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

Tiffany D. Barnes
Assistant Professor
Department of Political Science
University of Kentucky
tiffanydbarnes@uky.edu

Erin C. Cassese
Associate Professor
Department of Political Science
University of West Virginia
Erin.Cassese@mail.wvu.edu
(Corresponding Author)

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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

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 et al. 2004; Inglehart and Norris 2003). Today, women in the United States are more likely to identify with the Democratic Party, to vote for Democratic Party candidates, and to 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 (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 GOP women candidates (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 U.S. 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"—e.g. the Mommy Wars, the Republican War on Women— requires scholars revisit the conventional wisdom about women's political identities.

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[1] But see Kaufmann and Petrocik (1999) and Kaufmann (2002), discussed below.

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 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 by gender and party across ten different policy issues using the 2012 American National Election Study. 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 is insufficient 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 Republican gender gaps in issue attitudes.

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 et al. 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, political identities, and partisan preferences. 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 childcare subsidies, access to birth control, and protection from job discrimination in hiring and promotion (Barnes and Cordova forthcoming; Cassese et al. 2015; Deckman and McTague 2015; Strolovitch 1998), but policy preferences diverge also 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 et al. 2008; Kaufmann 2002, 2006; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986). Women also tend to favor government spending on education, healthcare, and welfare (Clark and Clark 1996; Schlesinger and Heldman 2001). Women are more likely to oppose war (Huddy et al. 2008) and to 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 to support Democratic candidates in general elections (Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999; Miller 1991). There is mounting evidence that this partisan gender gap is a result of ideological sorting along party lines. As the party system in the U.S. 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 (Levendusky 2009; Abramowitz 2010). 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 (Kaufman 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 et al. 2004; Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999; Norrander 1999). Between 1952 to 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 (Kaufman 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 (Converse 1964; Zaller, 1992; Carsey and Layman 2006), and consequently, the partisan gender gap is largest among this subset of partisans (Abramowitz 2010; Gillion et al. 2015). For example, Abramowitz (2010) finds a 6-point gender gap in partisanship among citizens with low levels of political engagement compared to a 20-point gap among those with a high level 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 party, and that 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 citizen's 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 et al. 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 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 American National Election Study to identify average gender gaps across policy areas and gender gaps within the parties for ten policy issues: abortion, childcare, education, healthcare, 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, 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 for both 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 zero and a standard deviation of one) 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 demonstrates 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, looking at 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=0.15)[4] [$F(1,5820)= 6.75$, p<.01], education (gender gap=0.25) [$F(1,5849)= 15.75$, p<.001], and healthcare (gender gap=0.09) [$F(1,5874)= 3.76$, p<.05]. These gaps indicate that even

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[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.

[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.

though women's issues have become increasingly polarized with the recent Mommy Wars and the Republican War on Women, Republican women hold more moderate views than male copartisans across a range of women's issues. Women (mean=0.32) are also more likely than men (mean=0.51) to favor the millionaire tax [$F(1,5440)= 8.00$, $p<=.01$]. Nevertheless, women are no more likely than men to favor increased public expenditures for welfare benefits.

With respect to issues linked to violence and use of force, Republican women (mean=0.20) are far more likely than Republican men (mean=0.54) to favor gun control [$F(1,5855)= 41.10$, $p<.001$]. This is the largest within party gender difference (gender gap=0.34) 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=0.10), 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 issues.

[Figure 1 Here]

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 (mean= -0.46) are far more likely than men (mean= -0.17) 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 [$F(1,5164)= 6.12$, $p<.01$]. Yet the magnitude of the within party gender gaps for healthcare (gender gap=0.11) and defense spending (gender gap=0.13) are less than half the size of the gun control gender gap (gender gap=0.29).

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. Kaufmann 2006; Gillion et al. 2015). However, significant within-party gender differences are 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 into account party, indicating that party sorting 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 subset of highly engaged partisans, as these citizens are better positioned to align themselves with the party that best represents their policy preferences (e.g. Gillion et al. 2015), whereas within-party gender differences are likely to be smallest among this group. To evaluate our *Engaged-Partisans Hypothesis* we distinguish among partisans that are more and less engaged by comparing primary voters to non-voters.[5] We compare within-party gender differences using the same difference-in-means approach described above.

[Figure 2 Here]

Gender Gaps Among Engaged Republicans

Consistent with previous literature, Republican primary voters tend to be more conservative than Republican non-voters (see Figure 2a). Moreover, as expected, there are some issues for which the gender gap is larger among non-voters than among voters. Female non-voters exhibit more liberal policy positions than do male non-voters on education spending (gender gap=0.20)

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[5] Past work has also relied on political sophistication (Zaller 1992; Carsey and Layman 2006) and education (Gillion et al. 2015) to distinguish among engaged partisans.

$[F(1,3059)= 6.26, p<.01]$, gay rights (gender gap=0.16) $[F(1,1973)= 3.91, p<.05]$, and gun control (gender gap=0.29) $[F(1,1971)= 15.01, p<.001]$. Nonetheless, less engaged Republicans do not drive gender gaps in issue support across all issue areas. Whereas female non-voters are more liberal than male non-voters 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=0.27) $[F(1,1959)= 12.09, p<.001]$, education spending (gender gap=0.36) $[F(1,1966)= 14.42, p<.001]$, the millionaire tax (gender gap=.37) $[F(1,1829)= 12.32, p<.001]$, and gun control (gender gap=0.41) $[F(1,1971)= 35.84, p<.001]$. For each of these issue areas, not only are male primary voters more conservative then female primary voters, but male primary voters stand out as being remarkably more conservative than all other Republicans.

Female primary voters' opposition to abortion stands in sharp contrast to the overall trends observed here. This is the sole issue area for which female primary voters have a more conservative policy position (mean=0.52) than do male primary voters (mean=0.35), but the difference is only marginally significant (gender gap=0.17) $[F(1,1835)= 3.42, p=.06]$. Meanwhile, there is no gender gap between Republican non-voters.

All told, gender differences in policy preferences exist for both primary voters and non-voters. In fact, we observe more gender differences among primary voters than among non-voters, 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 non-voters. Indeed, with the exception of healthcare spending and welfare

spending, engaged Democrats exhibit comparable preferences to less engaged Democrats. Instead, there is less heterogeneity in opinion among Democratic identifiers, regardless of their level of engagement, in our analysis. Where gender differences do emerge, we see that women are slightly more moderate than men. With respect to unengaged Democrats, we see that women are more moderate in their views towards healthcare and immigration than are men. In particular, we observe a 0.13 gender gap [$F(1,3068)= 7.37$, p<.01] for healthcare spending with men favoring higher levels of spending. Similarly, there is a 0.12 gender gap [$F(1,3069)= 4.52$, p<.06] over immigration policy with male non-voters being more accommodating towards immigrants than female non-voters.

With respect to engaged Democrats, female primary voters show higher levels of support for defense spending than do male primary voters (gender gap=0.19) [$F(1,2652)= 6.56$, p<.01]. Although female Democrats have, on average, more moderate views towards healthcare, immigration, and defense spending than do men, female Democrats have more liberal views on gun control than male Democrats. Indeed, a large gender gap in support for gun control persists among both primary voters (gender gap=0.31) [$F(1,3061)= 14.05$, p<.001] and non-voters (gender gap=0.28) [$F(1,3061)= 21.79$, p<.001] with women exhibiting more support for gun control. Notably, the gender gap in favor of gun control between engaged partisans is comparable to the gap between non-engaged partisans and these gaps are much larger than the gender gaps observed for other policy areas.

Overall the trends presented in Figures 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 persist regardless of partisans' levels of engagement. Further, with respect to Republicans, we observe that there are more gender gaps among primary voters than there are among non-voters, 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 partisan differences between parties, 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 occupation segregation) create stereotypic expectations about men's and women's behavior (Eagly et

al. 2000). People respond to and internalize these expectations, particularly when they 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 (Eagly and Wood 2002). These traits, which stem from common social roles, have implications for public opinion on a variety of political issues (Eagly et al. 2004; Diekman and Schneider 2010). For instance, women's communal orientation is commonly linked to their greater endorsement of social welfare programs aimed at disadvantaged groups (e.g. Page and Shapiro 1992). Women's roles as mothers and caregivers are associated with their orientation toward liberal policies on healthcare, childcare, education, and homelessness (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 considered "women's interests" (Reingold 2000; Swers 2002).

In addition to specific traits, social roles are associated with broader gender differences in social status. Men's and women's different social, economic, and political status translate to differential endorsement of status-oriented ideologies including political conservatism, social dominance orientation, and modern sexism (Jost et al. 2009). There is evidence that these orientations toward status and hierarchy underlie gender differences in policy attitudes (for a review, see 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 et al. 1997).

Gender differences in beliefs about gender-based inequality follow a similar pattern. Men and women tend to differ in their beliefs about the persistence and origins of gender inequality in society, ostensibly due to differences in personal experiences with gender discrimination (Manza and

Brooks 1998). On average men are more likely to attribute gender-based inequality in society to individual women and their personal choices, while 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 modern 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 ideological identification (Cassese et al. 2015). Thus, we also posit that men's and women's differential levels of modern sexism work to explain the gender gap we observed among Republicans—particularly their preferences over "women's issues."

Gender differences in socialization, roles, and status are also thought to influence core political values. In particular, gendered patterns are evident in support for a broad scope of government involvement 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 is caused by and sustained through discrimination. As a result, men are 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 in ensuring equal opportunities for all citizens (Howell and Day 2000; Feldman and Steenbergen 2001). This emphasis on egalitarianism and preferences for a broad scope of government shows through in specific policy positions, e.g. women's greater average support for the welfare state (Barnes and Córdova forthcoming; Carroll 2006; Deckman and McTague 2015). Consequently, we posit women's underlying values for social equality and their preferences for government involvement help explain the gender gap in public

opinion. Given our expectation 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 gender and policy attitudes.

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

Research on the origins of the gender gap has typically used meditation analysis to consider whether an intervening variable—such as egalitarianism—conveys the effect of gender on policy attitudes or partisanship. When inclusion of a variable reduces or eliminates the effect of gender in the model, gender's effect is understood to be partially or completely explained by that variable. For example Ingelhart and Norris (2003) demonstrate that much of the partisan gender gap in nations with advanced economies is attributable to three factors—postmaterialism, support for gender equality, and beliefs about the scope of government. We, thus, 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 heterogeneity 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 issues attitudes in a multivariate model without the hypothesized moderators to one that included the hypothesized moderators (Baron and Kenny 1986). We used a Seemingly Unrelated Regression/Logit (SUR/SUL) method to estimate these models and used Adjusted Wald Tests to indicate whether reductions in coefficient sizes are statistically significant.[7] Each of these models

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[6] Models were also estimated for Democrats and revealed comparatively little evidence of mediation (Appendix – Table 3). Gender and party differences on the mediators can be found in Figure 1 of the Appendix.
[7] Adjusted Wald tests offer a conservative test of the change in coefficient size for the logit models.

includes a full set of demographic controls, along with controls indicating whether respondents were primary voters and their level of political sophistication.[8]

[Table 1 Here]

The results are presented in Table 1. The issue areas are listed at the top of each column. 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] childcare, education, healthcare, gay rights, the millionaire tax, and gun control—the difference between men and women is statistically significant.

Turning to the models that include key mediators, one can see 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 also results in a reduction in 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 differences 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

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[8] See the appendix for measurement information.

[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.

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.

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—childcare, education, healthcare, and welfare—though they exert sporadic influence on other policy areas (such as the millionaire tax) as well.

Unpacking Multiple Mediation

Although these value and status-oriented variables 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 re-estimated the models using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). This approach allows us to directly estimating 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 childcare.[10] With the mediators included in the model, the direct effect of gender is zero. The indirect effect is negative and statistically significant, suggesting that women's more moderate preferences toward subsidized childcare are a function of these intervening beliefs and values. We further decomposed these indirect effects by mediator (Table 2). For the childcare preferences model, beliefs about the proper

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[10] A full set of control variables was included in all of the models. They are excluded from the figure, along with the covariances between mediators, to highlight the relationships of theoretical interest.

scope of government and modern sexism account for 83 percent of the effect of gender on support for subsidized childcare.

[Figure 3 & Table 2 Here]

This approach was used for each of the ten policy areas. Indirect effects of gender for each mediator are 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. The indirect effects are occasionally statistically significant though the effect sizes are substantively quite small. Egalitarianism does not explain any of the Republican gender gap.

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 over one third of the gender gap for eight of the ten issue areas and over half of the gender gap for six of the ten issue areas. While there is still some residual variance in many cases, a substantial portion of the Republican gender gap is explained by the factors explored here.

Conclusions

The gender gap literature has tended to focus on the gender gap 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 (Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999; Kaufmann 2002; Gillion et al.

2015). We find evidence of within-party gender gaps—particularly in the Republican Party—which points to the need to better understand the intersection of party and gender. Many of the policy areas where we observe gender gaps among Republicans are commonly considered "women's issues"—abortion, subsidized childcare, education, and health care, but Republican gender gaps were also evident for other issues, such as gay rights, the millionaire tax, and gun control.

The results suggest that gender has important implications for public opinion beyond its effect on partisanship. Although men and women have sorted into parties based on their policy attitudes, there is still some within-party heterogeneity based on gender. This is true even among the more engaged subset of Republicans who voted in the 2012 Presidential primaries—the party's most active and committed base. 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).

Our analysis traces the origins of the gender gaps within the Republican Party 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). While these factors explain a significant portion of the Republican gender gap, they do not account for all of it. Future research should further investigate how gender influences political thinking for conservative women. Gender identity is typically cast in liberal terms and conflated with feminist identity (Schreiber 2008). As a result, we know little about how conservative women navigate their own gender identity, their beliefs about gender, and the cross-pressures imposed by factors like party and religiosity. A more thorough exploration of the factors that draw women to conservative organizations and the Republican Party

generally, along with how they construct a gendered political identity, is important for better understanding their political behavior.

The findings here also raise normative questions about the quality of representation experienced by Republican women in this era of heightened partisan polarization. Millions of American women are Republicans. Although a subset of women identify with the Tea Party movement (Deckman 2015), on average Republican women hold more moderate policy preferences than Republican men. Yet, moderate Republicans are no longer running for Congress, and this tendency toward far-right candidates particularly effects women's candidacies, as they are more likely to run to the left of Republican men (Thomsen 2015). As a result, the women who do run for Congress tend to be disadvantaged in primary elections unless they are unusually conservative (Thomsen 2015) and thus likely diverge significantly from their female constituents. Together, the relatively more moderate views of women in the Republican electorate, combined with the conservative positions of elected officials, calls into question the extent to which the Republican Party is representing Republican women's policy preferences.

It is also unclear how moderate Republican women will influence election outcomes in the future. Some research suggests that GOP women will cross party lines to vote for female Democrats (Brians 2005). However, the inter-party differences we observer here are greater than intra-party differences based on gender. Given the number of conservative women pursuing high profile offices, the momentum around the conservative women's movement, and their potential influence on policymaking, these questions regarding ideological diversity among women and the quality of women's representation demand further attention.

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 (Caul 1999, 2001). 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 in conservative women gaining access to office as national-level gender quotas (which apply to all parties) have diffused across the globe (Hughes et al. 2015). 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.

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Table 1. Mediation Models, Republican Respondents

	Abortion		Childcare		Education		Healthcare		Welfare		Gay Rights		Immigration		Millionaire Tax		Defense		Gun Control	
Female	-0.18** (0.06)	-0.11 (0.06)	-0.37** (0.13)	-0.08 (0.14)	-0.50*** (0.13)	-0.22 (0.14)	-0.12* (0.05)	0.02 (0.04)	-0.12 (0.13)	0.19 (0.14)	-0.32*** (0.06)	-0.24*** (0.06)	-0.00 (0.06)	0.07 (0.06)	-0.25*** (0.07)	-0.02 (0.06)	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.06)	-0.75*** (0.14)	-0.45** (0.15)
Diff.	*F=11.73****		*F=18.02****		*F=16.18****		*F=24.48****		---		*F=15.57****		---		*F=34.60****		---		*F=18.19****	
Ideology		0.17*** (0.03)		0.11 (0.07)		0.16* (0.07)		0.11*** (0.02)		0.20** (0.07)		0.16*** (0.03)		0.07* (0.03)		0.14*** (0.03)		0.07* (0.03)		0.18* (0.08)
Scope of Gov.		0.10* (0.04)		0.65*** (0.10)		0.69*** (0.11)		0.39*** (0.03)		0.73*** (0.10)		0.07 (0.04)		0.14** (0.04)		0.42*** (0.04)		0.04 (0.04)		0.86*** (0.11)
Mod. Sexism		0.05 (0.04)		0.35*** (0.08)		0.46*** (0.08)		0.06* (0.03)		0.27** (0.08)		0.08* (0.03)		0.06 (0.03)		0.21*** (0.04)		-0.04 (0.04)		0.35*** (0.08)
Egalitarianism		-0.02 (0.03)		-0.31*** (0.07)		-0.27*** (0.08)		-0.08** (0.03)		-0.46*** (0.08)		-0.06 (0.03)		-0.06 (0.03)		-0.09* (0.04)		-0.05 (0.03)		-0.17 (0.09)
Religiosity	0.56*** (0.03)	0.52*** (0.03)	0.06 (0.06)	0.01 (0.06)	0.01 (0.06)	-0.06 (0.07)	0.06* (0.03)	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.06)	0.42*** (0.03)	0.38*** (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.07** (0.03)	0.05 (0.04)	-0.00 (0.03)	0.11*** (0.03)	0.09** (0.03)	0.00 (0.07)	-0.07 (0.07)
Married	0.07 (0.07)	0.06 (0.07)	0.18 (0.15)	0.09 (0.16)	-0.00 (0.15)	-0.09 (0.16)	0.07 (0.05)	0.04 (0.05)	0.29 (0.16)	0.21 (0.16)	0.06 (0.07)	0.05 (0.07)	-0.11 (0.07)	-0.14* (0.07)	-0.01 (0.09)	-0.06 (0.08)	-0.04 (0.07)	-0.05 (0.07)	0.08 (0.17)	0.02 (0.17)
Education	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.03)	0.01 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.06)	0.11 (0.06)	0.10 (0.07)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.04* (0.02)	0.01 (0.06)	-0.04 (0.06)	-0.09** (0.03)	-0.09*** (0.03)	-0.20*** (0.03)	-0.20*** (0.03)	0.02 (0.04)	0.01 (0.03)	-0.15*** (0.03)	-0.15*** (0.03)	-0.05 (0.07)	-0.08 (0.07)
Income	-0.01* (0.00)	-0.01* (0.00)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.02* (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)	-0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Employed	-0.09 (0.06)	-0.09 (0.06)	0.36** (0.14)	0.29* (0.14)	0.06 (0.15)	-0.10 (0.16)	0.16** (0.06)	0.11* (0.05)	0.49*** (0.14)	0.40** (0.14)	0.01 (0.07)	-0.00 (0.07)	0.22*** (0.06)	0.20** (0.06)	0.11 (0.09)	0.04 (0.07)	0.08 (0.07)	0.08 (0.07)	0.22 (0.16)	0.11 (0.16)
Homemaker	0.06 (0.14)	-0.02 (0.13)	1.02*** (0.27)	0.80** (0.29)	0.50 (0.27)	0.14 (0.27)	0.16 (0.09)	0.01 (0.08)	0.38 (0.23)	0.02 (0.24)	0.08 (0.11)	-0.02 (0.10)	0.04 (0.10)	-0.03 (0.10)	0.43** (0.14)	0.22 (0.13)	0.11 (0.13)	0.09 (0.13)	0.13 (0.26)	-0.25 (0.29)
Age	-0.01** (0.00)	-0.01** (0.00)	0.01 (0.00)	0.01 (0.00)	0.02*** (0.00)	0.02*** (0.01)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.01* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Kids<18	0.09 (0.07)	0.13 (0.07)	-0.59*** (0.16)	-0.52** (0.17)	-0.56*** (0.17)	-0.43* (0.18)	0.01 (0.06)	0.10 (0.05)	-0.09 (0.16)	0.08 (0.17)	-0.04 (0.07)	0.00 (0.07)	0.06 (0.07)	0.10 (0.07)	-0.14 (0.09)	-0.05 (0.08)	-0.01 (0.07)	0.02 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.17)	0.15 (0.18)
Black	0.10 (0.13)	0.20 (0.13)	-0.37 (0.53)	0.04 (0.50)	-1.58** (0.52)	-1.33* (0.58)	-0.42** (0.16)	-0.21 (0.12)	-0.52 (0.40)	-0.13 (0.39)	-0.08 (0.24)	0.03 (0.24)	-0.32* (0.16)	-0.23 (0.15)	0.09 (0.28)	0.38 (0.22)	-0.21 (0.24)	-0.17 (0.24)	-0.63 (0.50)	-0.16 (0.49)
Hispanic	0.09 (0.12)	0.17 (0.10)	-0.35 (0.25)	-0.12 (0.31)	-0.10 (0.26)	0.19 (0.36)	-0.34** (0.11)	-0.18* (0.07)	-0.32 (0.30)	-0.08 (0.28)	-0.04 (0.12)	0.05 (0.13)	-0.53*** (0.11)	-0.46*** (0.09)	0.14 (0.14)	0.32** (0.11)	0.09 (0.12)	0.14 (0.11)	-0.48 (0.27)	-0.22 (0.28)
Other Race	0.03 (0.12)	0.05 (0.11)	0.08 (0.26)	0.15 (0.25)	0.12 (0.28)	0.14 (0.30)	-0.14 (0.11)	-0.12 (0.09)	-0.39 (0.32)	-0.43 (0.34)	0.12 (0.14)	0.13 (0.14)	-0.09 (0.14)	-0.08 (0.13)	-0.13 (0.15)	-0.10 (0.12)	0.08 (0.13)	0.09 (0.13)	-0.30 (0.30)	-0.29 (0.31)
Primary Voter	0.12* (0.06)	0.05 (0.06)	0.34** (0.13)	0.12 (0.14)	0.43*** (0.13)	0.17 (0.14)	0.22*** (0.05)	0.08* (0.04)	0.29* (0.13)	0.02 (0.14)	0.10 (0.06)	0.03 (0.06)	0.15* (0.06)	0.08 (0.06)	0.35*** (0.08)	0.18** (0.07)	0.18** (0.06)	0.15* (0.06)	0.10 (0.14)	-0.20 (0.15)
Political Know.	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.07* (0.03)	0.36*** (0.06)	0.18** (0.06)	0.30*** (0.06)	0.11 (0.06)	0.12*** (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	0.29*** (0.06)	0.07 (0.06)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.02)	0.04 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.16*** (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	-0.00 (0.03)	0.22*** (0.07)	-0.01 (0.07)
Constant/Cut 1	0.75*** (0.15)	-0.10 (0.20)	0.10 (0.31)	0.67 (0.42)	1.56*** (0.36)	2.71*** (0.52)	0.19 (0.14)	-0.38* (0.15)	-3.32*** (0.49)	-2.79*** (0.60)	0.39* (0.15)	-0.41* (0.19)	0.74*** (0.15)	0.37 (0.19)	0.18 (0.18)	-0.57* (0.23)	0.42* (0.17)	0.06 (0.24)	-1.33*** (0.39)	-0.46 (0.56)
Cut2			2.39*** (0.32)	3.28*** (0.43)	3.35*** (0.37)	4.77*** (0.52)			-1.69*** (0.38)	-1.01* (0.51)									2.35*** (0.40)	3.74*** (0.58)
Cut3									0.38 (0.35)	1.32** (0.48)										
Cut4									2.12*** (0.35)	3.39*** (0.49)										
N	1758	1758	1747	1747	1753	1753	1760	1760	1753	1753	1758	1758	1760	1760	1753	1753	1654	1654	1756	1756
adj. R^2	.32	.37	.07	.14	.08	.16	.11	.37	.03	.11	.22	.27	.09	.14	.08	.26	.07	.08	.03	.12

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. $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.001$.

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

	Indirect Effects of Gender through Mediators				Total Effects		
	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
Childcare	-.01 (.01)	-.06*** (.02)	-.06*** (.02)	-.02+ (.01)	-.03 (.06)	-.13*** (04)	.83
Education	-.01 (.01)	-.06*** (.02)	-.10*** (.02)	-.01 (.01)	-.08 (.06)	-.18*** (.03)	.69
Healthcare	-.02* (.01)	-.07*** (.02)	-.03* (.01)	.00 (.01)	.03 (.04)	-.12*** (.03)	.80
Welfare	-.01 (.01)	-.05*** (.02)	-.04* (.01)	-.01 (.01)	.07+ (.04)	-.12*** (.02)	.69
Gay Rights	-.02* (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.03* (.02)	.00 (.00)	-.24*** (.05)	-.08*** (.02)	.24
Immigration	-.01+ (.01)	-.03* (.01)	-.03+ (.02)	.00 (.00)	.06 (.06)	-.07*** (.02)	.94
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)	-.07 (.06)	-.00 (.02)	.07
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). 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}=n.s, χ^2_{bs}<.001, Hu and Bentler 1999).

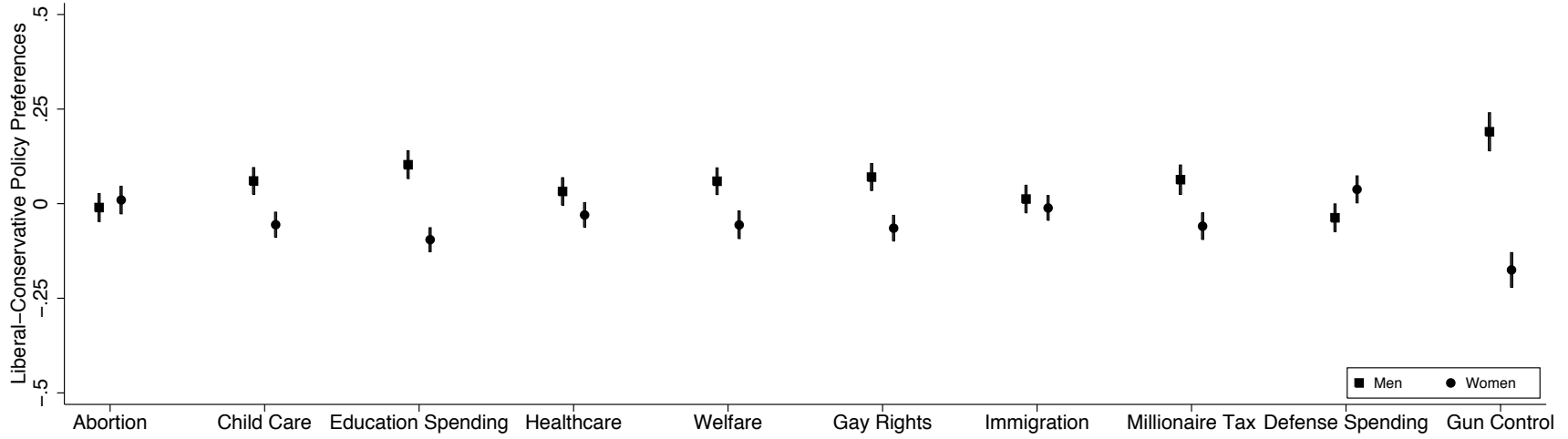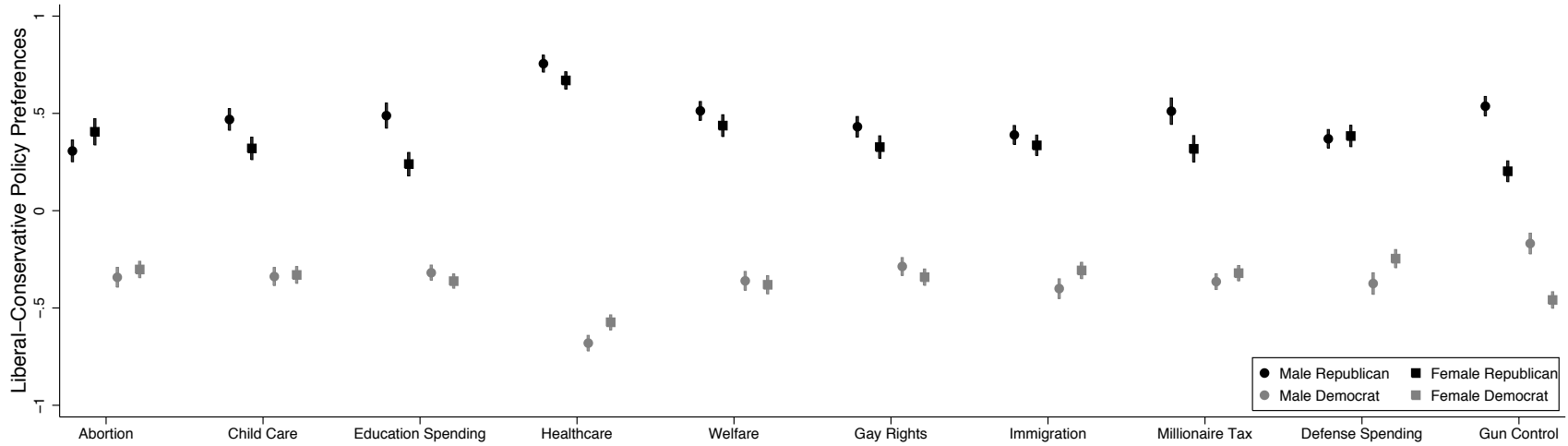## Figure 1a. Policy Preferences: by Gender

Figure 1b. Policy Preferences: by Respondent Party and Gender

Entries are weighted group means. The confidence intervals surrounding the mean values allow us to evaluate whether differences between conditions are significant at the 95% confidence level (Julious 2004).

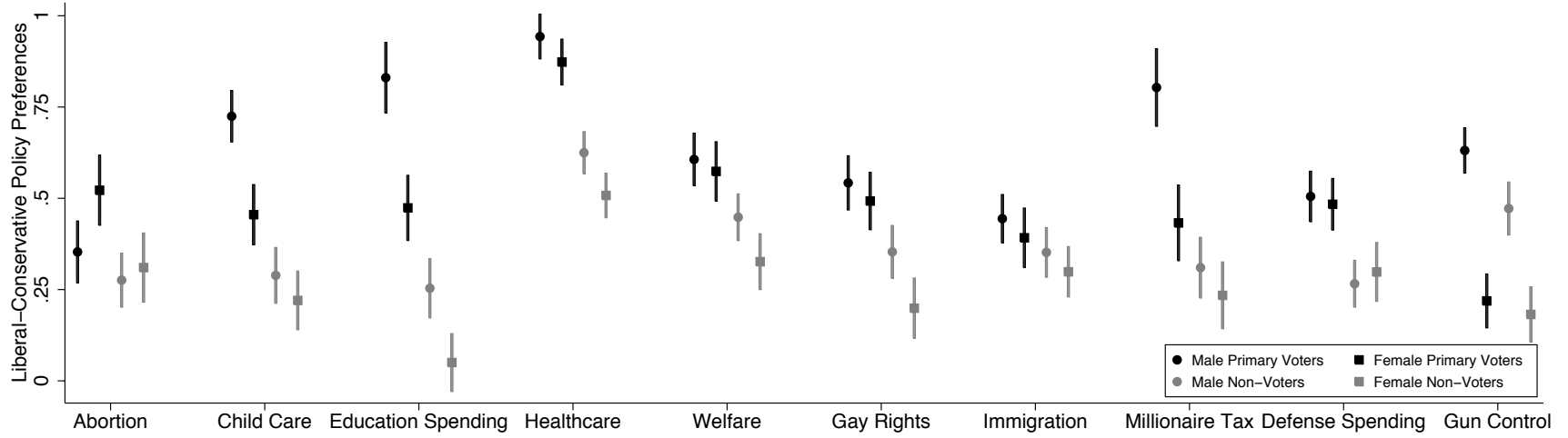Figure 2a. Policy Preferences: Republican Primary Voters and Non−Voters

Figure 2b. Policy Preferences: Democrat Primary Voters and Non−Voters
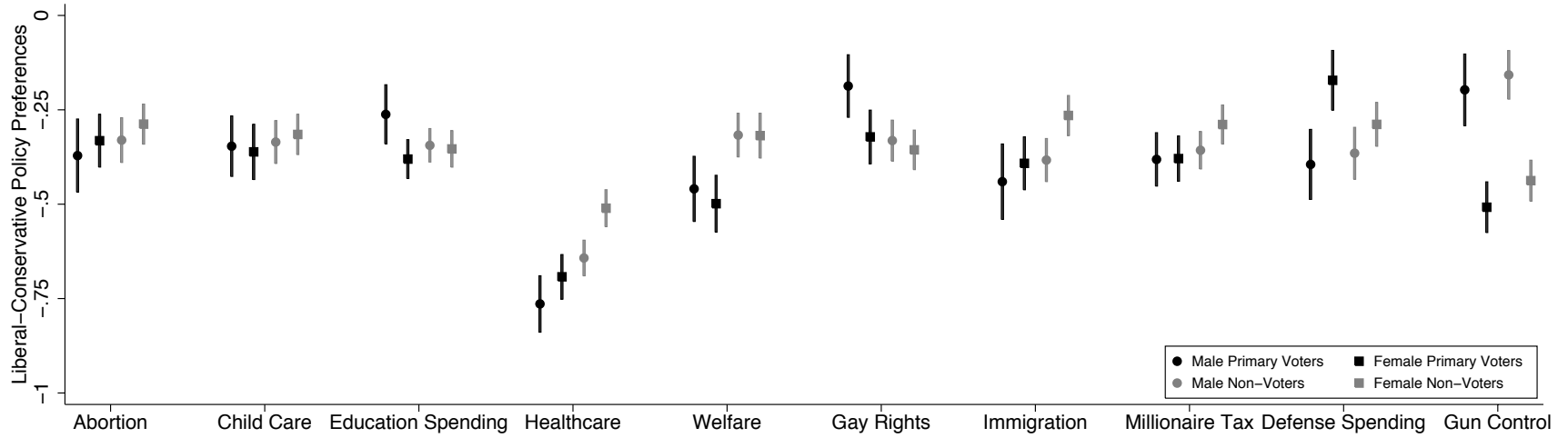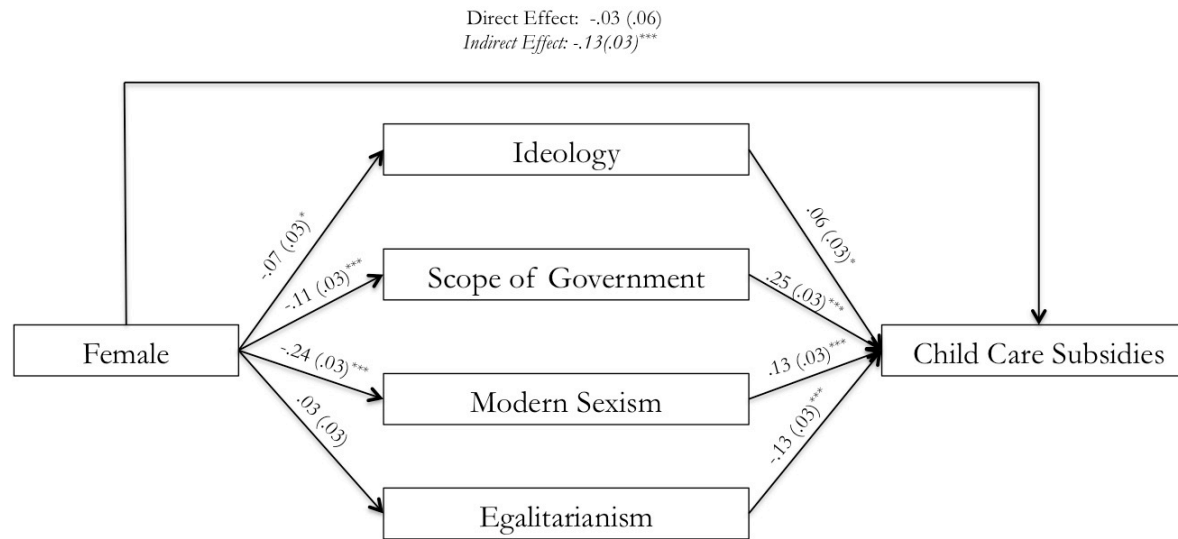
Figure 3. Example Mediation Model, Support for Subsidized Child Care among Republicans

Direct Effect: -.03 (.06)
*Indirect Effect: -.13(.03)****

Ideology

Scope of Government

Female

Modern Sexism

Child Care Subsidies

Egalitarianism

-.07 (.03)*

-.11 (.03)***

-.24 (.03)***

.03 (.03)

.06 (.03)*

.25 (.03)***

.13 (.03)***

-.13 (.03)***

Entries are maximum likelihood coefficients from a SEM evaluating the effects of multiple mediators between respondent gender and opposition to subsidized childcare. Ideology, scope of government, modern sexism, and attitudes toward childcare 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 socio-demographic controls included the models, for the purposes of highlighting the mediation mechanism tested here.