

Gender and Political Representation

Session 7: The Demand Side

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Results from interim evaluation

The interim evaluation is based on 4 responses, so for the others, please complete the survey

- generally satisfaction with seminar
- a bit more mixed feelings about learning progress
- you like the interactive atmosphere but wish for more participation
- let me know what you need for better learning progress!

What we did last week...

- conceptualized institutions
- established how institutions could mitigate gender-based discrimination (e.g. proportional electoral systems) and how they could dampen women's participation and representation (e.g. compulsory voting, open candidate selection procedures)

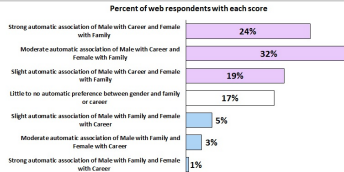
Plan for today

Today, we scrutinize whether the demand side, i.e., voters, systematically discriminate against women.

You have completed the study.

During the Implicit Association Test (IAT) you just completed:

Your responses suggested little or no automatic association between Female and Male with Career and Family.



This distribution summarizes 846,020 IAT scores for the Gender-Career task completed between January 2005 and December 2015.

Figure: **Implicit Association Test** by Harvard University

Why focusing on the demand side may be important...

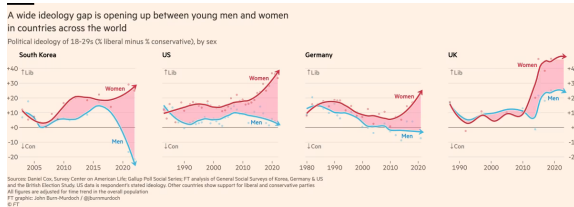


Figure: Remember the growing gender gap in political attitudes (Burn-Murdoch 2024)

Why might that be an issue?

Why focusing on the demand side may be important...

If a gender gap in political attitudes is emerging, it might be that men discriminate against female politicians (and vice versa). However, is that really the case? Is there a backlash against gender equality @Vincent?

Why focusing on the demand side may be important...

Overall, not necessarily...

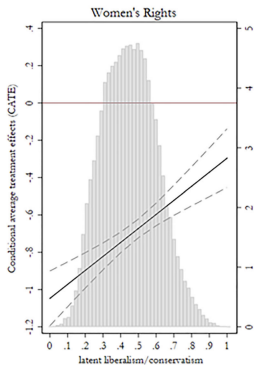


Figure: When people are triggered with gender equality as a threat (i.e., 'gone too far'), they become even more convinced that it's necessary (Alexander, Charron, and Off 2024)

Why focusing on the demand side may be important...

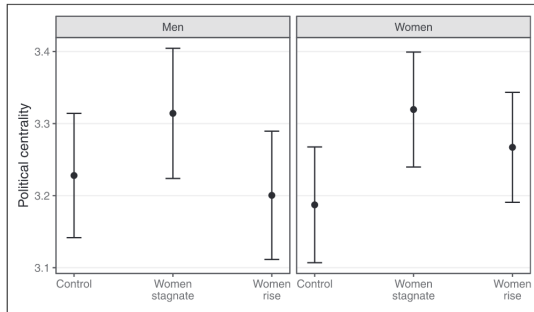


Figure: ...and men do not really lash back against (projected) increased representation of women (Breyer 2024)

Why focusing on the demand side may be important...

However, against specific measures of gender equality, there might still be a backlash...

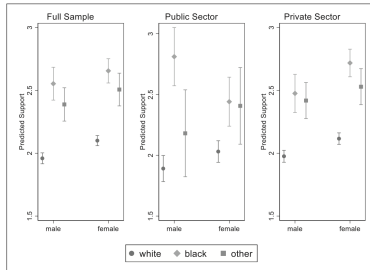


Figure 2. Gender-based AA support (means by gender and race across samples).
Note: 95% confidence intervals shown.

Figure: Heterogeneous level of support for gender-based affirmative action in the US (Hsu.2024)

Survey on the reading



Gender politics of executive candidate selection and reselection

Before we start, please form groups, go through the paper once again and try to complete our classification scheme. [10 minutes]

- **Research Question:**
- **Main Argument:**
- **Data and Method:**
- **Results:**
- **Implications:**

Research Question

- **Research Question:** Are female politicians regarded less persuasives in justifying policy than male politicians?
- **Main Argument:**
- **Data and Method:**
- **Results:**
- **Implications:**

Argument

- **Research Question:** Are female politicians regarded less persuasives in justifying policy than male politicians?
- **Main Argument:** Social role expectations disadvantage women in political debates.
- **Data and Method:**
- **Results:**
- **Implications:**

Argument

Following social role theory, women are less often seen as assertive or strong. This has negative consequences in argumentative contexts.

Could female candidates simply counter social role expectations through their behavior?

Argument

According to Anderson-Nilsson and Clayton (2021): **no!**

- women who do not meet gendered role expectations are often evaluated as more negatively
- because of role expectations that portray women as nurturing, consensus-oriented, backlash particularly stark when they communicate negative sentiment

Argument

The **main hypothesis** is thus,

Men's policy justifications are judged more persuasive than women's arguments.

In addition, Anderson-Nilsson and Clayton (2021) formulate **moderating hypotheses**, the effect is conditional on...

- ...the policy domain
- ...partisanship

Data and Method

- **Research Question:** Are female politicians regarded less persuasives in justifying policy than male politicians?
- **Main Argument:** Social role expectations disadvantage women in political debates.
- **Data and Method:** Original survey experiment in the US (N=3,200)
- **Results:**
- **Implications:**

Data and Method

What is a survey experiment?

Data and Method

How a survey experiment functions...

- researchers randomly split the sample of a survey, assigning part of the sample to a *treatment* condition, while the other part is exposed to a control condition.
- because of random assignment, we can rule out that individual-level predispositions drive differences in the evaluation of male and female policy justifications

Data and Method

OTC Birth Control:

Respondents read:

Recently there has been a policy debate about whether birth control should be available over-the-counter. You will now hear a brief clip of that policy debate, presenting two opposing perspectives.

The debate is between two candidates in a state primary election, Susan Miller and Brian Johnson. Both candidates belong to the same political party, but are expressing different viewpoints on this issue.

Please listen carefully, as you will be asked several follow-up questions on the debate.

Figure: Stimulus material

Often, stimulus material is a written text. Here, they give respondents an audio snippet and an image, too. What may be good, what may be bad about this approach?

Data and Method

Position A: Birth control pills should be available over the counter. Making the pill available over the counter would have a variety of positive consequences. It would lower the number of unwanted pregnancies and lower teen pregnancy rates. Studies show that when teens have access to contraceptives, teen pregnancy rates drop significantly.

Position B: Birth control pills should not be available over the counter. Teen pregnancy rates are not likely to change if the pill is made available over-the-counter, as many teens do not know how to take the pill correctly. Requiring a prescription not only ensures they are instructed on proper use by a medical professional, but also encourages them to have additional screenings, tests, and conversations to promote healthy behavior.

Figure: Different positions

How do they test whether men or women are perceived as more persuasive?

Findings

- **Research Question:** Are female politicians regarded less persuasives in justifying policy than male politicians?
- **Main Argument:** Social role expectations disadvantage women in political debates.
- **Data and Method:** Original survey experiment in the US (N=3,200)
- **Results:** Women are not regarded less persuasive than men, on average; however, there are party-specific effects
- **Implications:**

Findings

TABLE I. Agreement and perceived expertise by policy area

Policy area	Agreement with Susan	Agreement with Brian	Difference	p-value
Health	0.487	0.513	0.026	0.465
Security	0.512	0.488	0.024	0.480
Tourism	0.567	0.433	0.134	≤0.001
Birth control	0.513	0.487	0.026	0.463
	Expertise, Susan	Expertise, Brian	Difference	p-value
Health	2.866	2.744	0.123	0.005
Security	2.852	2.828	0.023	0.545
Tourism	3.030	2.802	0.228	≤0.001
Birth control	3.098	2.619	0.479	≤0.001

Differences significant at $p \leq 0.05$ indicated in **bold**. $n = 3239$.

Figure: Mean comparison between Susan and Brian (Anderson-Nilsson and Clayton 2021, p. 825)

Findings

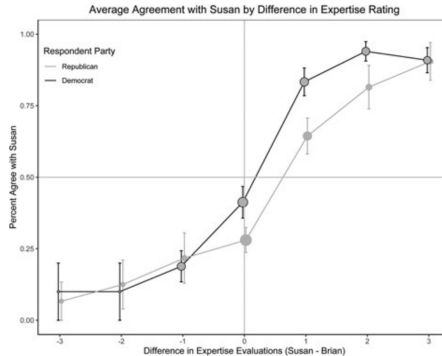


Figure: Relationship between expertise and agreement, by partisanship (Anderson-Nilsson and Clayton 2021, p. 826)

Findings

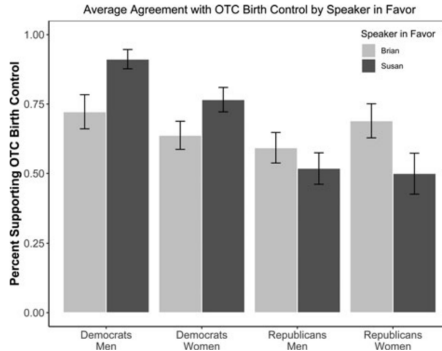


Figure: How Republican and Democratic men and women react to Susan and Brian (Anderson-Nilsson and Clayton 2021, p. 827)

Findings

How do these findings relate to work by Bauer and Carpinella (2018), @Mira Caroline?

Implications and alternative explanations

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- **Implications:** Negative judgements of women by some voters may be offset by positive judgements by others.

Implications and alternative explanations

Imagine you got \$10,000 to run another survey experiment on the topic. What would you change?

Implications and alternative explanations

- intersectionality? would you vary ethnical background? what would be the challenge?
- external validity?
 - other countries? why could it be different in other countries?
 - make partisanship explicit?
- same-sex debates?
- alternative mechanisms? if it's not about expertise, what else might explain why voters prioritize one voter over another?
 - feelings towards the other group?
 - representation by men/women in own district?

It's a wrap...

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What we've learned today...

- how voters' gender biases may matter for female representation in politics
- that there may not be a general backlash against gender equality but more nuanced erosion of support
- how one can examine gendered effects on political persuasion with experimental methods

To prepare for next week...

- next week, we'll deal with the role of the supply side, we focus both on political parties' role in gender biases and individual reasons of why the pool of female candidates is small
- Main reading:
 - **Bernhard R, Shames S, and Teele DL (2021)** To Emerge? Breadwinning, Motherhood, and Women's Decisions to Run for Office. *American Political Science Review* **115** (2), 379–394. ISSN: 0003-0554, 1537-5943. DOI: [10.1017/S0003055420000970](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055420000970)
- Complementary readings

To prepare for next week...

- **Thomsen DM and King AS** (2020) Women's Representation and the Gendered Pipeline to Power. *American Political Science Review* **114** (4), 989–1000. ISSN: 0003-0554, 1537-5943. DOI: [10.1017/S0003055420000404](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055420000404)
- **De Bruycker I** (2025) Access for All? Socio-demographic Biases and Interest Group Access to the European Parliament. *Journal of European Public Policy* **0** (0) (), 1–25. ISSN: 1350-1763. DOI: [10.1080/13501763.2024.2409822](https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2024.2409822)
- **Erfort C** (2023) *Gendered Targeting: Do Parties Tailor Their Campaign Ads to Women?* DOI: [10.31219/osf.io/5vs9b](https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/5vs9b)
- **Erzeel S and Celis K** (2016) Political Parties, Ideology and the Substantive Representation of Women. *Party Politics* **22** (5), 576–586. ISSN: 1354-0688. DOI: [10.1177/1354068816655561](https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068816655561)

Thank you for your attention!
Any further questions?

Literature



Alexander A, Charron N, and Off G (2024) For Every Action a Reaction? The Polarizing Effects of Women's Rights and Refugee Immigration: A Survey Experiment in 27 EU Member States. *European Journal of Political Research* **63** (4), 1557–1577.



Anderson-Nilsson G and Clayton A (2021) Gender and Policy Persuasion. *Political Science Research and Methods* **9** (4), 818–831.



Bauer NM and Carpinella C (2018) Visual Information and Candidate Evaluations: The Influence of Feminine and Masculine Images on Support for Female Candidates. *Political Research Quarterly* **71** (2), 395–407.

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-  **Bernhard R, Shames S, and Teele DL (2021)** To Emerge? Breadwinning, Motherhood, and Women's Decisions to Run for Office. *American Political Science Review* **115** (2), 379–394.
-  **Breyer M (2024)** Backlash or Progressive Mobilization? Voter Reactions to Perceived Trajectories of Women's Representation. *Comparative Political Studies*, 00104140231223745.
-  **Burn-Murdoch J (2024)** A New Global Gender Divide Is Emerging. *Financial Times*.
-  **De Bruycker I (2025)** Access for All? Socio-demographic Biases and Interest Group Access to the European Parliament. *Journal of European Public Policy* **0** (0) (), 1–25.
-  **Erfort C (2023)** *Gendered Targeting: Do Parties Tailor Their Campaign Ads to Women?* 2023.

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