Product of Survey Specification Error.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 86(1):107–133.

Verba, Sidney, Nancy Burns & Kay Lehman Schlozman. 1997. “Knowing and caring about politics: Gender and political engagement.” *The journal of politics* 59(4):1051–1072.

Voorpostel, Marieke & Hilde Coffé. 2012. "Transitions in partnership and parental status, gender, and political and civic participation." *European Sociological Review* 28(1):28–42.

White, Linda A. 2009. "The United States in comparative perspective: Maternity and parental leave and child care benefits trends in liberal welfare states." *Yale JL & Feminism* 21:185.

Wolak, Jennifer. 2020. "Self-confidence and gender gaps in political interest, attention, and efficacy." *The Journal of Politics* 82(4):1490–1501.

Supplemental Material for 'The Political Consequences of the Mental Load'

Contents

A Information about the Survey

Ethical Considerations

The study was reviewed and approved by my university's relevant ethics committee. Participation in the survey was voluntary. Data was collected by the survey provider Dynata (formerly Survey Sampling International), and like other providers Dynata recruits participants through small monetary or reward incentives. Before participants could proceed to the survey, they were directed to an information and consent page. Participants were provided with information about the purpose of the scientific study, eligibility, that participation is entirely voluntary and they can exit at any time, that no identifying information is collected, expected duration of survey, and contact information (name and email address) for the principal investigator. Participants are then given a choice between providing their informed consent and proceeding with the survey, or not providing consent and choosing not to participate in the study.

Survey Question Items: Politics and Mental Load

Respondents first answer the following series of questions about their level of interest in politics and how often they discuss politics. How interested would you say you personally are in the following types of political issues:

- Local issues
- National issues
- International issues

Response options are: "Not at all interested", "Not very interested", "Fairly interested", and "Very interested."

Please indicate your level of interest in each of the following political issues, on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "no interest at all" and 10 means "a lot of interest":

- Inflation / prices

- Abortion

- Gun control

Questions Composing the Task-Based Measure of the Mental Load

After answering questions about politics and physical household labor, respondents are told the following:

"Now think about the **mental work** involved in managing your household and caring for children, not the physical aspect.

You will see a series of 7 questions which ask about some different aspects of household and care work. **Please respond who in our household (yourself or someone else) typically handles this kind of mental work.**"

The response options given are: "Mostly me", "Mostly my partner", "Partner and I share equally", "Someone else (Includes friends and family)", and "NA". The seven categories shown below were randomly varied.

Care for children: In your household, who typically does the following?

- Researching options for new items children need, like school supplies or shoes
- Deciding on a child care provider (e.g., babysitter, daycare, camp)
- Noticing when children's nails need to be cut

Cleaning: In your household, who typically does the following?

- Keeping track of when sheets and towels need to be washed
- Cleaning out kids' clothes that no longer fit
- Noticing when the house needs to be tidied

Finances: In your household, who typically does the following?

- Researching options for financial products like bank accounts or insurance
- Deciding how to allocate money (such as paying off credit cards or increasing savings)
- Keeping track of household expenses

Food: In your household, who typically does the following?

- Keeping rack of which groceries need to be purchased
- Deciding what meals to cook
- Monitoring food for "sell-by" dates, or noticing when foods need to be thrown away

Home maintenance: In your household, who typically does the following?

- Noticing when something like a dishwasher or faucet needs repair
- Booking a repair professional like a plumber or mechanic
- Remembering when items like a boiler or car need servicing

Social relationships: In your household, who typically does the following?

- Finding social options for children's enrichment (sports classes, clubs, etc)
- Coordinating a playdate
- Checking in with family and friends

Scheduling: In your household, who typically does the following?

- Keeping track of the family calendar, such as kids' medical appointments
- Planning a family event, like a birthday party
- Remembering to schedule appointments, such as dentist appointments

Table A1: Representativeness of Sample of U.S. Parents

	Dynata	2021 Census (ASEC)
Woman	55.3%	55.3%
Man	44.7%	44.7%
Age 18–24	3.1%	3.1%
Age 25–34	25.7%	25.7%
Age 35–44	40.8%	40.8%
Age 45–54	24.1%	24.1%
Age 55 +	6.3%	6.3%
White	76.2%	76.2%
Black	12.3%	12.3%
Asian	7.6%	7.7%
Mixed race or other	3.9%	3.9%
Education, less than high school degree	8.8%	8.9%
Education, high school degree	24.2%	24.2%
Education, some college or Associates	25.0%	25.1%
Education, Bachelors or more	41.9%	41.8%

Census data source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2021 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. Internet Release Date: November 2021. Note that Census reference figures were compiled using data for parents with children under 18.

Table A2: Summary Statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Woman	3,000	0.553	0.497	0	1
Age 18–24	3,000	0.031	0.172	0	1
Age 25–34	3,000	0.257	0.437	0	1
Age 35-44	3,000	0.408	0.492	0	1
Age 45–55	3,000	0.241	0.428	0	1
Age 55 +	3,000	0.063	0.243	0	1
White	3,000	0.762	0.426	0	1
Black	3,000	0.123	0.328	0	1
Asian	3,000	0.076	0.265	0	1
Mixed or other race	3,000	0.039	0.194	0	1
Lesbian, gay, or bisexual	3,000	0.067	0.251	0	1
Higher education	3,000	0.419	0.494	0	1
Share mental load	2,989	0.597	0.315	0	1
Share physical HH labor	3,000	0.693	0.242	0	1
Partner	3,000	0.785	0.411	0	1
Democrat	3,000	0.398	0.489	0	1
Republican	3,000	0.306	0.461	0	1
Not employed	3,000	0.318	0.466	0	1
Low income (< $50,000)	3,000	0.217	0.412	0	1
Medium income ($50,000 – $100,000)	3,000	0.249	0.432	0	1
High income (> $100,000)	3,000	0.212	0.409	0	1
Youngest child 0 or 1	3,000	0.121	0.326	0	1
Youngest child 2 or 3	3,000	0.131	0.337	0	1
Youngest child 4 or 5	3,000	0.128	0.334	0	1
Youngest child over 5	3,000	0.590	0.492	0	1
Number of children	3,000	1.725	0.931	0	5
Interest in local issues	3,000	0.737	0.270	0.000	1.000
Interest in national issues	3,000	0.744	0.269	0.000	1.000
Interest in international issues	3,000	0.660	0.288	0.000	1.000
Interest in inflation/ prices	3,000	0.798	0.218	0.000	1.000
Interest in abortion	3,000	0.608	0.321	0.000	1.000
Interest in guns	3,000	0.682	0.310	0.000	1.000

Notes: Missing data in mental load is due to a small number of respondents (N=11) reporting NA for each item included.

Validation check of the mental load scale

In Figure A1, I provide a validation check on my task-based measure of the mental load. Figure A1 shows that the task-based measure (on the x-axis) is strongly correlated with respondents' own assessments of the share of mental load they are personally responsible for in their household (on the y-axis). This is true for both mothers and fathers, with correlation coefficients very similar among the sub-samples. Note that in the self-reported estimates, both fathers and mothers say that they do a greater share of the mental load than I find using the task-based measure, and this difference is larger for men. The average self-estimate of household mental load among fathers is 61% (16 percentage points higher than the task-based mean of 45%), compared to mothers' 78% (6 percentage points higher than the task-based mean of 72%). The task-based measure has the advantage of asking respondents about specific activities, rather than relying on respondents to remember all of the mental work they do (which could increase over-reporting). Because of this, I rely on the task-based measure for the current study.

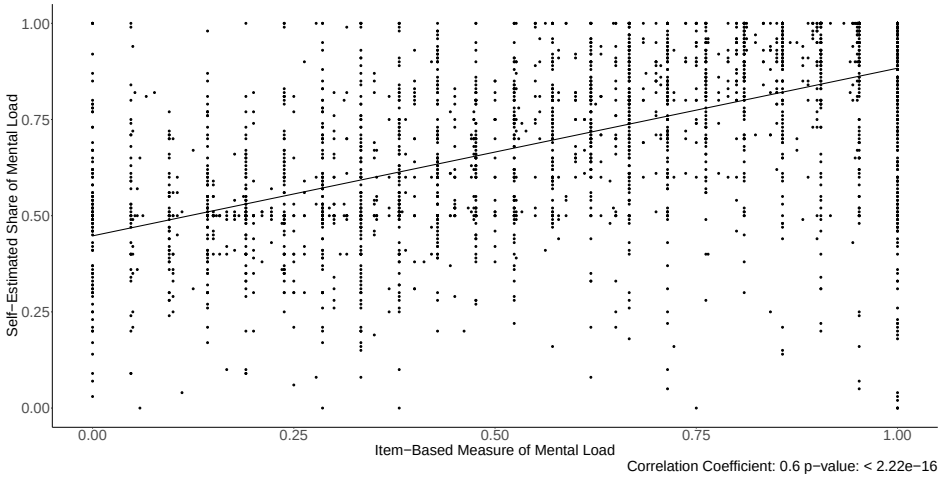

Figure A1: Validation Check on Mental Load Scale

B Determinants of the Mental Load

In order to examine how the mental load relates to political engagement for mothers and fathers, an important first step is understanding "selection" into the mental load. Table B1 reports Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regressions of the relative share of cognitive household labor on a battery of independent variables, separately for fathers and mothers.

Table B1 shows that the most important determinant of cognitive household labor is having a partner that lives in the same household, which reduces the share of the mental load by 37 percentage points for fathers and 18 percentage points for mothers. Among mothers, the next most important determinant is age, with mothers between 35 and 55 years of age taking on significantly more mental load than younger or older mothers. In line with studies finding a more equal division of household labor within same-sex couples (e.g., Bauer 2016; Doan & Quadlin 2019), lesbian or bisexual mothers take on less primary responsibility for the mental load compared to heterosexual mothers. Ethnicity also matters, in different ways for fathers and mothers. Notably, none of the important factors linked to women's household bargaining power in previous studies (e.g., Ferrant, Pesando & Nowacka 2014; Fuwa 2004; Iversen & Rosenbluth 2010) reduce mothers' mental load: education, employment, level personal income (reference category: no income / not employed), and relative income in the household are all not significant determinants of the share of mothers' mental loads. Among fathers, having very young children is linked to lower levels of mental load compared to having older children, while voting Democrat in the last election is linked to taking on more of the mental load. Models of political engagement in the main text thus include these potential confounders as controls.

Table B1: Determinants of Cognitive Household Labor by Gender

	Dependent variable:	
	% Cognitive Household Labor	
	Mothers	Fathers
	(1)	(2)
Higher education	0.001	0.032
	(0.016)	(0.019)
Low income	0.031	-0.054
	(0.016)	(0.029)
Medium income	0.009	-0.036
	(0.018)	(0.027)
High income	-0.009	-0.002
	(0.025)	(0.028)
Relative HH income (earns more)	-0.011	0.022
	(0.022)	(0.017)
Black	-0.034	-0.075**
	(0.020)	(0.027)
Asian	-0.077***	0.008
	(0.023)	(0.035)
Mixed / Other race	0.016	-0.052
	(0.031)	(0.045)
Age 25–34	0.060	-0.013
	(0.033)	(0.081)
Age 35–44	0.099**	-0.052
	(0.034)	(0.081)
Age 45–54	0.107**	-0.127
	(0.036)	(0.082)
Age 55+	0.088*	-0.092
	(0.043)	(0.086)
Partner	-0.178***	-0.375***
	(0.016)	(0.024)
Youngest child 4 - 5	-0.016	-0.035
	(0.021)	(0.024)
Youngest child 2 - 3	-0.039	-0.078**
	(0.021)	(0.025)
Youngest child 0 - 1	0.001	-0.119***
	(0.021)	(0.028)
Number of children	0.011	0.001
	(0.007)	(0.009)

Democrat	0.006	0.056***
	(0.014)	(0.017)
Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual	-0.058*	0.017
	(0.024)	(0.037)
Constant	0.757***	0.833***
	(0.039)	(0.087)
Observations	1,606	1,279
R^2	0.119	0.214
Adjusted R^2	0.108	0.202
Note:	*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001	

The reference category for income is not employed / no income, and the reference category for age range is 18 – 24.

C Regressions

Table C1: Bivariate Regression Results, Gender and Political Interest

	Dependent Variable	Coefficient	Std Error	t-value	p-value
Model 1	Interest: Local issues	-0.097	0.010	-9.986	0.000
Model 2	Interest: National issues	-0.118	0.010	-12.221	0.000
Model 3	Interest: International issues	-0.111	0.010	-10.731	0.000
Model 4	Interest: Inflation / prices	-0.031	0.008	-3.890	0.000
Model 5	Interest: Abortion	0.044	0.012	3.707	0.000
Model 6	Interest: Gun control	0.010	0.011	0.899	0.369

Notes for Tables C2 and C3

Tables C2 and C3 show the full model specifications used to create Figures 3 and 4 in text. Note that income refers to personal annual salary (not household), and the reference category is no income / not employed. As with mental load, the relationship the relationship between physical household labor and political engagement is often curvilinear, especially for mothers. Following the same procedure used with mental load, then, I test whether physical household labor requires a quadratic term by comparing the AIC information criterion in models with and without this transformation. I find that quadratic terms improve the model fit in each specification shown in Table C2 (mothers) except for gun control. For fathers, the quadratic term for physical household labor only improves model fit for interest in abortion (see Table C3).

Table C2: Determinants of Political Interest among Mothers

	Dependent variable:					
	Interest					
	Local	National	Int'l	Prices	Abortion	Guns
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Mental load	0.208	0.319**	0.036	0.368***	0.054	0.066*
	(0.106)	(0.106)	(0.110)	(0.086)	(0.033)	(0.031)
Mental load^2	-0.167	−0.243**	-0.025	−0.264***		
	(0.089)	(0.089)	(0.093)	(0.072)		
Physical HH labor	0.624***	0.553***	0.414**	0.167	0.233	0.107**
	(0.150)	(0.150)	(0.156)	(0.122)	(0.176)	(0.035)
Physical HH labor^2	−0.335**	−0.285*	-0.167	0.022	-0.091	
	(0.114)	(0.115)	(0.119)	(0.093)	(0.134)	
Higher education	0.035*	0.064***	0.077***	-0.003	0.003	0.009
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.013)	(0.020)	(0.018)
Low income	0.051**	0.038*	0.034	0.041**	-0.010	-0.010
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.014)	(0.020)	(0.019)
Medium income	0.139***	0.112***	0.080***	0.087***	0.002	0.042*
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.015)	(0.022)	(0.021)
High income	0.090***	0.094***	0.055*	0.054*	0.013	0.026
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.021)	(0.030)	(0.029)
Age 25–34	-0.053	−0.078*	-0.016	-0.005	-0.045	0.027
	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.027)	(0.040)	(0.038)
Age 35–44	-0.060	−0.089*	-0.048	0.032	-0.058	0.031
	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.036)	(0.028)	(0.041)	(0.039)
Age 45–54	-0.030	-0.047	-0.029	0.073*	-0.018	0.082*
	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.039)	(0.030)	(0.044)	(0.041)
Age 55+	0.061	0.056	0.061	0.166***	0.067	0.134**
	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.046)	(0.036)	(0.052)	(0.049)
No. children	0.011	0.011	0.001	-0.002	0.006	-0.007
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Child under 4	-0.012	-0.005	0.001	0.031*	0.041*	0.036
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.014)	(0.020)	(0.019)
Partner	0.009	0.008	0.036	0.022	0.009	-0.003
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.014)	(0.020)	(0.019)
Democrat	0.076***	0.092***	0.094***	0.008	0.143***	0.145***
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.012)	(0.018)	(0.017)
Black	0.029	0.021	0.039	-0.007	-0.020	0.057*
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.016)	(0.024)	(0.022)
Asian	-0.005	-0.006	0.062*	-0.005	0.001	0.069**

	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.019)	(0.028)	(0.026)
Mixed / other race	-0.046	-0.001	0.053	-0.004	-0.0003	0.042
	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.034)	(0.026)	(0.038)	(0.036)
LGB	0.002	0.013	0.027	-0.010	0.071*	-0.022
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.025)	(0.020)	(0.029)	(0.027)
Constant	0.310***	0.309***	0.285***	0.449***	0.425***	0.443***
	(0.065)	(0.065)	(0.067)	(0.053)	(0.074)	(0.052)
Observations	1,645	1,645	1,645	1,645	1,645	1,645
R^2	0.121	0.141	0.118	0.110	0.070	0.103
Adjusted R^2	0.111	0.130	0.107	0.099	0.059	0.093
Note:					*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001	

The reference category for income is not employed / no income, and the reference category for age range is 18 – 24.

Table C3: Determinants of Political Interest among Fathers

	Dependent variable:					
	Interest					
	Local	National	Int'l	Prices	Abortion	Guns
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Mental load	0.239**	0.265***	0.238**	0.242***	0.030	0.153
	(0.079)	(0.075)	(0.087)	(0.068)	(0.032)	(0.103)
Mental load^2	-0.137	−0.161*	-0.104	−0.212***		-0.122
	(0.074)	(0.070)	(0.081)	(0.063)		(0.097)
Physical HH labor	0.068*	0.047	0.059	0.162***	0.332*	0.051
	(0.028)	(0.026)	(0.030)	(0.024)	(0.168)	(0.036)
Physical HH Labor^2					-0.212	
					(0.138)	
Higher education	0.073***	0.064***	0.087***	0.013	0.0003	0.006
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.017)	(0.013)	(0.020)	(0.020)
Low income	0.019	0.019	0.028	-0.002	-0.026	-0.021
	(0.023)	(0.021)	(0.025)	(0.019)	(0.030)	(0.029)
Medium income	0.069**	0.075***	0.078***	0.022	-0.004	-0.009
	(0.021)	(0.020)	(0.023)	(0.018)	(0.028)	(0.028)
High income	0.095***	0.071***	0.124***	0.057**	0.040	0.033
	(0.022)	(0.021)	(0.025)	(0.019)	(0.030)	(0.029)
Age 25–34	-0.026	0.073	0.007	0.025	-0.054	0.058
	(0.067)	(0.064)	(0.073)	(0.057)	(0.090)	(0.087)
Age 35–44	-0.024	0.092	0.013	0.037	-0.054	0.060
	(0.066)	(0.063)	(0.073)	(0.057)	(0.089)	(0.087)
Age 45–54	-0.039	0.113	0.005	0.058	-0.110	0.041
	(0.067)	(0.064)	(0.074)	(0.058)	(0.090)	(0.088)
Age 55+	0.017	0.149*	0.086	0.084	-0.063	0.061
	(0.070)	(0.067)	(0.078)	(0.061)	(0.095)	(0.092)
No. children	0.003	0.001	-0.010	0.006	-0.001	-0.002
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Child under 4	-0.014	-0.001	-0.008	0.001	-0.026	-0.031
	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.018)	(0.014)	(0.022)	(0.021)
Partner	0.035	0.030	0.032	0.006	0.041	0.047
	(0.020)	(0.019)	(0.022)	(0.017)	(0.026)	(0.026)
Democrat	0.049***	0.046***	0.065***	-0.018	0.156***	0.137***
	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.015)	(0.012)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Black	0.029	0.024	0.005	-0.018	-0.00002	0.091**
	(0.022)	(0.021)	(0.024)	(0.019)	(0.029)	(0.028)
Asian	−0.077**	-0.045	-0.012	-0.036	-0.037	0.036

	(0.028)	(0.027)	(0.031)	(0.024)	(0.038)	(0.037)
Mixed / other race	−0.118**	-0.020	0.065	0.005	-0.056	0.072
	(0.036)	(0.035)	(0.040)	(0.031)	(0.049)	(0.048)
LGB	0.009	0.008	0.042	0.020	0.069	0.034
	(0.030)	(0.029)	(0.033)	(0.026)	(0.040)	(0.039)
Constant	0.560***	0.479***	0.433***	0.588***	0.421***	0.445***
	(0.075)	(0.072)	(0.083)	(0.065)	(0.110)	(0.099)
Observations	1,331	1,331	1,331	1,331	1,331	1,331
R^2	0.155	0.124	0.164	0.080	0.107	0.094
Adjusted R^2	0.142	0.111	0.152	0.067	0.094	0.081
Note:					*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001	

The reference category for income is not employed / no income, and the reference category for age range is 18 – 24.

Table C4: Mental Load and Political Interest among Mothers, No Controls

	Dependent variable:					
	Interest					
	Local	National	Int'l	Prices	Abortion	Guns
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Mental load	0.301**	0.437***	0.203	0.461***	0.061*	0.094***
	(0.106)	(0.107)	(0.110)	(0.085)	(0.030)	(0.028)
Mental load^2	-0.217*	-0.314***	-0.150	-0.291***		
	(0.086)	(0.087)	(0.089)	(0.069)		
Constant	0.605***	0.564***	0.555***	0.626***	0.585***	0.621***
	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.032)	(0.024)	(0.023)	(0.022)
Observations	1,652	1,652	1,652	1,652	1,652	1,652
R^2	0.006	0.011	0.002	0.029	0.003	0.007
Adjusted R^2	0.004	0.010	0.001	0.027	0.002	0.006
Note:						*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table C5: Mental Load and Political Interest among Fathers, No Controls

	Dependent variable:					
	Interest					
	Local	National	Int'l	Prices	Abortion	Guns
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Mental load	0.400***	0.372***	0.398***	0.324***	0.058*	0.250*
	(0.081)	(0.076)	(0.089)	(0.067)	(0.028)	(0.104)
Mental load^2	−0.275***	−0.260***	−0.240**	−0.252***		−0.193*
	(0.074)	(0.069)	(0.082)	(0.061)		(0.095)
Constant	0.693***	0.719***	0.614***	0.745***	0.558***	0.622***
	(0.018)	(0.016)	(0.019)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.022)
Observations	1,337	1,337	1,337	1,337	1,337	1,337
R^2	0.030	0.028	0.034	0.020	0.003	0.005
Adjusted R^2	0.028	0.026	0.033	0.019	0.002	0.004
Note:						*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Notes for Tables C6 and C7 Tables C6 and C7 address the concern that the nonlinear relationships I hypothesize and find are a consequence of treating limited dependent variables as continuous through the use of an OLS model (relevant for interest in local, national, and international politics, where the response options range from not at all interested to very interested rather than a numeric scale). This is not the case; I continue to find an improvement in AIC when I include a polynomial term modeling ordinal outcomes using an ordinal logistic regression. Additionally, Tables C6 and C7 show that key findings are robust to models that use ordered logistic regression instead of OLS.

Table C6: Determinants of Pol. Interest among Mothers, Ordered Logistic Regression

	Dependent variable:		
	Interest		
	Local	National	International
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Mental load	1.290	1.920*	0.078
	(0.750)	(0.748)	(0.743)
Mental load^2	-0.982	-1.378*	0.035
	(0.633)	(0.633)	(0.626)
Physical HH labor	4.104***	3.473**	2.744*
	(1.070)	(1.084)	(1.077)
Physical HH labor^2	-2.161**	-1.661*	-1.068
	(0.819)	(0.828)	(0.821)
Higher education	0.196	0.425***	0.489***
	(0.119)	(0.119)	(0.118)
Low incme	0.355**	0.240*	0.228
	(0.119)	(0.120)	(0.119)
Medium income	1.091***	0.866***	0.567***
	(0.138)	(0.138)	(0.133)
High income	0.732***	0.715***	0.396*
	(0.189)	(0.188)	(0.182)
Age 25–34	-0.373	-0.573*	-0.138
	(0.237)	(0.242)	(0.238)
Age 35–44	-0.428	-0.651**	-0.347
	(0.246)	(0.250)	(0.246)

Age 45–54	-0.219	-0.299	-0.231
	(0.262)	(0.266)	(0.262)
Age 55+	0.582	0.619	0.443
	(0.320)	(0.328)	(0.312)
No. children	0.080	0.079	0.013
	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.051)
Child under 4	-0.116	-0.011	0.049
	(0.121)	(0.121)	(0.120)
Partner	0.055	0.028	0.262*
	(0.130)	(0.130)	(0.127)
Democrat	0.513***	0.653***	0.631***
	(0.108)	(0.108)	(0.107)
Black	0.292*	0.178	0.270
	(0.147)	(0.149)	(0.146)
Asian	-0.037	-0.064	0.428*
	(0.168)	(0.168)	(0.166)
Mixed / other race	-0.386	-0.016	0.378
	(0.230)	(0.232)	(0.232)
LGB	0.013	0.078	0.156
	(0.173)	(0.172)	(0.172)
Observations	1,645	1,645	1,645
Note:		*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001	

The reference category for income is not employed / no income, and the reference category for age range is 18 – 24.

Table C7: Determinants of Pol. Interest among Fathers, Ordered Logistic Regression

	Dependent variable:		
	Interest		
	Local	National	International
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Mental load	2.164**	2.472***	1.881**
	(0.701)	(0.700)	(0.678)
Mental load^2	-0.975	-1.303*	-0.700
	(0.669)	(0.664)	(0.641)
Physical HH labor	1.372	1.958	0.169
	(1.123)	(1.134)	(1.085)
Physical HH labor^2	-0.719	-1.348	0.219
	(0.927)	(0.935)	(0.892)
Higher education	0.626***	0.547***	0.664***
	(0.134)	(0.135)	(0.130)
Low income	0.112	0.143	0.197
	(0.197)	(0.197)	(0.188)
Medium income	0.492**	0.592**	0.577**
	(0.186)	(0.185)	(0.176)
High income	0.819***	0.658***	0.989***
	(0.200)	(0.198)	(0.190)
Age 25–34	-0.309	0.791	0.119
	(0.630)	(0.550)	(0.557)
Age 35–44	-0.349	0.903	0.145
	(0.628)	(0.548)	(0.554)
Age 45–54	-0.531	1.085	0.018
	(0.634)	(0.555)	(0.560)
Age 55+	0.021	1.448*	0.639
	(0.665)	(0.590)	(0.591)
No. children	0.024	-0.002	-0.082
	(0.066)	(0.065)	(0.062)
Child under 4	-0.154	0.009	-0.094
	(0.144)	(0.145)	(0.138)
Partner	0.381*	0.291	0.315
	(0.181)	(0.181)	(0.174)
Democrat	0.440***	0.429***	0.483***
	(0.121)	(0.122)	(0.116)
Black	0.278	0.267	0.068
	(0.197)	(0.199)	(0.187)

Asian	-0.638**	-0.252	-0.079
	(0.247)	(0.257)	(0.238)
Mixed / other race	-0.794*	-0.102	0.491
	(0.323)	(0.321)	(0.309)
LGB	0.119	0.002	0.333
	(0.275)	(0.272)	(0.261)
Observations	1,331	1,331	1,331
Note:			*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

The reference category for income is not employed / no income, and the reference category for age range is 18 – 24.

10: Table C8: Determinants of Pol. Interest, Interactions between Gender and Mental Load

	Dependent variable:					
	Interest					
	Local	National	Int'l	Prices	Abortion	Guns
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Woman	-0.047	-0.110***	-0.019	-0.084**	0.016	0.005
	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.035)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.040)
Mental load	0.254**	0.245**	0.234*	0.261***	0.019	0.174
	(0.086)	(0.084)	(0.091)	(0.071)	(0.030)	(0.102)
Mental load^2	-0.163*	-0.161*	-0.116	-0.230***		-0.158
	(0.079)	(0.078)	(0.084)	(0.066)		(0.094)
Mental load x Woman	-0.048	0.089	-0.182	0.117	0.051	-0.088
	(0.128)	(0.126)	(0.136)	(0.106)	(0.040)	(0.152)
Mental load^2 x Woman	0.013	-0.081	0.088	-0.040		0.151
	(0.110)	(0.108)	(0.117)	(0.091)		(0.131)
Physical HH labor	0.378***	0.341***	0.189	0.118	0.270*	0.009
	(0.098)	(0.096)	(0.104)	(0.081)	(0.120)	(0.116)
Physical HH labor^2	-0.197*	-0.180*	-0.044	0.051	-0.136	0.059
	(0.077)	(0.076)	(0.082)	(0.064)	(0.095)	(0.091)
Higher education	0.057***	0.066***	0.084***	0.006	0.006	0.011
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.009)	(0.014)	(0.013)
Low income	0.042**	0.035**	0.028*	0.030**	-0.017	-0.010
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.011)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Medium income	0.107***	0.099***	0.072***	0.063***	-0.003	0.020
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.011)	(0.017)	(0.016)
High income	0.110***	0.087***	0.098***	0.073***	0.035	0.042*
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.013)	(0.020)	(0.019)
Age 25–34	-0.046	-0.053	-0.016	0.001	-0.056	0.030
	(0.029)	(0.028)	(0.030)	(0.024)	(0.035)	(0.034)
Age 35–44	-0.048	-0.050	-0.031	0.028	-0.063	0.034
	(0.029)	(0.028)	(0.031)	(0.024)	(0.036)	(0.034)
Age 45–54	-0.040	-0.014	-0.023	0.060*	-0.070	0.051
	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.032)	(0.025)	(0.037)	(0.036)
Age 55+	0.038	0.057	0.061	0.124***	-0.003	0.093*
	(0.034)	(0.033)	(0.036)	(0.028)	(0.042)	(0.040)
No. children	0.007	0.005	-0.003	0.0004	0.003	-0.006
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Child under 4	-0.013	-0.0001	-0.001	0.018	0.011	0.007
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.010)	(0.015)	(0.014)
Partner	0.020	0.016	0.038**	0.015	0.022	0.016

	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.011)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Democrat	0.066***	0.072***	0.081***	-0.002	0.153***	0.145***
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.008)	(0.013)	(0.012)
Black	0.028	0.022	0.025	-0.011	-0.014	0.071***
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.012)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Asian	-0.034	-0.020	0.036	-0.018	-0.016	0.056**
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.015)	(0.022)	(0.021)
Mixed / other race	-0.071**	-0.001	0.058*	-0.002	-0.025	0.052
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.026)	(0.020)	(0.030)	(0.029)
LGB	0.005	0.010	0.033	-0.002	0.067**	-0.007
	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.020)	(0.015)	(0.023)	(0.022)
Constant	0.451***	0.488***	0.393***	0.565***	0.419***	0.464***
	(0.047)	(0.046)	(0.050)	(0.039)	(0.056)	(0.056)
Observations	2,976	2,976	2,976	2,976	2,976	2,976
R^2	0.151	0.166	0.160	0.094	0.084	0.092
Adjusted R^2	0.145	0.160	0.153	0.087	0.077	0.085
Note:						*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

The reference category for income is not employed / no income, and the reference category for age range is 18 – 24. Model 5 (abortion) does not include the quadratic transformation of mental load because it does not improve model fit among fathers or mothers. For Model 6 (gun control), I include the quadratic term because it improves model fit for fathers, but I also performed the analysis without it. The results do not change.

Table C9: Determinants of Political Interest among Mothers, Excluding Singles

	Dependent variable:		
	Interest		
	National	Prices	Guns
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Mental load	0.265*	0.395***	0.074*
	(0.115)	(0.096)	(0.036)
Mental load^2	-0.174	-0.290***	
	(0.097)	(0.081)	
Physical HH labor	0.631***	0.189	0.120**
	(0.169)	(0.141)	(0.043)
Physical HH labor^2	-0.363**	-0.013	
	(0.129)	(0.108)	
Higher education	0.053**	-0.007	0.017
	(0.018)	(0.015)	(0.021)
Low income	0.034	0.032*	-0.007
	(0.019)	(0.016)	(0.022)
Medium income	0.109***	0.080***	0.030
	(0.020)	(0.017)	(0.024)
High income	0.115***	0.062**	0.029
	(0.027)	(0.022)	(0.031)
Age 25–34	-0.078*	-0.010	0.026
	(0.034)	(0.029)	(0.040)
Age 35–44	-0.085*	0.026	0.046
	(0.036)	(0.030)	(0.041)
Age 45–54	-0.030	0.077*	0.065
	(0.038)	(0.032)	(0.045)
Age 55+	0.067	0.127**	0.072
	(0.050)	(0.042)	(0.058)
No. children	0.014	-0.004	-0.005
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.009)
Child under 4	-0.003	0.029	0.021
	(0.019)	(0.016)	(0.022)
Democrat	0.091***	-0.007	0.160***
	(0.016)	(0.014)	(0.019)
Black	0.040	-0.011	0.086**
	(0.025)	(0.021)	(0.029)
Asian	0.003	-0.004	0.067*
	(0.024)	(0.020)	(0.028)

Mixed / other race	-0.030	-0.028	0.024
	(0.038)	(0.032)	(0.044)
LGB	0.012	-0.007	0.008
	(0.027)	(0.023)	(0.032)
Constant	0.297***	0.490***	0.416***
	(0.070)	(0.058)	(0.053)
Observations	1,233	1,233	1,233
R^2	0.150	0.090	0.108
Adjusted R^2	0.136	0.076	0.095
Note:	*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001		

The reference category for income is not employed / no income, and the reference category for age range is 18 – 24.

Table C10: Determinants of Political Interest among Fathers, Excluding Singles

	Dependent variable:
	Interest Prices
	(1)
Mental load	0.241**
	(0.074)
Mental load^2	-0.209**
	(0.072)
Physical HH labor	0.142***
	(0.026)
Higher education	0.010
	(0.014)
Low income	-0.025
	(0.024)
Medium income	-0.008
	(0.021)
High income	0.037
	(0.022)
Age 25–34	0.037
	(0.060)
Age 35–44	0.048
	(0.059)
Age 45–54	0.068
	(0.060)
Age 55+	0.089
	(0.063)
No. children	0.007
	(0.007)
Child under 4	0.004
	(0.015)
Democrat	-0.021
	(0.013)
Black	-0.025
	(0.022)
Asian	-0.044
	(0.026)
Mixed / other race	0.032
	(0.037)

LGB	0.012
	(0.029)
Constant	0.619***
	(0.067)
Observations	1,105
R^2	0.073
Adjusted R^2	0.058
Note:	*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

The reference category for income is not employed / no income, and the reference category for age range is 18 – 24.