

**WORKING NINE TO FIVE:
ECONOMIC IMPACTS ON THE GENDER GAP IN MACRO POLITICS**

An Undergraduate Research Scholars Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

Working Nine to Five: Economic Impacts on the Gender Gap in Macro Politics. (May 2014)

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A difference in aggregate public opinion and policy preferences between men and women has long been assumed but rarely fully empirically tested. In this analysis, I look at multiple economic factors impacting men and women in similar, yet different ways, which lead to a dynamic policy preference gap between genders. I test the impact of economic differences created by careers in “gender divisive,” or male dominated and non-male dominated industries on the differences between men and women’s policy preferences, created as a variation of Stimson’s Policy Mood. Through analysis, men are shown as more reactive to certain indicators, including self-professed macro partisanship and changes in inflation, while women are more reactive to fluctuations in job security in non-male dominated industries. This implies while men are more reactive to changes in cost and self-professed ideology, women become more liberal as their perceived likelihood of needing government support increases, leading to an overall gap in policy preferences due to different stimulants.

DEDICATION

For Jim

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During the 2008 Democratic Presidential Primary, Hillary Clinton selected the song *Nine to Five*, from the 1980 movie of the same title, as one of her campaign theme songs. *Nine to Five* centered on the concept that women are limited in the advancement of their careers by men, and emphasizes a belief that working with women is often only considered a “step on the boss man’s ladder.”

The thought behind *Nine to Five* was considered the perfect concept on which Clinton could center her campaign as one of the first viable female presidential candidates in the United States. When considering this, one has to ask, is it possible Hillary Clinton realized the political impact the careers women hold make on the women themselves, and in turn, if these careers could actually impact whether she, a female Democratic Presidential candidate, could appeal to and persuade these women when she selected *Nine to Five* and the sentiment it conveys as one of her campaign themes?

The gender gap in policy mood which exhibits women as preferring more liberal policies than their male counterparts is overwhelmingly empirically uncharted territory. While politicians and television commentators have long been aware of a political gender gap and have used and discussed gender specific appeal methods for decades, political scientists have only recently begun to apply empirical analysis in order to understand this phenomenon of differences in policy preferences. While a significant amount of work has been done on gender gaps in

political participation, vote choice, and partisanship, a gender gap in actual policy preferences, or mood, has remained limited. While some recent research has shown women maintain more liberal policy preferences than their male counterparts, the amount of research on this issue is limited as to empirical analysis of the potential causes of this phenomenon. This article is written in order to help further offer theory as to some possible empirical explanations for the observed gender gap in policy preferences.

While there is the possibility for a multitude of potential causes of the gender gap in policy mood, economic issues are regularly considered driving factors behind public opinion and aggregate policy mood. Some argue women are more liberal than men because women are more likely to be in situations that are considered to be more economically vulnerable when compared to those of men (Kellstedt, Ramirez and Peterson 2010). In this article, I question if the phenomenon of economic vulnerability is actually a driving factor of the gender gap in policy preferences through an analysis of economic situation measured by perceived job security in male-dominated and non-male dominated industries in relation to male and female liberalism, or policy mood.

Studying the gender gap in liberalism modeled as a variation of Stimson's Policy Mood rather than relying on studying the gender gap in partisanship, political participation, or vote choice is important when studying what policies Americans actually prefer. Measuring the gap with a variable identifying the policy preferences of the American people provides a more conclusive insight into what the American people actually want from the federal government than partisanship or vote choice allows. Partisanship displays too narrow of a view on the wants of the

American people, due to its irregularity and the assumed blanket understanding of political preferences. Policy Mood, on the other hand, allows us to show the American people are more complex in their political views than simply identifying as a Republican or a Democrat. It allows for Americans to express different beliefs on different issues rather than relying on a party platform.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Policy Mood, the “shared feelings that move over time and circumstance,” in relation to policy, (Stimson 1999) provides a single measurement of the overarching “spirit of the age,” by which we can understand the American people’s wants and expectations of their federal government. Policy Mood provides a time-series measurement of American support of government programs on a liberal-conservative continuum. Using Stimson’s concept of Mood, we can empirically establish a liberalism gender gap and we can in turn further analyze the differences between men’s and women’s policy preferences over time.

Historically, women in the United States maintain stronger and more stable liberal policy preferences when compared to men, even during times when men’s preferences are more liberal than they have been prior (Kellstedt, Ramirez, and Peterson 2010). When comparing male and female policy mood, we see a demonstrated gap in policy preferences over time, leading to the question, “what is the cause of these differences?”

In the study of aggregate Policy Mood, two primary theories have been presented to the explanatory variables behind the gradual shifts in direction and level of Mood. Durr (1993) presents changes in economic expectations, or “consumer sentiment” as the causal mechanism behind changes in aggregate Policy Mood. For example, when the public anticipates a future with good economic times, greater support of more liberal policies like increased spending on welfare and nationalized healthcare is more likely. Conversely, when the public anticipates bad

economic times in the future, more conservative policies are supported, like lower government spending and increased tax cuts.

Wlezien's thermostatic theory argues Policy Mood is inversely related to policy changes, with conservative policies causing Policy Mood movement in a liberal direction and liberal policies causing Policy Mood movement in a conservative direction (Wlezien 1995). Wlezien's thermostatic theory expects people to constantly pursue an overall moderate policy stance, or a "comfortable temperature" mix of policies.

Page and Shapiro (1992) argue "practically all Americans are exposed to the same facts and ideals," leading citizens to "change [opinions] in the same direction and by the same amount." Based off this argument, we move to question why, if 1) men and women experience the same shifts in policy and 2) we expect similar reactions to the same policy stimulant, a liberalism gender gap exists. In order for a policy mood gender gap to exist, it is necessary that either women and men are exposed to significantly different stimulants and experiences throughout life in order to shape different political ideals, or women and men do not change opinions in the same direction by the same amount, or possibly even both.

Previous research shows that political gender gaps appear to be widening in certain areas like macro partisanship (Box-Steffensmeier, DeBouf, and Lin 2004) and ideology (Norrander and Wilcox 2008) while still having varying effects during election cycles (Manza and Brooks 1998). The gender gap in Policy Mood, shown in Figure 1, however, appears to behave differently than macro partisanship and ideology. In policy mood studies, men are shown to be more sensitive to

non-economic policies than women, while both men and women show identical directional reactions to changes in policy, but different degrees of reactions over time (Kellstedt, Peterson, and Ramirez 2010). Kellstedt, Peterson, and Ramirez argue men have a less stable Policy Mood than women, thus allowing women to be more liberal, more often.



Figure 1: Liberalism by Gender

While economic factors are commonly understood to be the explanatory force behind changes in policy mood, there are a number of differing expectations as to how each gender will react to shifts in economic outlook. Some expect women to be more supportive of liberal spending policies due to women having a greater risk of socioeconomic disadvantage (Carroll 1988). This

assumption implies women are more supportive of increased spending on social welfare and healthcare programs due to having a greater chance of utilizing the programs during their lifetime than men.

Alternatively, other research argues women are becoming more liberal than men not because they have a greater chance of utilizing social welfare, but because women are actually joining the workforce and improving their socioeconomic status, allowing them greater financial security (Edlund and Pande 2002). This theory is in agreement with Durr's theory of economic expectations, implying women are more likely to support a liberal policy preference due to a positive economic outlook as a result of increased employment levels and opportunities over time.

However, an increase in women's employment must be analyzed in a more complex way than the effect of a woman simply being employed versus being out of the workforce. Andersen argues women are employed by the government or in careers close to the government at a significantly higher rate than men (26.6% v 7.8% in 1992) and women as a whole were also more likely to vote for Bill Clinton (1999), implying employment closely associated with the government leads to more liberal policy views. While I do not believe one industry of employment accounts for a significant difference in policy mood, analyzing the employment industries of women compared to the employment industries of men will likely allow further insight.

A common belief in the study of partisan and mood gender gaps is that when making political decisions, women are more reliant on their emotions while men are more reliant on thought, which in turn leads to the Democratic Party being more appealing to women due to its softer nature (Burden 2008). Burden analyzed this phenomenon in *The Social Roots of the Partisan Gender Gap* (2008), arguing question wording has a significant impact on partisan beliefs for men and women. Burden found when women are asked questions regarding how they “feel” about an issue rather than what they “think” about an issue, women maintain political beliefs significantly more similar to men than what many political scientists initially believed (Burden 2008).

CHAPTER III

MODEL

In this analysis, I measure the impact of multiple economic factors on men and women's liberalism over time. In order to do so, I created a measurement of men's liberalism and women's liberalism, as well as measurements of job security, macro partisanship, inflation, and unemployment over time.

To create a measurement of liberalism, I replicated the policy spending preferences model used in Kellstedt, Peterson, and Ramirez's *The Macro Politics of a Gender Gap* (2010). The General Social Survey from 1973 to 2012, asked the question "We are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I'm going to name some of these problems, and for each one I'd like you to tell me whether you think we're spending too much money on it, too little money, or about the right amount," regarding a number of issues, including welfare, healthcare, the environment, education, and race. Using the data gathered from these questions, I established an overall measurement of American government spending preferences for males and females independently.

As expressed in Kellstedt, Peterson, and Ramirez (2010), it is not possible to use Stimson's (1999) original measurement of policy mood in order to measure the gender gap because:

- 1) many of the survey items are not available for disaggregation by gender; and 2) the scaling mechanism that Stimson (1999) used places each series on a unique metric, preventing direct comparisons between male and female policy mood...these measures are capturing much of

the same policy sentiment among men and women as Stimson's (1999) aggregate measure...[and] although the metrics are slightly different, the over-time movement in our series and the fully aggregated series are similar....Thus, it appears that our measures are capturing the same over-time movement among the public for more or less government spending. The original Mood series does show a little less movement due to differences in sample sizes and the use of an exponential smoother.

The independent variable of job security for male dominated and non-male dominated industries is taken from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' seasonally adjusted Mass Annual Layoff Statistics for each Occupational Industry. In order to specify gender dependent industries, the Bureau of Labor Statistics' women's employment data is used to create an indicator of male-dominated and non-male dominated fields, shown in Table 1. Any field which averages less than 40% women from 1973 to 2012 is classified as a "male-dominant" field. Once the "gender" of each industry is established, a measurement of Job security is derived from the average annual number of layoffs in male-dominated occupations and non-male-dominated occupations.

Table 1: Male and Female Dominated Industries

Male Dominated Fields	Non-Male Dominated Fields
Utilities	Retail Trade
Transportation and Warehousing	Information
Wholesale Trade	Financial
Non-Durable Goods	Education
Durable Goods	Professional and Business Services
Manufacturing	Health
Construction	Government
Mining and Logging	Other

A comparison of the job security per gender dominated industries, as shown in Figure 2, shows a significant difference between the likelihood of an employee in a male-dominated industry being laid off and the likelihood of an employee in a non-male dominated industry being laid off.

Through empirical analysis, I determine those employed in male-dominated industries are two to three times more likely to be laid off than those employed in non-male dominated industries, leading to the conclusion that women are significantly less likely to be directly affected by mass layoffs than men and therefore are in a position to have an increased sense of job security.

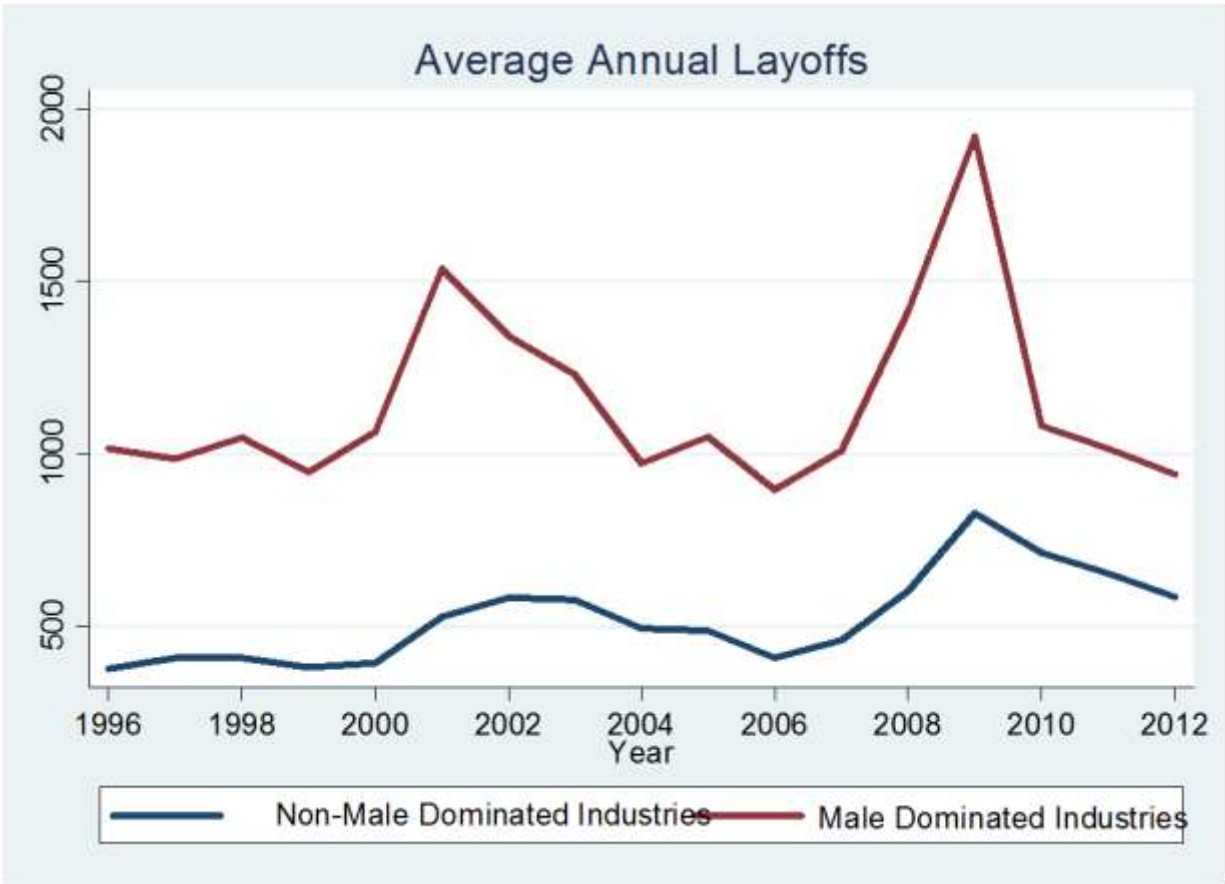


Figure 2: Annual Layoffs in Male and Non-Male Dominated Industries

The measurement of macro partisanship per gender was constructed using the General Social Survey question “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent, or what?” by bundling strong Democrats through Democratic leaners together and strong Republicans through Republican leaners together and establishing the percentage of self-identified partisans that identify with the Democratic party for males and females, respectively.

The measure of unemployment is created using the seasonally adjusted Unemployment Rate for ages 16 and up from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The unemployment rate is included as an

indicator of the overall annual economic environment for the United States. While the annual unemployment rate is not necessarily a strong indicator of likelihood of unemployment or a person's perception of their likelihood of becoming unemployed, it is representative of the universal measurement of the current economic climate.

My final variable, Consumer Price Index from the Bureau of Labor Statistics is included as an indicator of inflation perceived by Americans as individuals rather than the annual rate of inflation. While a person rarely recognizes a change in the numeric inflation rate as reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, a person is very likely to recognize a change in the price of an everyday product such as a gallon of milk or gasoline, making the Consumer Price Index a better measurement for inflation for this purpose.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

Using an Ordinary Least Squares regression, I modeled the impact of Men and Women's Job Security, Men and Women's Partisanship, Consumer Price Index, and Unemployment on men and women's liberalism, shown in Table 2. Model 1 shows Women's Liberalism to be positively correlated with the annual layoffs in non-male dominated industries, implying women become more supportive of liberal spending policies as layoffs in industries they're prominent in begin to experience layoffs and economic hardship. Additionally, women are likely to be more supportive of conservative spending policies during times of high unemployment, implying that while they are more likely to see layoffs themselves women want strong social spending whereas when the overall economic status of the United States is likely to experience hardship, women are less likely to support the same spending initiatives.

Using an identical model of Men's Liberalism, we observe similar reactions to each variable as women, but in general, in a more extreme fashion. Men display a smaller but still positive correlation with decreased job security and increased liberalism, implying they are still more likely to support liberal spending policies if there are mass layoffs taking place in male dominated industries, just not as much as women in similar situations.

Table 2: Regression Results

	Model 1	Model 2
	Women's Liberalism	Men's Liberalism
Job Security	.019*** (0.007)	.005*** (.002)
Macro Partisanship	-0.239 (.246)	-0.610** (.284)
Inflation	.083*** (.023)	.176*** (.042)
Unemployment	-2.400*** (.534)	-2.184*** (.350)
Constant	79.709*** (15.061)	76.358*** (9.324)
N	17	17
R ²	0.71	.70

Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

While men and women react similarly to each variable, men display greater reactions to macro partisanship, Consumer Price Index, and Unemployment than women. Women react more to the annual number of layoffs in female dominated occupations than men display in male dominated occupations. This implies while men and women are influenced similarly in identical situations, men and women react differently to different stimulus, thus producing a difference in political opinion.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

From my analysis, I interpret men and women react similarly when exposed to similar experiences, but not necessarily always to the same extent. With certain explanatory variables, men display a more extreme reaction than women, except in regards to the measurement of job security.

Women's liberalism is more likely to have a greater impact from a lack of job security, or increase in layoffs, in non-male dominated industries than men show in relation to male dominated fields. There is a possibility this is due to the rarity of layoffs in female dominated fields compared to male dominated fields. With men working in male dominated fields being approximately two to three times more likely to be laid off than those working in non-male dominated fields, it could be a difference in their perception of their economic experience that drives the difference in liberalism.

As displayed in Figure 2, Male Dominated Industries and Non-Male Dominated Industries traditionally experience mass layoffs at similar times. However, the average number of layoffs is expressively different, making layoffs in Non-Male Dominated Industries significantly more unlikely. Therefore, layoffs in these industries could be perceived as a sign of a greater economic downturn than layoffs in Male-Dominated Industries. Therefore, if women begin to see more layoffs in industries that traditionally don't experience layoffs which are also industries that women are traditionally more likely to be employed in, these layoffs could be a stronger

indicator of a woman's perception of job security than the same experience of a layoff to a man in a Male Dominated Industry. This greater reaction to a threat of economic insecurity could be the explanatory factor as to the difference in women's liberalism and men's liberalism.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Throughout this paper, I have sought to further understand the economic explanatory factors concerning the gap between men's and women's policy mood. In order to understand the gap, it was necessary to uncover a significant difference between the impact of the economic stimuli on men's liberalism and the same economic stimuli on women's liberalism. Once considering a number of variables, the differing impact of economic variables between men and women became clear.

Those employed in non-male dominated professions are less likely to be laid off than those employed in male dominated professions, therefore leading to women being more supportive of increased government spending policies.

At the same time, women's liberalism is more strongly tied to layoffs in non-male dominated industries, which can be contributed to the belief that one who anticipates needing government resources would be more likely to support more expansive government spending at that time.

Overall, while men and women react similarly to economic stimulants, the impact of the stimulant varies by gender, with women being more reactive to Job Security while men are more reactive to Macro partisanship. This can be interpreted as men differing more with their self-professed political ideology while women's macro partisanship is still inversely related but to a lesser extent.

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