Article

American Party Women: A Look at the Gender Gap within Parties

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Abstract

Research on the gender gap in American politics has focused on average differences between male and female voters. This has led to an underdeveloped understanding of sources of heterogeneity among women and, in particular, a poor understanding of the political preferences of Republican women. We argue that although theories of ideological sorting suggest gender gaps should exist primarily *between* political parties, gender socialization theories contend that critical differences lie at the intersection of gender and party such that gender differences likely persist *within* political parties. Using survey data from the 2012 American National Election Study, we evaluate how party and gender intersect to shape policy attitudes. We find that gender differences in policy attitudes are more pronounced in the Republican Party than in the Democratic Party, with Republican women reporting significantly more moderate views than their male counterparts. Mediation analysis reveals that the gender gaps within the Republican Party are largely attributable to gender differences in beliefs about the appropriate scope of government and attitudes toward gender-based inequality. These results afford new insight into the joint influence of gender and partisanship on policy preferences and raise important questions about the quality of representation Republican women receive from their own party.

Keywords

gender gap, partisanship, public opinion, policy attitudes, partisan sorting, values

Traditionally, women were more politically conservative than men. Yet, in the early 1980s, women began realigning, shifting to the left of men and reversing the gender gap in developed democracies across the globe (Box-Steffensmeier, De Boef, and Lin 2004; Inglehart and Norris 2003). Today, women in the United States are more likely to identify with the Democratic Party, vote for Democratic Party candidates, and hold liberal positions on social issues. Although scholars have devoted considerable attention to understanding the gender gap in public opinion, existing research focuses almost exclusively on average differences between men and women—emphasizing women's liberal tendencies and defining women's political identity almost entirely in liberal terms. While women's greater average liberalism is well established empirically, approximately one in four women identify with the Republican Party—a figure that translates into millions of American women who buck this liberal trend (Deckman 2016). Because existing research has focused on average differences between men and women, we know little about sources of heterogeneity among women.

Does the gender gap extend to the Republican Party, with Republican women holding more liberal views than their male counterparts? To date, most research about Republican women has focused on the elite level, investigating factors like party structure, activists and donors, conservative women's groups, and candidates for political office (Cooperman and Crowder-Meyer 2015; Thomsen 2015). Comparatively little research has considered the attitudes and issue preferences of Republican women in the electorate.[1] In recent years, the United States has seen a rise in high-profile Republican women running for office and the development of a conservative women's movement (Schreiber 2008, 2014). The surge in conservative appeals to women, coupled with the increased salience of and polarization on "women's issues"—for example, the Mommy Wars and the Republican War on Women—requires that scholars revisit the conventional wisdom about women's political identities.

Building on the burgeoning body of research on partisan sorting, we develop expectations regarding the intersection between gender and party. Theories of partisan sorting suggest that women and men sort themselves into the party that best represents their views—such that the

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gender gap occurs primarily across parties and gender gaps within parties are minimized. This claim seems at odds with theories of gender differences linked to socialization and social roles, which contend that women's shared experiences likely have political consequences that cut across party—raising the possibility of within-party gender gaps. To investigate public opinion at the intersection of gender and party, we first document patterns of public opinion across ten policy issues using the 2012 American National Election Study (ANES). Our analysis shows that although policy preferences are primarily governed by partisan identification, gender still influences opinion. In particular, Republican women exhibit significantly more moderate policy preferences than Republican men in several issue areas.

Our results suggest that although party sorting accommodates most gender differences in policy preferences, it fails to account for all gender differences in public opinion. Within-party gender gaps persist, particularly among Republicans. This raises a second question: what explains gender differences in public opinion among Republicans? We draw on social role and system justification theories of gender differences to develop hypotheses that the Republican gender gap in policy preferences originates from core values and status-oriented beliefs. Using mediation analysis, we show that two of these factors—support for limited government and beliefs about gender inequality in society—largely mediate the relationship between gender and issue support, explaining many of the Republican gender gaps.

Our findings afford new insights into the joint influence of gender and partisanship on policy preferences and carry important implications for the representation of Republican women. We know from previous research that female legislators are more likely to represent women's policy preferences than are their male counterparts (Gerrity, Osborn, and Mendez 2007; Osborn and Mendez 2010; Swers 2013). Given that Republican women remain woefully underrepresented in Congress—and particularly moderate Republican women (Thomsen 2015)—these gaps call into question the extent to which Republican women's preferences are being articulated in the policy-making process.

Gender Gaps in Public Opinion and Partisanship

Over the last twenty years, political scientists and popular media alike have documented pervasive gender gaps across a range of political behaviors and political identities. Mounting evidence shows that women are more liberal than men. Not only are women more likely than men to support a host of gender equality policies such as fair pay, parental leave and child care subsidies, access to birth control, and protection from job discrimination in

hiring and promotion (Barnes and Córdova 2016; Cassese and Barnes 2016; Cassese, Barnes, and Branton 2015; Deckman and McTague 2015; Strolovitch 1998) but policy preferences also diverge across a wide range of issues that are not explicitly gendered. For instance, women are more liberal on issues of social welfare, morality, and government use of force (Huddy, Cassese, and Lizotte 2008; Kaufmann 2002, 2006; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986). Women also tend to favor government spending on education, health care, and welfare (Schlesinger and Heldman 2001). Women are more likely to oppose war (Huddy, Cassese, and Lizotte 2008) and favor gun control (Howell and Day 2000). In sum, copious research has documented widespread gender gaps in issue attitudes in which women are more liberal than men.

Gender differences in policy preferences are closely tied to party identification. Women are more likely than men to identify with the Democratic Party (Kanthak and Norrander 2004; Norrander 1999), vote in Democratic primaries (Patterson 2009), and support Democratic candidates in general elections (Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999; Miller 1991). There is growing evidence that this partisan gender gap is a result of ideological sorting along party lines. As the party system in the United States became increasingly polarized at the elite level, members of the public have responded to elite signals, gravitating to the party that best represents their preferences (Abramowitz 2010; Levendusky 2009). Attitudes toward social welfare issues have become more closely correlated with partisanship for both men and women (Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999; Norrander 1999), and women in particular have responded to the heighted salience of "culture wars" issues (Kaufmann 2002).

Although this pattern can be partially explained by women becoming more liberal and moving into the Democratic Party (Shapiro and Mahajan 1986), party sorting is even more prevalent among men (Box-Steffensmeier, De Boef, and Lin 2004; Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999; Norrander 1999). Between 1952 and 2004, there was only a 5 percent decline in the share of Republican women, yet there was a 16 percent decline in the share Democratic men (Kaufmann 2006). As a result, the gender gap in party identification doubled between the 1970s and the 1990s (Norrander and Wilcox 2008). Moreover, party sorting is most prevalent among citizens who are politically aware and engaged (Carsey and Layman 2006; Zaller 1992); consequently, the partisan gender gap is largest among this subset of partisans (Gillion, Ladd, and Meredith 2015). For example, Abramowitz (2010) finds a 6-point gender gap in partisanship among citizens with low levels of political engagement compared with a 20-point gap among those with high levels of engagement.

Sorting-based accounts of the gender gap have focused primarily on partisanship and the salient issues that

connect citizens to the parties. Collectively, they point to a trend toward growing uniformity within the parties on salient political issues. In this fashion, sorting suggests that gender differences matter largely in their relation to parties and gender differences in public opinion toward specific policy issues are largely worked out through the sorting process. Although sorting is an important and clearly gendered dynamic, research in this area has focused on average differences between all men and all women, and overlooked differences between men and women of the same party. Yet previous work implies that sorting mechanisms should result in relatively homogeneous parties—at least with respect to gender. If men and women are sorting themselves into the party that best represents their policy preferences, there should be minimal differences between men and women within the same party. As such, controlling for party should eliminate any residual effect of gender on political attitudes. To capture this expectation, we posit the following hypothesis:

> **The Party-Sorting Hypothesis:** To the extent that polarization and sorting mechanisms place men and women into the party that most closely approximates their views, gender gaps in policy preferences should exists primarily *between* political parties, with minimal observable differences in issue positions between men and women of the same party.

Moreover, gender differences within and across parties may be related to citizens' levels of political engagement. The sorting literature demonstrates that sorting occurs among politically engaged citizens, who are most tuned in to party polarization and position taking (Abramowitz 2010; Gillion, Ladd, and Meredith 2015). These citizens are best able to match the cues they receive from elites to their own political preferences. Because engaged partisans are more likely to have sorted and also more likely to be polarized themselves (e.g., Abramowitz and Saunders 2008), engaged men and women in each party are likely to be more united in their policy positions than less engaged men and women. Specifically, we test the following hypothesis:

> **The Engaged Partisans Hypothesis:** Because sorting occurs among the most politically aware and engaged citizens, we will observe fewer gender differences among highly engaged partisans relative to less engaged partisans of the same party.

Evaluating Gender Gaps in Policy Support

To evaluate how party sorting relates to gender differences in public opinion, we use data from the 2012 ANES to identify average gender gaps within parties for ten policy areas: abortion, child care, education, health care, welfare, gay rights, immigration, the millionaire tax, defense spending, and gun control. We selected these issues because they have been identified as important in the party sorting literature and the gender gap literature or because they were salient in the 2012 election cycle. Measurement information is provided in the online appendix. We use Adjusted Wald Tests to compare weighted mean issue positions for male and female Republicans and Democrats across the range of policies. These mean preferences and confidence intervals are graphed in Figure 1.[2] The x-axis lists the policy areas, and the y-axis represents policy preferences, with high scores corresponding to more conservative positions. The policy measures are standardized (with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1) to facilitate comparisons across issues. The confidence intervals surrounding the means allow us to evaluate whether there is a statistically significant difference between groups at the 95% confidence level.[3]

As one might expect, Figure 1a demonstrates that there are gender gaps across most of the policy areas in our analysis, with women generally holding more liberal attitudes than men. However, party qualifies the observed gender differences in important ways. Figure 1b shows that Republican and Democratic respondents are sharply divided in their policy positions across every issue area examined here. Republicans consistently exhibit more conservative policy preferences than Democrats, indicating that, on average, respondents are sorted along party lines. The general trends in Figure 1b provide support for the *Party-Sorting Hypothesis.* Nonetheless, important differences exist between men and women of the same party for several of the policy areas.

The Gender Gap among Republicans

First, among Republicans, women tend to favor government spending on social welfare programs more so than men. Specifically, women are more supportive of spending on child care (gender gap = .15),[4] $F(1, 5820) = 6.75$, $p < .01$; education (gender gap = .25), $F(1, 5849) = 15.75$, $p < .001$; and health care (gender gap = .09), $F(1, 5874) = 3.76$, $p < .05$. These gaps indicate that even though opinion on these issues has become increasingly polarized, Republican women hold more moderate views than male copartisans across a range of women's issues. Women ($M = .32$) are also more likely than men ($M = .51$) to favor the millionaire tax, $F(1, 5440) = 8.00$, $p \leq .01$. Nevertheless, women are no more likely than men to favor increased public expenditures for welfare benefits.

With respect to issues linked to violence and the use of force, Republican women ($M = .20$) are far more likely than Republican men ($M = .54$) to favor gun control,
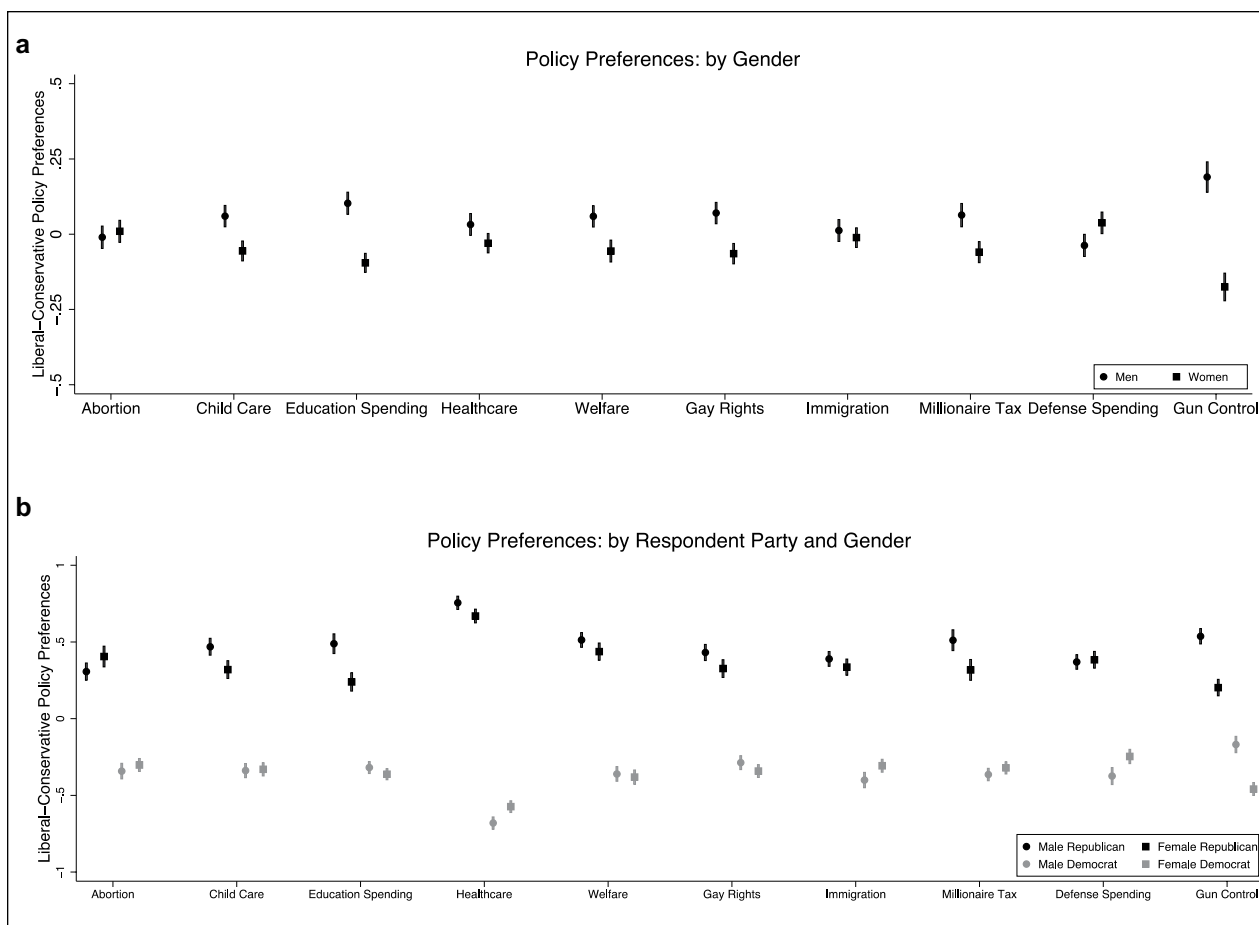
Figure 1. Policy preferences: (A) by gender and (B) by respondent party and gender.
Entries are weighted group means. Party "leaners" are included in the partisan groups. The confidence intervals surrounding the mean values indicate whether differences between conditions are significant at the 95% confidence level.

$F(1, 5855) = 41.10, p < .001$. This is the largest within-party gender difference (gender gap = .34) in our analysis. But women are no more likely than men to favor defense spending. Finally, Republican women are slightly more likely to support gay rights than are Republican men (gender gap = .10), although the difference is only marginally significant, $F(1, 5839) = 3.54, p = .06$. There are no differences on abortion or immigration. All together, significant within-party gender differences exist for Republicans on six of the ten policy issues.

The Gender Gap among Democrats

Whereas Republican men and women hold significantly different positions on a number of issues, Democratic men and women have similar views for all but three issue areas. Women ($M = -.46$) are far more likely than men ($M = -.17$) to favor gun control, $F(1, 5855) = 35.82, p < .001$. As with Republicans, the gender gap on gun control is the largest within-party gender difference among Democrats.

By contrast to women's more liberal views on gun control, men tend to have more liberal views than women on health care spending, $F(1, 5874) = 7.36, p < .01$, and defense spending, $F(1, 5164) = 6.12, p < .01$. Unlike the gender gaps observed among Republicans, the gender gaps for health care spending and defense spending are not statistically significant when we control for other important demographic characteristics (see Table 4 in the online appendix). Moreover the magnitude of the within-party gender gaps for health care (gender gap = .11) and defense spending (gender gap = .13) are less than half the size of the gun control gender gap (gender gap = .29).

Thus, we find asymmetrical support for our *Party-Sorting Hypothesis*. Figure 1b shows that the biggest differences in policy preferences exist between political parties, with Republican women and men exhibiting more conservative policy preferences than Democratic women and men. This fits with accounts of party sorting (e.g., Gillion, Ladd, and Meredith 2015; Kaufmann 2006). However, significant within-party gender differences are
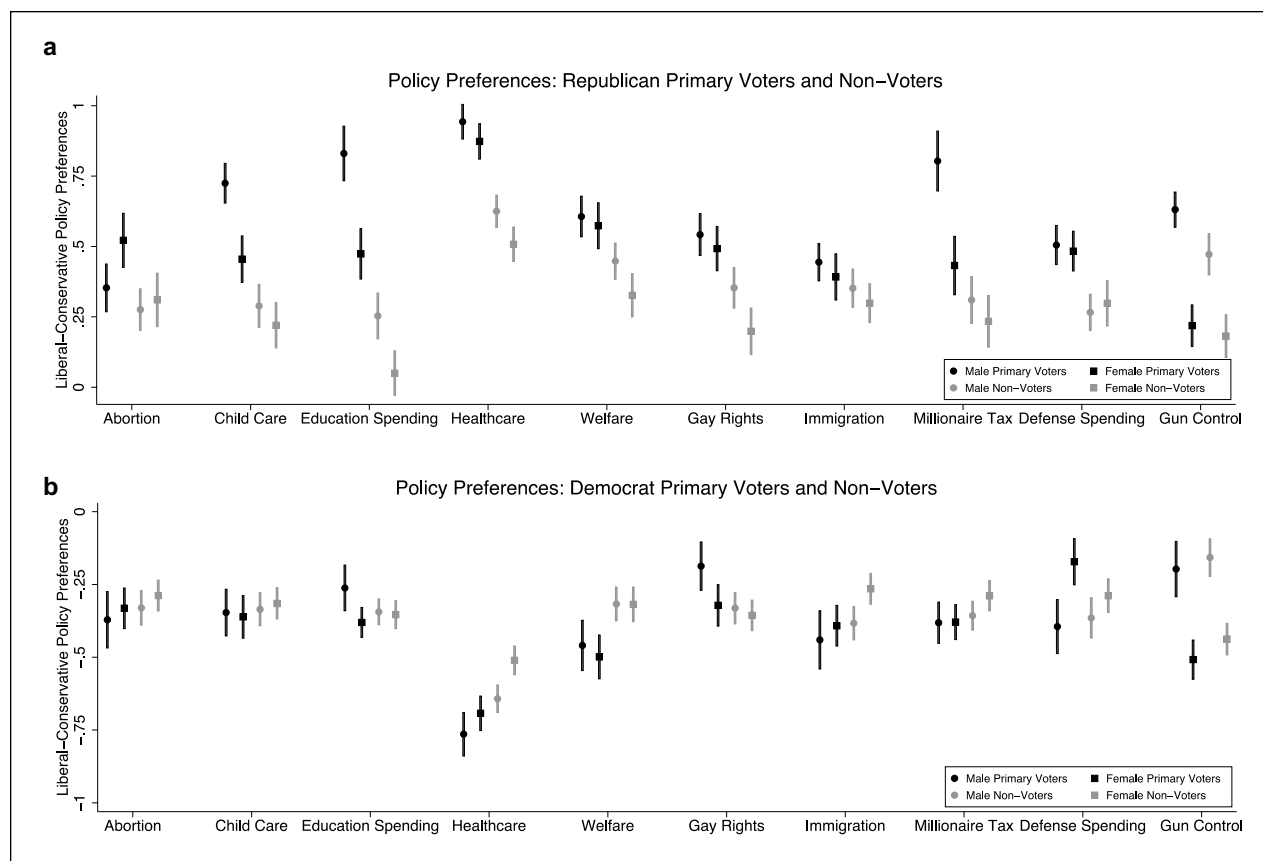
Figure 2. Policy preferences: (A) Republican primary voters and nonvoters and (B) Democrat primary voters and nonvoters. Entries are weighted group means. Party "leaners" are included in the partisan groups. The confidence intervals surrounding the mean values indicate whether differences between conditions are significant at the 95% confidence level.

also evident—although primarily within the Republican Party. Thus, it appears that gender continues to offers some explanatory power for policy attitudes, even when taking the party into account, indicating that party sorting alone is not sufficient to explain all gender differences in public opinion.

Gender Gaps among Engaged Partisans

Extant research on party sorting shows that sorting occurs primarily among politically engaged and aware citizens. As a result, the cross-party gender gap may be largest among this group, as highly engaged partisans are better positioned to align themselves with the party that best represents their policy preferences (e.g., Gillion, Ladd, and Meredith 2015), whereas within-party gender differences are likely to be smallest among this group. To evaluate our *Engaged Partisans Hypothesis*, we distinguish among partisans who are more and less engaged by comparing primary voters with nonvoters.[5] We compare within-party gender differences using the same difference-in-means approach described above.

Gender gaps among engaged Republicans. Consistent with previous literature, Republican primary voters tend to be more conservative than Republican nonvoters (see Figure 2a). Moreover, as expected, there are some issues for which the gender gap is larger among nonvoters than among voters. Female nonvoters exhibit more liberal policy positions than do male nonvoters on education spending (gender gap = .20), $F(1, 3059) = 6.26$, $p < .01$; gay rights (gender gap = .16), $F(1, 1973) = 3.91$, $p < .05$; and gun control (gender gap = .29), $F(1, 1971) = 15.01$, $p < .001$.

Nonetheless, less engaged Republicans do not drive gender gaps in issue support across all issue areas. Whereas female nonvoters are more liberal than male nonvoters for three issue areas, female primary voters are more liberal than male primary voters across four issue areas. In particular, there are large gender gaps among primary voters with respect to child care subsidies (gender gap = .27), $F(1, 1959) = 12.09$, $p < .001$; education spending (gender gap = .36), $F(1, 1966) = 14.42$, $p < .001$; the millionaire tax (gender gap = .37), $F(1, 1829) = 12.32$, $p < .001$; and gun control (gender gap = .41), $F(1, 1971) = 35.84$, $p < .001$. For each of these issue areas, not only are

male primary voters more conservative than female primary voters but they also stand out as being remarkably more conservative than all other Republicans. Abortion is the sole issue area for which female primary voters have a more conservative policy position ($M = .52$) than do male primary voters ($M = .35$), but the difference is only marginally significant (gender gap = .17), $F(1, 1835) = 3.42$, $p = .06$. Meanwhile, there is no gender gap between Republican nonvoters.

All told, we observe more gender differences among primary voters than among nonvoters, indicating that gender gaps in public opinion are not simply a function of incomplete or imperfect sorting among people with low levels of political engagement. Instead, our results show that even after party sorting takes place, gender remains an important factor for understanding public opinion among Republicans.

Gender gaps among engaged Democrats. Turning next to Figure 2b, we observe far fewer differences between Democratic primary voters and Democratic nonvoters. With the exception of health care spending and welfare spending, engaged Democrats exhibit preferences comparable with less engaged Democrats. There is less heterogeneity in opinion among Democrats, regardless of their level of engagement. Where gender differences do emerge, women are slightly more moderate than men. With respect to unengaged Democrats, we observe a .13 gender gap, $F(1, 3068) = 7.37$, $p < .01$, for health care spending and a gap of .12, $F(1, 3069) = 4.52$, $p < .06$, for immigration policy with men favoring higher levels of spending and being more accommodating toward immigrants than women. Among engaged Democrats, women show higher levels of support for defense spending (gender gap = .19), $F(1, 2652) = 6.56$, $p < .01$. Although female Democrats have, on average, more moderate views toward health care, immigration, and defense spending than do men, female Democrats have more liberal views on gun control than male Democrats. The gender gap in support for gun control persists among both primary voters (gender gap = .31), $F(1, 3061) = 14.05$, $p < .001$, and nonvoters (gender gap = .28), $F(1, 3061) = 21.79$, $p < .001$, with women exhibiting more support for gun control.

Overall, the trends presented in Figure 2a and 2b do not demonstrate support for our *Engaged Partisans Hypothesis*, which posits that we will see fewer gender differences among primary voters relative to nonvoters of the same party. Instead, gender differences occur regardless of partisans' levels of engagement. Furthermore, with respect to Republicans, there are more gender gaps among primary voters than nonvoters, suggesting that gender differences observed among Republicans in Figure 1b are not driven by a lack of political engagement

or awareness. Thus, although partisan sorting is clearly at work and is useful for explaining average gender differences in partisanship, unexplained gender differences in policy preferences exist within parties. Understanding these differences and their origins may be particularly meaningful among Republicans, for whom we see considerable preference heterogeneity based on gender and levels of engagement. These findings raise an important question: if party sorting does not fully explain gender gaps in policy preferences, what accounts for gender gaps within the parties—particularly the Republican Party?

Below, we develop expectations concerning the effect of core political values on policy support to explain the origins of gender gaps within the Republican Party. The sorting literature is agnostic as to the origins of the gender gap, and therefore cannot explain why gender differences in issue preferences exist to begin with. Other theoretical accounts of political gender difference linked to gender socialization and gender roles argue that common experiences may shape women's underlying values and beliefs about gender-based inequality in a way that cuts across party, explaining why women might maintain significantly more liberal views than their male counterparts of the same party. Yet, it is not clear from previous research how sorting and theories on the origins of the gender gap relate to one another. By bringing the sorting literature into conversation with research on the origins of the gender gap, we move beyond description of gender differences and into a theoretical and empirical investigation of the foundations of gender differences in partisanship and public opinion.

Origins of Gender Gaps in Issue Attitudes

Research on the origins of various political gender gaps has focused on the different social roles, expectations, and stereotypes associated with men and women. Social role theory maintains that gender differences in the aggregate division of labor (both in terms of household labor and occupational segregation) create stereotypic expectations about men and women's behavior (Eagly, Wood, and Diekman 2000). People respond to and internalize these expectations, particularly when they themselves occupy gender-stereotypic roles in their families and the workplace. As a result, stereotypic traits and behaviors are commonly reinforced in men and women such that men assume more agentic, agency-oriented traits and women assume more communal traits associated with concern for others (Wood and Eagly 2002). These traits, which stem from common social roles, have implications for public opinion on a variety of political issues (Eagly et al. 2004). For instance, women's communal orientation is commonly linked to their greater endorsement of social

welfare programs aimed at disadvantaged groups (Page and Shapiro 1992). Women's roles as mothers and care-givers are associated with their orientation toward liberal policies on health care, child care, education, and home-lessness (Cassese and Barnes 2016; Schlesinger and Heldman 2001). Because of these close associations between women's traditional roles and gender gaps in these policy areas, such policies are commonly consid-ered "women's issues" (Reingold 2000; Swers 2002).

In addition to specific traits, social roles are associated with broader gender differences in social status. Men and women's different social, economic, and political statuses translate to differential endorsement of status-oriented ideologies including political conservatism, social domi-nance orientation, and modern sexism (Jost, Federico, and Napier 2009). There is evidence that these orienta-tions toward status and hierarchy underlie gender differ-ences in policy attitudes (Diekman and Schneider 2010). For instance, men's higher status is associated with a greater tendency to support policies that support or enhance the status quo (Jost and Kay 2005), whereas women support policies that tend to reduce hierarchy, such as social welfare programs (Pratto, Stallworth, and Sidanius 1997).

Gender differences in beliefs about gender-based inequality follow a similar pattern. Men and women differ in their beliefs about the persistence and origins of gender inequality in society ostensibly due to differences in per-sonal experiences with gender discrimination (Manza and Brooks 1998). On average, men are more likely to attri-bute gender-based inequality to individual women and their personal choices, whereas women are more likely to attribute inequality to systematic discrimination against women (Swim et al. 1995). These beliefs about the origins of gender-based inequality—often referred to as modern sexism—shape policy attitudes. Individuals high in mod-ern sexism are less likely to support policies explicitly designed to mitigate gender inequalities or those policies that disproportionately benefit women, such as welfare policies. Gender differences in modern sexism cut across the ideological spectrum, with women reporting lower levels of modern sexism than men regardless of their ideo-logical identification (Cassese, Barnes, and Branton 2015). Thus, we also posit that men and women's differ-ential levels of modern sexism work to explain the gender gap we observed among Republicans—particularly their preferences on "women's issues."

Gender differences in socialization, roles, and status are also thought to influence core political values. In par-ticular, gendered patterns are evident in support for a broad scope of government and egalitarian values. As noted above, men's higher social status decreases the likelihood that they believe gender-based inequality and social inequality more generally are caused by and sustained through discrimination. Men are therefore less likely to believe that the government is responsible for decreasing social inequality and thus favor a smaller scope of government. By contrast, women are more likely to attribute inequality to structural factors, and believe the government should play a larger, more active role in improving citizens' daily lives (Carroll 2006; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986) and ensuring equal opportunities for all citizens (Feldman and Steenbergen 2001; Howell and Day 2000). This emphasis on egalitarianism and prefer-ences for a broad scope of government shows through in specific policy positions, for example, women's greater average support for the welfare state (Barnes and Córdova 2016; Carroll 2006; Deckman and McTague 2015). Consequently, we argue that women's underlying values for social equality and their preferences for government involvement help explain the gender gap in public opin-ion. Given our expectations about how different political values and status-oriented ideologies work together to explain the Republican gender gap in issue attitudes, we posit the following hypothesis:

The Mediation Hypothesis: Political values (i.e., egalitarianism and scope of government) and status-oriented ideologies (i.e., political conservatism and modern sexism) mediate the relationship between gen-der and policy attitudes.

Core Values, Status-Oriented Ideologies, and the Republican Party Gender Gap

Research on the origins of the gender gap often uses med-itation analysis to consider whether an intervening vari-able—such as egalitarianism—conveys the effect of gender on policy attitudes or partisanship. Typically, this is accomplished by comparing the effect of gender in a model that does not contain the hypothesized mediating variables with the effect of gender in a model that does contain these variables. When inclusion of one or more mediating variables reduces or eliminates the effect of gender in the model, gender's effect is partially or com-pletely explained by that variable. For example, Inglehart and Norris (2003) demonstrate that much of the partisan gender gap in advanced industrial democracies is attribut-able to postmaterialism, support for gender equality, and beliefs about the scope of government. Inclusion of these mediators in the models substantially reduces the size of the gender gap. We adopt a similar approach to examine the extent to which political values explain the Republican gender gap in policy preferences.

Because we observe more gender-based heterogene-ity among Republicans relative to Democrats—both in terms of the policy attitudes and our hypothesized

mediators—we examine the sources of the Republican gender gap.[6] We compared the estimated effect of respondent gender on attitudes in a multivariate model without the hypothesized moderators with one that included the hypothesized moderators (Baron and Kenny 1986). We used a seemingly unrelated regression/logit (SUR/SUL) method, which combines the estimates from multiple models that are jointly estimated to obtain the variance–covariance matrix for coefficients produced by different models, which is necessary to compute accurate standard errors for comparisons of coefficients across models. Then, we used Adjusted Wald Tests to test whether the size of the coefficient on the respondent gender variable was significantly different across models that include and exclude our hypothesized moderators.[7]

Ideology was measured with a standard 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Scope of government is a six-item standardized scale (e.g., "Which of the two statements comes closer to your view: (1) we need a strong government to handle today's complex economic problems or (2) the free market can handle these problems without government being involved?") coded so that high scores correspond to support for limited government ($\alpha = .81$). Modern sexism is a six-item standardized scale (i.e., "When employers make decisions about hiring and promotion, how often do they discriminate against women?") coded so that high scores correspond to high levels of modern sexism ($\alpha = .71$). Egalitarianism is also a six-item standardized scale (e.g., "We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country"—reversed) coded so that high scores correspond to greater endorsement of egalitarian values ($\alpha = .78$).[8]

The results are presented in Table 1. The issue areas are listed at the top of each column. For each policy area, the model on the left excludes mediators and the model on the right includes mediators. Looking first at the models without the mediating variables, the coefficients for respondent gender are negative, indicating that on average female Republicans still have more moderate preferences than male Republicans in fully controlled models. For seven of the ten issue areas—abortion,[9] child care, education, health care, gay rights, the millionaire tax, and gun control—the difference between men and women is statistically significant.

Turning to the models that include mediators, one can see that they exert a significant influence on policy attitudes. In each policy model, at least two of the mediators are statistically significant, though the pattern varies across issue areas. Their inclusion reduces the coefficient size for the respondent gender variable. For five of the seven issues, the effect of gender on policy attitudes is no longer statistically significant, indicating complete mediation. The Adjusted Wald Tests demonstrate that the difference in coefficient size between the models is statistically

significant in each case at the $p < .001$ level. This finding is consistent with our *Mediation Hypothesis*.

Attitudes toward welfare, immigration, and defense are an exception to this pattern; male and female Republicans hold comparable views in these policy areas. The initial effect on gender on support for welfare is negative but not statistically significant. Inclusion of the mediators flips the sign such that Republican women are actually more conservative than Republican men when ideology, scope of government, and modern sexism are accounted for, though this effect is still not statistically significant. This is an interesting result in light of existing scholarship, which argues that men and women's attitudes toward social welfare issues have become increasingly correlated with partisanship over time (Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999; Norrander 1999). It suggests that party sorting largely accommodates gender differences in welfare preferences, though we observe that for most other issue areas, there is a residual effect of gender.

Unpacking Multiple Mediation

Looking at the effects of the mediators, some patterns are apparent. Ideology and scope of government influence opinion across all issue areas. Modern sexism and egalitarianism have large effects on policy areas that are typically thought of as women's issues—child care, education, health care, and welfare—though they exert sporadic influence on other policy areas (i.e., millionaire tax) as well. Although these factors have a significant effect on policy attitudes, we do not get a clear picture of the extent to which gender is mediated by each variable using this approach. To better unpack the multiple sources of mediation, we reestimated the models using structural equation modeling (SEM). This approach allows us to estimate the direct effect of gender on policy attitudes, along with the indirect effects channeled through each individual mediator. It also allows us to simultaneously model the covariances between mediators. An example of this modeling strategy is provided in Figure 3, which shows the relationships among respondent gender, the mediating beliefs and values, and support for subsidized child care. With the mediators included in the model, the direct effect of gender is 0. The indirect effect is negative and statistically significant, suggesting that women's more moderate preferences toward subsidized child care are a function of these intervening beliefs and values. We further decomposed these indirect effects by mediator (Table 2). For the child care preferences model, beliefs about the proper scope of government and modern sexism account for 83 percent of the effect of gender on support for subsidized child care.

This approach was used for each of the ten policy areas. Indirect effects of gender for each mediator are

Table 1. Mediation Models, Republican Respondents.

	Abortion		Child care		Education		Health care		Welfare		Gay rights		Immigration		Millionaire tax		Defense		Gun control	
Female	−.18**	−.11	−.38**	−.09	−.52***	−.25	−.12*	.03	−.12	.20	−.32***	−.23***	−.00	.07	−.25***	−.02	−.08	−.07	−.74***	−.44**
	(.06)	(.06)	(.13)	(.14)	(.13)	(.14)	(.05)	(.04)	(.13)	(.14)	(.06)	(.06)	(.06)	(.06)	(.07)	(.06)	(.06)	(.06)	(.14)	(.16)
Difference	$F = 11.71$***		$F = 17.62$***		$F = 15.08$***		$F = 24.72$***		—		$F = 15.83$***		—		$F = 35.12$***		—		$F = 18.46$***	
Ideology		.17***		.11		.16*		.11***		.20**		.16***		.07**		.14***		.07*		.19*
		(.03)		(.07)		(.07)		(.02)		(.07)		(.03)		(.03)		(.03)		(.03)		(.08)
Scope of government		.10*		.65***		.70***		.39***		.74***		.07		.14***		.42***		.04		.86***
		(.04)		(.10)		(.11)		(.03)		(.10)		(.04)		(.04)		(.04)		(.04)		(.11)
Modern sexism		.05		.34***		.45***		.06*		.28***		.08*		.06		.22***		−.04		.36***
		(.04)		(.08)		(.08)		(.03)		(.08)		(.03)		(.03)		(.04)		(.04)		(.08)
Egalitarianism		−.02		−.32***		−.30***		−.08*		−.45***		−.05		−.06		−.09*		−.04		−.16
		(.03)		(.07)		(.08)		(.03)		(.08)		(.03)		(.03)		(.04)		(.03)		(.09)
Observations	5,687	5,677	5,676	5,666	5,682	5,672	5,689	5,679	5,682	5,672	5,687	5,677	5,689	5,679	5,681	5,672	5,578	5,573	5,685	5,675
Adjusted R^2	.32	.37	.10	.27	.10	.30	.12	.37	.09	.16	.22	.28	.10	.14	.08	.26	.07	.08	.05	.20

Entries are coefficients from seemingly unrelated regression and seemingly unrelated logit models with standard errors in parentheses. Survey weights are applied. Differences in the coefficient sizes for respondent gender are evaluated using Adjusted Wald Tests. Models are restricted to Republican respondents, including leaners. All models contain the following control variables: religiosity, married, education, income, employed, homemaker, age, kids under 18, black, Hispanic, other race, primary voter, political knowledge, and South. Adjusted R^2 for ordered logits are calculated using Wherry's formula. The full results are available in Table 3 of the online appendix.
$^\dagger p < .10$. $^*p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.
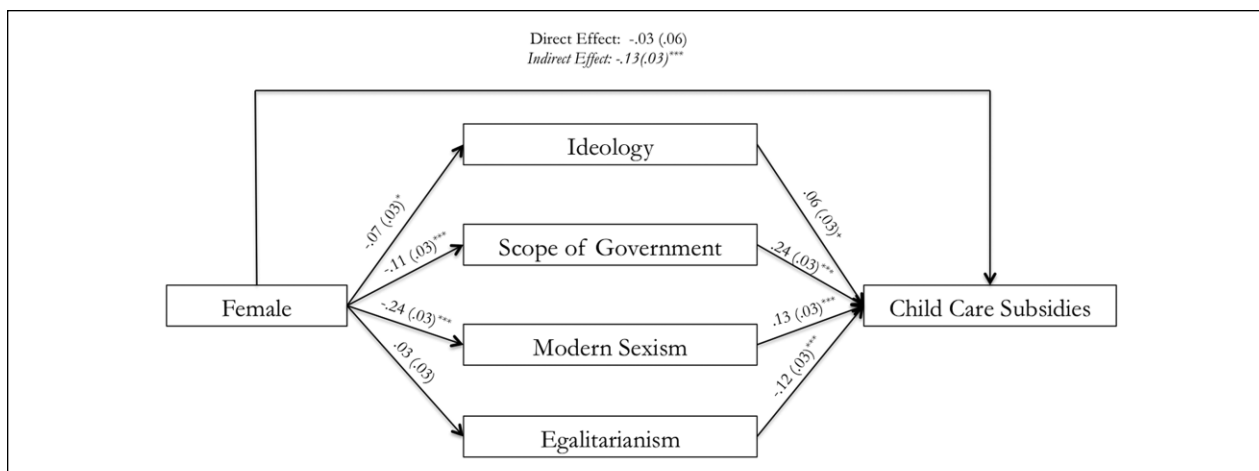
Figure 3. Example mediation model, support for subsidized child care among Republicans.
Entries are maximum likelihood coefficients from a structural equation model evaluating the effects of multiple mediators between respondent gender and opposition to subsidized child care. Ideology, scope of government, modern sexism, and attitudes toward child care subsidies are all coded so that high scores correspond to more conservative positions. Egalitarianism is coded so that high scores correspond to greater endorsement of egalitarian values. Survey weights are applied. The figure omits covariances that were estimated between the four mediators and also the effects of sociodemographic controls included in the models for the purposes of highlighting the mediation mechanism tested here.
$^\dagger p < .10$. $^* p < .05$. $^{**} p < .01$. $^{***} p < .001$.

provided in the first four columns of Table 2, followed by the direct effect of gender, the combined total indirect effect for all four mediators, and the total proportion of the effect of gender that is mediated in each model. Looking across the individual mediators (columns 1–4), it is clear that beliefs about the appropriate scope of government and modern sexism account for most of the Republican gender gap. In eight of ten cases, the indirect effect of gender on policy attitudes conveyed through scope of government is statistically significant. The same is true in eight of ten cases for modern sexism. The two mediators have roughly similar effect sizes across policy areas such that both are accounting for similar portions of the Republican gender gaps. By contrast, ideology plays a negligible role in explaining the gender gap, and egalitarianism does not offer any explanatory purchase.

The rightmost column of Table 2 indicates the total proportion of the gender gap in policy attitudes that is explained by the mediators. The mediators explain more than one-third of the gender gap for eight of the ten issue areas and more than half of the gender gap for six of the ten issue areas. Although there is still some residual variance in many cases, a substantial portion of the Republican gender gap is explained by the factors explored here.

Conclusion

The gender gap literature has tended to focus on gender differences in partisanship, highlighting the factors that account for women's greater affinity with the Democratic Party and men's greater affinity with the Republican

Party (e.g., Kaufmann 2002). We find evidence of within-party gender gaps, particularly in the Republican Party. We think the differences between the parties reflect the outcomes of long-term party sorting mechanisms. As a result of the movement of Southern white men from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party (Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999), the Democratic Party has lost some of its more moderate constituents and has become more internally cohesive with respect to policy positions.[10] Within the Republican Party, gender still consistently exerts a unique effect on policy positions. Gender gaps in the GOP occur not only in policy areas that are commonly considered "women's issues"—abortion, subsidized child care, education, and health care—but also for other issues, such as gay rights, the millionaire tax, and gun control. These results are consistent with prior claims that "conservative women are gender-conscious political actors" (Schreiber 2008, 475) and also the notion that gender issues "have not been absorbed into the party system" (Sanbonmatsu 2002, 202).

We trace the origins of the GOP gender gaps to gender differences in beliefs about the appropriate scope of government, attitudes toward gender-based social inequality, and—to a lesser extent—ideological extremity. These results are consistent with literature suggesting that women's roles and experiences cause them to endorse different beliefs and values (e.g., Carroll 2006; Howell and Day 2000). Although these factors explain a significant portion of the Republican gender gaps, they do not explain opinion on gun control and gay rights.[11] The Republican gender gap on gun control is among the

Table 2. Indirect Effects of Respondent Gender on Policy Attitudes, Republican Respondents.

	Indirect effects of gender through mediators				Total effects of gender on policy attitudes		
	Ideology	Scope of government	Modern sexism	Egalitarianism	Direct effect	Total indirect effect	Proportion mediated
Abortion	−.03* (.01)	−.02* (.01)	−.02 (.02)	.00 (.00)	−.09 (.06)	−.06* (.02)	.40
Child care	−.01 (.01)	−.05*** (.02)	−.06*** (.02)	−.01 (.01)	−.03 (.06)	−.13*** (.03)	.83
Education	−.01 (.01)	−.06*** (.02)	−.10*** (.02)	−.01 (.01)	−.09 (.06)	−.17*** (.03)	.67
Health care	−.02* (.01)	−.07*** (.02)	−.03* (.01)	.00 (.01)	.03 (.04)	−.12*** (.03)	.80
Welfare	−.01 (.01)	−.05*** (.02)	−.04* (.01)	−.01 (.01)	.08 (.05)	−.12*** (.03)	.60
Gay rights	−.02* (.01)	−.01 (.01)	−.03* (.02)	.00 (.00)	−.24*** (.05)	−.07*** (.02)	.24
Immigration	−.01† (.01)	−.03* (.01)	−.03† (.02)	.00 (.00)	.06 (.05)	−.06*** (.02)	.51
Millionaire tax	−.02* (.01)	−.08*** (.02)	−.09*** (.02)	−.01 (.01)	−.00 (.06)	−.20*** (.04)	.99
Defense spending	−.01 (.01)	−.01 (.01)	.02 (.02)	−.00 (.00)	−.06 (.06)	−.01 (.02)	.09
Gun control	−.01 (.01)	−.06*** (.01)	−.06*** (.02)	.00 (.00)	−.21*** (.05)	−.13*** (.03)	.38

Entries are maximum likelihood coefficients from SEMs with multiple mediators and a full set of demographic covariates (see Figure 3). Models are restricted to Republican respondents, including leaners. In each case, the SEMs are well-fitted models in terms of both absolute (RMSEA < .05, TLI/CFI < .97) and relative fit (χ^2_{ms} = ns, χ^2_{bs} < .001, Hu and Bentler 1999). SEMs = structural equation modelings; RMSEA = root mean square error approximation; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; CFI = comparative fit index.
†p < .10. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

largest across issue areas, and just below 40 percent of the gap is explained by the mediating variables. Past research attributes gender differences on this and other "use of force" issues to women's different orientation toward aggression and violence and their greater average fear of crime—socialized factors that likely cut across party (see Huddy, Cassese, and Lizotte 2008). Future research should delve deeper into Republican women's attitudes toward gun control, particularly given recent conflict over this issue in Congress and their uniquely moderate position in a seemingly intractable climate for legislating on this issue.

Our findings raise normative questions about the quality of representation experienced by Republican women in this era of heightened partisan polarization. Although Republican women in Congress in the 1980s and 1990s held more liberal views and roll call records (Swers 2002), beginning in the 109th Congress, Republican women were ideologically indistinguishable from men in the House—even on women's issues (Frederick 2013). Female GOP senators have retained some discretion to pursue more centrist objectives (Swers 2013) but face significant obstacles to legislating on women's issues given their small numbers and conservative bases (Swers 2016). Among the small number of GOP women competing for office (Barnes, Branton, and Cassese 2016), electoral trends point toward increasingly conservative women candidates (Thomsen 2015) and increasingly conservative women attaining leadership positions within the GOP through the Tea Party (Deckman 2016), all of whom are likely to address these issues from a traditional standpoint on gender roles.

Beyond this, even when moderate women are able to gain elective office, their influence on policy is constrained by party culture. The Democratic Party is known as a coalition party with many diverse internal constituencies, whereas Republicans are governed by a culture that values singular identification with the party and conformity with the party platform, and eschews special-interest claims (Freeman 1986). Because of the Republican Party's more individualistic culture, women's organizations lose credibility when they make claims on behalf of women as a group. Making group-based claims "call[s] into question the universal desirability of the Republican program" (Freeman 1986, 338). Similarly, other elites in the GOP—such as activists and donors—who act as "policy demanders" and advocate for policy change, endorse traditional beliefs about gender and women's roles (Cooperman 2016), and express opposition to group-based claims on behalf of women (Cooperman and Crowder-Meyer 2015; Grossmann and Hopkins 2015). Deckman (2016) acknowledges that conservative women's groups strategically avoid making group-based claims for just this reason. Together, the relatively more moderate views of women in the Republican electorate, combined with the conservative positions of women elected to the GOP and the party culture, calls into question the extent to which the Republican Party is effectively representing Republican women's policy preferences.

These cultural differences at the elite level also help to explain some of our observations at the mass level. Women in the Democratic Party have played a more active role in shaping policy and the party platform given its greater acceptance of special-interest claims, and male

Democrats at the national level have largely embraced this women's rights policy agenda (Wolbrecht 2000). As a result, male and female Democrats in the electorate have converged in their positions on these issues over time. On the Republican side, the more moderate policy views of women have not been integrated into major legislation or the party platforms. As a result, gender gaps persist among Republicans in the electorate. Because party culture also constrains women in the mass public, we have not seen moderate Republican women emerge as a major force for change within the electorate. Instead, these gender gaps reflect a significant, but latent, division within the party.

It is also worth noting that issue positions are not the sole drivers of partisan identity. Partisanship is a symbolic attachment, and policy attitudes do not need to perfectly "match" their group identity (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2004; Mason 2015). These gender gap issues are thus insufficient to drive women from the Republican Party, especially given the distance observed between the two parties on these issues. Issue salience likely moderates the relationship between these issues and party identification. To the extent that these gap issues are chronically less important or salient to voters than economic issues, they may not exert much cross pressure against women's partisan identities. Deckman's (2012) analysis of issue importance among GOP and Tea Party women demonstrated that the economy, energy, health care, and terrorism most strongly shape vote choice. If these policy considerations continue to dominate the party platform and campaign rhetoric, we are unlikely to see much effort toward substantive policy change on the gender gap issues at the elite level. Similarly, it is unlikely that we will see shifts in partisanship among moderate Republican women in the electorate—for example, a mass defection to independent identification. However, a shift in issue salience might activate divisions between men and women, making them more politically consequential in the future.

Finally, the representational implications of this research extend beyond the United States. Historically, left-wing parties hosted the majority of women in parliaments and exhibited a better track record of representing women. Yet, as left-wing parties moved to adopt more women-friendly policies, competing parties often responded with policy initiatives that appeal to women in an effort to win back women's votes (Caul 2001). Although right-wing parties have not kept pace with the increases in women's numeric representation on the left, recently, there has been a rise in high-profile conservative women pursuing office (O'Brien 2015) and an influx of conservative women gaining access to office as legislative gender quotas (which apply to all parties) have diffused across the globe. Parties from the right have began vying for women's votes, and increasingly, parties from across the political spectrum make claims on women's behalf (Piscopo

2014). In principle, the increased attention to conservative female constituents is good for representation and democracy more generally. Yet, as more parties and politicians compete for women's support and claim to stand for women, it is increasingly important to understand the policy preferences of conservative women.

Notes

1. But see Kaufmann and Petrocik (1999) and Kaufmann (2002), discussed below.
2. Survey weights are applied. All observed gaps, except for the abortion gender gap among Republicans, hold even after controlling for socioeconomic and demographic variables (see Table 1). The direction of the abortion gap is reversed when controls variables are included the in the model. Partisans include leaners. Models were reestimated excluding leaners as a robustness check, and the results did not differ appreciably. These results are provided in Table 5 and 6 of the online appendix.
3. To determine if the means are statistically different at the 95% confidence level, we graph 84% confidence intervals for each of the means. If the 84% confidence intervals do not overlap, we can conclude that the difference between

two means is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level (Julious 2004).

4. In each case, the gap is the difference in weighted mean policy preferences for men and women in each issue area.

5. Past work has also relied on political sophistication (Carsey and Layman 2006; Zaller 1992) and education (Gillion, Ladd, and Meredith 2015) to distinguish among engaged partisans. Our findings are robust to alternative measures of "engaged partisans" (see Figures 2–4, online appendix).

6. Models for Democrats revealed little evidence of mediation (see online appendix, Table 4). For gender and party differences on the mediators, see Figure 1 of the online appendix.

7. Adjusted Wald Tests offer a conservative test of the change in coefficient size for the logit models.

8. See the online appendix for complete measurement information. Also see Tables 7 to 10 in the online appendix where we evaluate differences in policy preferences across age cohorts.

9. In our initial mean comparison, we observed a gender gap in which Republican women were more conservative than men on abortion. Once we control for religiosity, the gender gap is reversed.

10. For more on regional differences in the gender gap, see Ondercin (2013).

11. Some evidence suggests that these issues have relatively low salience for Republican women. The American National Election Study contains a question asking how important gun control is to you personally; only 32.2% of Republican women said it was very or extremely important. By contrast, 86.09% felt reducing the budget deficit was very or extremely important. Deckman (2012) similarly demonstrates that Grand Old Party women place significantly less emphasis on gay rights than economic issues.

Supplemental Material

Supplemental materials for this article can be viewed at http://prq.sagepub.com/supplemental/.

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