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Is There a “Woman’s Perspective?”

An Exploration of Gender Differences Along Republican and Conservative Lines¹

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Abstract

Is there a distinct “woman’s perspective?” This paper argues that the answer is an emphatic yes. American National Election Study survey data are used to explore Republican and conservative women’s attitudes concerning social spending issues and religiosity. Most of the previous gender gap research focuses on gender differences in attitudes by examining gender shifts in political party identification and voting, but do not adequately address opinion differences along gender lines between groups that think of themselves as similar. This paper asserts that if men and women who classify themselves as both conservative and Republican exhibit distinct differences, evidence of a “woman’s perspective” is more convincing because the expectation is that there would be more similarity within these groups. Inferential statistical methods indicate that Republican and conservative women favor social spending more than men. Women also exhibit higher levels of religiosity. Furthermore, it is theoretically suggested that these differences manifest a diverging conceptualization of conservatism, with men viewing conservatism in economic terms while women conceptualize it in religiously based terms, resulting in the actualized behavior of value-based voting.

Introduction

Most of the previous research on the gender gap has primarily focused on the partisan divide (Baxter and Lansing 1983; Burris 1984; Francovic 1982; Gilens 1988; Klein 1985; Mansbridge 1985; Wirls 1986, Clark and Clark 1996, 1999, 2000). Some attribute this electoral and partisan gap to diverging issue positions and policy preferences (Wirls 1986; Goertzel 1983; Kaufman and Petrocik 1999; Conover 1988). While there are many gender gap theories that explain a partisan divide, these theories do not convincingly identify a “woman’s perspective.”

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By examining this phenomenon in a single party and within those who identify their ideology similarly, evidence of a “woman’s perspective” is more convincing. If there are significant differences between men and women who tend to think of themselves as alike ideologically and politically, then there must be some underlying difference. While much of the research does identify differences, most of it includes identifiers from both parties and this increases the likelihood of finding gender differences because the majority of women are liberal. Therefore, such samples are biased because they include both Republican and Democrat women. In other words, liberal women are over-represented because the samples include women from both sides of the partisan and ideological spectrum combined with men who are liberal and this leaves a significantly smaller proportion of conservative men, making it easier to identify differences.

While the findings in this paper do not contradict previous findings that women are predominantly more liberal in regards to social spending, they do provide stronger evidence of a “woman’s perspective” by focusing on groups wherein there is some expectation of similarities (Republican and conservative identifiers), so evidence of differences is more convincing. In addition, the differing levels of religiosity among Republican identifiers have not been highlighted in previous research. This paper theorizes that gender differences between Republican and conservative identifiers on social spending issues and religiosity lead to a differing conceptualization of conservatism. Republican men tend to view conservatism in economic terms while Republican women base their view in values associated with religion. This differing conceptualization leads to continued support of the Republican Party by both groups.

The Relevant Literature

In the early 1980s, political scientists as well as the popular media began to notice that men and women held divergent positions on certain issues and these positions were expressed in the voting booth. This divergence came to be known as “the gender gap.” It became evident with the outcome of the 1980 election that significant proportions of females preferred Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan. The conventional argument was that the Democratic Party was drawing more of the female vote because females were more liberal, and therefore, female allegiance was shifting to the Democratic Party (Clark and Clark 1999,2000; Dolan 1998). Wirls (1986) contends that the shifting party balance was in fact a result of the move of conservative voters away from the Democratic Party (see also, Kaufman and Petrocik 1999). The assertion is that men and women were moving away from liberal values, defecting from the Democratic Party in the process. The rates of defection were higher among men resulting in larger proportions of female Democrats. While the evidence in support of this argument is convincing, it does not attempt to measure the issue position and policy preference differences between the men and women that have either shifted towards the Republican Party or of those that were already Republican identifiers.

Kaufman and Petrocik (1999) concur with the assertion that the increasing disproportionality of men and women across partisan lines is a product of the changing partisanship of men rather than the assertion that women are becoming more liberal. By analyzing survey data from 1952 through 1996 they determined that opinions concerning

social welfare issues might be the central contributor to the partisan gender gap. The "attitude hypothesis," which states that the gender gap is due to differences in underlying political preferences and the "salience hypothesis," which states that men and women weigh issues differently, are tested and support for both is found. While this is compelling evidence of gender differences, evidence that shows gender differences concerning social spending issues and religiosity within a single party provides even stronger support for both of these hypotheses because it would be expected that identifiers of the same party would show more coalescence on issues, and if they do not the evidence is more striking.

In addition, Kaufman and Petrocik (1999) include both Democrats and Republicans in their analysis, and by doing so they increase the likelihood of finding gender differences. While their conclusion is accurate, illuminating differences that look specifically at Republicans and self-professed conservatives is more convincing of an attitude difference because it stacks the cards against the potential of finding differences. By making it more difficult to accept the hypothesis that there are differences the evidence is more convincing. Therefore, the actual evidence of attitude differences is more meaningful if the purpose is to illuminate gender differences solely, rather than to explain the partisan balance. If the goal is to establish that there are underlying gender differences or a "woman's perspective," then it is necessary to have stronger evidence.

Gilens (1988) argues that gender differences in presidential approval of Reagan can be attributed to diverging opinions on military spending and social welfare spending. He also argues that partisanship helps to explain approval of Reagan's job performance for both male and female Republicans. His analysis is problematic on two levels. First, he fails to consider alternative explanations that may have been driving females' approval of Reagan's job performance, such as personal characteristics or association with the moral values of the burgeoning Christian Right. Secondly, he controls for partisanship in several of his measures but does not do so in his assessment of gender differences concerning military spending and social welfare spending. Therefore, he fails to account for these differences on the Republican side. Illuminating these differences would potentially change his findings concerning approval of Reagan.

Goertzel (1983) addresses the differences in attitudes across socio-economic groups. He found that women in all socio-economic groups were less militaristic in their opinions than men, and that women in lower socio-economic groups were more anti-Reagan in their views. Burris (1984) concurs that women's anti-military views explain the greatest part of the gender gap, but asserts that the gap was greatest among higher socio-economic groups suggesting that the rise of the gender gap in 1980 was a result of a decline in turnout among minorities and the poor. Both Burris and Goertzel include all partisan identifiers in their analyses, which leads to a biased sample as described earlier and inflates the findings of gender differences. Burris looks directly at a vote differential as a result of demographics rather than opinions on issues, which differs from the approach of other researchers. Burris' findings indicated that there was indeed a larger proportional gap in the lower socio-economic groups, but because of their low turnout, the majority of the gap could be attributed to the higher socio-economic groups. Turnout can also have other implications because the gender gap may be exacerbated by the higher turnout of women as compared to men since the 1970s (Monk-Turner 1982). While turnout may be

a partial explanation of the partisan divide, it does not address attitudinal differences and therefore fails to recognize the effects of a potential “woman’s perspective” on the balance of the electorate.

Up to this point, the previous research discussed primarily addresses the gender differences that lead to a partisan division. Other research more directly addresses the concept of a “woman’s perspective” (Carroll 1988; Conover 1988; Mansbridge 1985; Cook and Wilcox 1991; Gidengil 1995) arguing that men and women think differently and this difference manifests in diverging political attitudes. Clark and Clark (1999) find evidence in support of the concept of a “woman’s perspective,” contending that there is a rise in women’s consciousness of feminism, their greater compassion for the less fortunate in society, and their cost-bearing or position of economic inequality that leads them to more directly recognize the potential benefits of governmental assistance. An examination of attitudinal differences within a single party and along ideological lines is useful for exploring these theories because by controlling for partisanship and ideology the theories could be more clearly examined. If men and women of like party identification and self-professed ideology hold different positions on issues the question is...why?

Conover (1988) also argues that the gap can be largely attributed to feminist women who support an equal role for women. Mansbridge (1985) finds the opposite, contending that female support for the ERA did not affect voting behavior. Conover (1988) asserts that the reason for differing opinions between males and females is due to an underlying “woman’s perspective” that encompasses an ethic of caring. Burns and Schumaker (1987, 1988) also support the idea that women are naturally more nurturing and this leads to their support of neighborhood security policies that will help them to protect their families. Gidengil (1995) expands the idea of the nurturing female providing evidence that women are more likely to consider public welfare and social programs when forming attitudes about market-based policies. It is possible that some of these nurturing characteristics could be associated with higher levels of religiosity.

Carroll (1988) also approaches inquiry into gender differences from the “woman’s perspective” angle proposing four hypotheses labeled “vulnerability,” “mobilization,” “autonomy,” and “nurturance.” Evidence in support of both an ethic of caring in the nurturance hypothesis, and the assertion that women are driven by self-interest in the vulnerability hypothesis are presented. The vulnerability hypothesis posits that women will support government programs because of their own disadvantaged positions. Others find that self-interest does exert influence if the issue is of relatively high salience (Tedin 1994; Sears and Citrin 1982).

Not all agree that there is a distinct “woman’s perspective.” Cook and Wilcox (1991) find that feminism is associated with distinctive values among men and women, and therefore, there is not a distinctive underlying “woman’s perspective.” Gender differences within the Republican Party challenge this assertion, simply because if the majority of women, regardless of party identification are liberal, and the majority of men are not, then the only other option is that there is a “man’s perspective.” Basic logic tells us that if there are only two groups- male and female- and males have a perspective, then

those who do not share their perspective must have one of their own, hence, the “woman’s perspective.”

Exhibition of an issue gap in the Republican Party and along ideological lines does not provide a reason for the gender difference on issues but it does suggest that there is some underlying difference driving the gap. If men and women identify with a party because of shared beliefs, but systematic gender variation on certain issues is still present, then there must be an underlying gender difference. The argument is that all of the disagreement, apparent in this literature review, about theories that try to get at the causation of gender differences could be more appropriately tested if approached by analyzing the differences within a single party and within groups that profess the same ideology. Simply, differences along these lines are more convincing because they are not expected.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This paper addresses three primary and sequential research questions: 1) *Is there truly a “woman’s perspective?”* 2) *And if so, does this divergence in attitudes along gender lines lead to a different conceptualization of conservatism?* And 3) *If so, does the Republican Party adequately address this differential, allowing them to secure their base of both males and females?* These three questions lead to a three-part theory. First, the theory is that evidence of attitudinal differences along gender lines among members of the same party and those who identify themselves with the same ideology is more convincing of a “woman’s perspective” than theories that seek to explain why women tend to favor the Democratic Party. If women who claim to be conservative are in fact liberal on many issues, this more strongly supports the premise of a distinct “woman’s perspective.” This offers a new perspective on the choosing of a sample when exploring gender differences, giving a new starting point for more research that tries to get at the underlying causation of a “woman’s perspective.” Next, it is theorized that due to these differing attitudes, male and female Republicans conceptualize conservatism differently. And finally, the assertion is that the pursuit of a conservative social spending agenda complemented with the public presentation of a religiously based agenda by the Republican Party in government allows them to secure the vote of their differing male and female base.

In order to answer these questions and provide support to the theory, a series of hypotheses are proposed and tested. First of all it must be established that Republican women and self-professed conservative women do in fact differ from Republican men and self-professed conservative men on many issues (particularly social spending issues), exhibiting more liberal positions. Therefore, a series of government spending hypotheses are proposed. Although the hypotheses stated include both Republicans and self-professed conservatives each group will be tested separately. The hypotheses are as follows:

H₁. *Among Republicans and self-professed conservatives, women are more likely than men to identify social welfare as the most important problem facing the country.*

H₂. *Among Republicans and self-professed conservatives, women are more likely than men to support increased school spending.*

H₃. *Among Republicans and self-professed conservatives, women are more likely than men to support increased government spending for more government services.*

H₄. *Among Republicans, women are more likely than men to attend church regularly.*

H₅. *Among Republicans, women are more likely than men to believe that the Bible is God's word.*

H₆. *Among Republicans, women are more likely than men to claim a great deal of religious guidance in their day to day lives.*

H₇. *Among Republicans, women are more likely than men to claim religion as an important part of their lives.*

The tests of the first set of hypotheses are intended to provide support for the first part of the theory- there is a “woman’s perspective.” The next set of hypotheses are intended to address both the second and third questions: Does this divergence in attitudes along gender lines lead to a different conceptualization of conservatism, and if so, does the Republican Party adequately address this differential, allowing them to secure their base of both males and females? The hypotheses are as follows:

H₈. *Self-identified Republican men and women consistently vote Republican at proportions in excess of 60%.*

H₉. *Those who identify themselves as Republican are likely to identify themselves as conservative.*

H₁₀. *Among Republicans, women are more likely than men to express negative feelings about big business.*

H₁₁. *Among Republicans, men are more likely than women to express negative feelings in regards to Protestants.*

In the next section, the data and methods used to test the hypotheses and provide support to the basic premises of the paper will be described. This description will include a summary of how the indicators necessary to test these hypotheses were measured.

Data and Methods

Data

The data come from the 1968, 1978, 1988, and 1998 American National Elections Studies.² This survey instrument was selected because it contains sufficient indicators of gender, partisanship, social spending issues, attitudes about business and religious groups, and religiosity. These years were chosen because they represent periods in time that include two presidential election years and two midterm election years. By including off presidential election years, short-term forces associated with presidential campaigns that may influence the findings are controlled. These data were made available through the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research. These data were

² For the remainder of the paper, the data including the years 1968, 1978, 1988, and 1998 will be referred to as 1968-1998.

filtered to only include Republican identifiers and conservative identifiers. Only these identifiers were included in the tests because previous research indicated that women were more liberal, and therefore, the logic of approaching the topic from the conservative side seemed more appropriate. Evidence of a true “woman’s perspective” is more convincing by examining women who classify themselves as Republican and conservative while holding liberal positions on social spending issues. Because the literature indicates that women are more liberal than men regarding social spending issues, it is unlikely that women who categorize themselves as liberal will actually be conservative on social spending issues because the contention is that they categorize themselves as liberal because of their position on issues.

Because the data for the various samples come from different years and the sampling frame varies for many of the tested relationships the sample sizes vary. Some of the indicators were not available for 1968, 1978, 1988, and 1998, so this varied the sample sizes for some of the tests. It would have been preferable to use the same indicators across time for all of the variables but this was not possible because they were not all available in these data.

Indicators

Gender is measured simply by the interviewer’s identification of the sex of the respondents and then coded male-0 and female-1. Party identification is measured using a 7-point scale wherein Republican leaners, weak Republicans, and strong Republicans were coded as 4 -7 respectively. All of those coded 4 -7 were included in each test relating to party identification. Ideology was also measured on a 7-point scale wherein slightly conservative, conservative, and extremely conservative were also coded as 4 – 7 respectively. Each of these categories were included in the samples for the appropriate tests.

The most important national problem was measured by responses to an indicator that asked the respondent to identify what they thought was the most important national problem. The responses were then put into categories that included agriculture, economics, foreign affairs and national defense, government functioning, labor issues, natural resources, public order, racial problems, and social welfare. Each of these responses is coded 1-9. The gender relationship with this variable was tested across time from 1968 to 1998. The sample size is 2,367 for the Republican identifier sample and 2,714 for the conservative sample.

Support for school spending is measured by their responses to the following question: “Should federal spending be increased, decreased, or kept about the same (concerning public schools)?” The increased response was coded as 1, the no change response as 2, and the decreased or entirely cut out response as 3. This variable was measured using data from 1988 because that was the only year the question was asked. The sample size is 838 for the Republican identifier sample and 1,219 for the conservative sample.

Support for increased government spending with more services or decreased spending with fewer services was measured on a 7-point scale with decreased spending and fewer services categorized on the scale as 1 and increased spending with more services as 7.

The respondents were asked to rate themselves on this scale. This variable was measured using data from 1988 and 1998 because those are the years the question was asked. The sample size is 1,169 for the Republican identifier sample and 1,508 for the conservative sample.

Party of vote choice was measured with two indicators. Respondents were asked which party's candidate they supported for both their respective senatorial and congressional campaigns. These data included Republican identifiers and a combination of 1968-1998. The sample sizes were 1,718 for the combined 1968-1998 party of congressional vote choice test and 1,290 for the combined 1968-1998 party of senatorial vote choice test.

Church attendance was measured using responses to the following survey question: "Thinking about your life these days, do you ever attend religious services, apart from occasional weddings, baptisms or funerals? (IF YES:) Do you go to religious services every week, almost every week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, or never?" The responses were then coded with 1 being every week, 2 almost every week, and up to 5 being never. Those without religious preference were coded as 7. This indicator was measured using data from 1968-1998. The sample size is 2,077.

The authority of the Bible was measured by asking the respondents to choose which of the following statements best summarizes their view of the Bible: "1) The Bible is God's word and all it says is true, 2) The Bible was written by men inspired by God but it contains some human errors, 3) The Bible is a good book because it was written by wise men, but God had nothing to do with it, and 4) The Bible was written by men who lived so long ago that it is worth very little today." Those who did not know were coded as 0. These data are from 1988 with a sample size of 1,223.

The importance of religion to the respondent was simply measured by asking them if religion was an important part of their lives. An affirmative response was coded as 1; a negative response was coded as 2; and no response as a 0. The level of religious guidance for respondents was measured by asking them if they were guided by religion in their day-to-day lives. Some guidance was coded as a 1, quite a bit of guidance was coded as a 2, a great deal of guidance as a 3, and no importance as a 5. Both importance and guidance of religion were included in 1988-1998 with a sample size of 1,227.

Attitudes about business and religious groups were measured using two indicators in the form of feeling thermometers. Respondents were read an opening statement about how certain groups try to influence government and were then asked to place how they feel about these groups on a feeling thermometer that ranges from 0 to 100 with 50 indicating that the respondent felt neither warm nor cold toward the group. The two groups used were big business and Protestants. Big business was chosen because it reflects the respondents' orientation toward traditional laissez-faire conceptualizations of conservatism and Protestants were chosen to get at religiously based orientations toward conservatism. The big business indicator was available for 1968 and 1988 with a sample size of 1,246, and the Protestant thermometer was available only in 1968 with a sample size of 512.

It was not possible to use all of the same indicators for each year in the sample because they were not available in these data. This is not problematic because it is not the purpose of this paper to show the fluctuations of gender attitudes about a specific variable over time, but rather to survey the gender attitudinal differences at different points in time. While all of the indicators do not cover the span of time from 1968-1998, there are enough related indicators at different points in time to suggest that the differences have been consistent over this time period.

Methods

The methodological framework for this paper consists of a series of null hypotheses tests combined with a descriptive statistics assessment, a Pearson's correlation test, and a qualitative assessment. This framework is suitable to establish the argument that there is a gender gap within the Republican Party and among conservative identifiers because it illuminates the significance of gender differences that exist, while allowing some contextual support through a qualitative assessment of the parties' positions. It is asserted that gender differences in combination with Republican Party agenda are the reason that both male and female Republican identifiers continue to vote Republican. The theory is that these females continue to vote Republican because they believe that the Republican Party is more in line with their religious values than is the Democratic Party; and the males continue to vote Republican because they believe the party is the best available representative of their economic positions. This is not to imply that males and females do not consider both religious values and economics, but rather that the saliency of each differs across gender. An assessment of both the Republican and Democratic Party platforms will provide support for these assertions. This is not to imply that all candidates pursue an agenda that is congruent with their respective party platforms, but rather to suggest that a general flavor for the parties' and its members' positions on social spending issues and religious agendas can be ascertained.

A descriptive analysis will be offered to assess the relationship between both Republicans and conservatives concerning the identification of national problems. An independent samples t-test as well as a descriptive analysis is utilized to determine the significance of the relationship between male and female Republican identifiers as well as conservative identifiers and the respondents' support for school spending and support for government spending versus government services. Only Republican identifiers were tested for religiosity differences, also using an independent samples t-test, because the argument is that Republicans continue to vote Republican because they associate these values with the Republican Party, not that conservatives continue to vote Republican. The test for vote choice was simply tested by a crude but sufficient mathematical model. If the female Republican weak identifiers vote Republican in excess of 60%, then H_8 that *self-identified Republican men and women consistently vote Republican at proportions in excess of 60%* can be accepted. While this threshold is arbitrary it is sufficiently high to support the theory.

Furthermore, it is suggested that male and female Republicans conceptualize conservatism differently. A Pearson's correlation test is employed to ascertain whether or not those who are self-professed conservatives also identify with the Republican Party at significant rates. The argument is that if those who classify themselves as conservative

predominately identify with the Republican Party but vastly differ on issues associated with conservatism, such as economic conservatism and religious conservatism, it is likely that they conceptualize conservatism differently. If they conceptualize conservatism differently, it is rational for them to continue to vote Republican. Their different conceptualizations of conservatism, framed within the logic of this argument, are further tested using an independent samples t-test for differences in attitudes about big business and Protestants. The test is intended to illuminate the theory that women think of conservatism in moral terms while men think of it in economic terms.

Findings

1968-1998 National Problem

The descriptive statistics in *Table I* concerning national problems reveal some important gender differences. Both men and women identify economics as the largest problem, but men identify this problem at a significantly higher rate than do women. While 45.2% of the male Republican respondents identify economics as the biggest national problem, only 37.8% of the females Republicans agree. 52.4% of the male conservative respondents identify economics as the biggest national problem, and only 42.9% of the female conservatives agree. Also, while only 12.7% of the male respondents think that social welfare is the biggest national problem, 16.6% of the females believe this to be the biggest national problem. Likewise, while only 15.1% of the male respondents think that social welfare is the biggest national problem, 23.5% of the females believe this to be the biggest national problem.

**Table I- What is the most important national problem?
Republicans and Conservatives**

	Ag	Eco	F/Aff	Go/func	Labor	Nat/Res	Order	Race	Welfare	Total
Male Rep%	.6 (7)	45.2 (503)	17.4 (193)	5.4 (60)	.3 (3)	1.3 (15)	14.9 (166)	2.2 (24)	12.7 (141)	100% (1112)
Fem Rep%	.3 (4)	37.8 (470)	19.2 (241)	3.8 (48)	.2 (3)	2.5 (32)	17.9 (225)	1.9 (24)	16.6 (208)	100% (1255)
Total N	11	973	434	108	6	47	391	48	349	2367
Male Con%	.7 (8)	52.4 (637)	10.0 (121)	5.3 (65)	.4 (5)	1.6 (19)	13.0 (158)	1.5 (18)	15.1 (184)	100% (1215)
Fem Con%	.5 (8)	42.9 (643)	8.5 (127)	3.0 (45)	.3 (4)	2.1 (31)	18.3 (274)	.9 (14)	23.5 (353)	100% (1499)
Total N	16	1280	248	110	9	50	432	32	537	2714

Source: 1968,1978,1988, and 1998 American National Election Study (all Republican and conservative identifiers only). Total N within gender in parentheses.

These descriptive statistics allow us to accept H_1 that *among Republicans and self-professed conservatives, women are more likely than men to identify social welfare as the most important problem facing the country.* While these descriptive statistics do not indicate directional positions on these issues, they do show across the board that men and

women are prioritizing different issues. These numbers may not seem that large at first, but if you consider the fact that an election can be won by these slim margins and that the sample size is over 2000 then these numbers clearly possess significance. While women did not name social welfare as the leading concern of the nation, they did rank it highly and significantly different than did the males.

1988 School Spending

The descriptive statistics indicate that while a majority of both males and females support increased school spending, the female Republican identifiers are more in favor of increasing public school spending than are the male identifiers, as are the conservatives. As can be seen in *Table II*, 57.2% of the female Republicans favor increasing school spending while only 51.8% of males favor increasing spending. 62.9% of the female conservatives favor increasing spending while only 57.9% of the males favor increasing school spending. *Graph I* and *Graph II* provide a good visual representation of the differences.

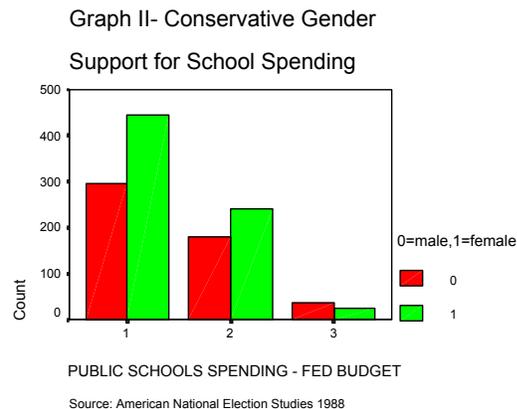
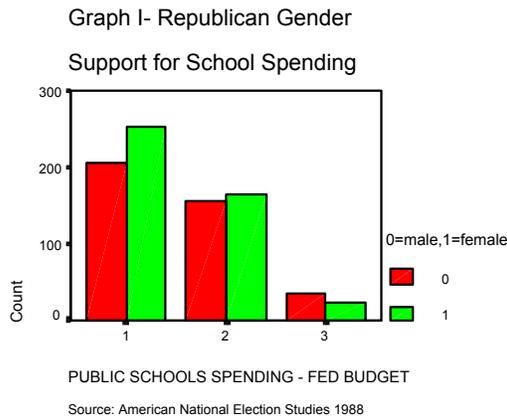


Table II- Gender and Public School Spending

	Increase Spending	No Change in Spending	Decrease Spending	Total
Male % Republican	51.8% (205)	39.4% (156)	8.8% (35)	100.0% (396)
Female % Republican	57.2% (253)	37.3% (373)	5.4% (24)	100.0% (442)
Total N Respondents	458	321	59	838
Male % Conservative	57.9% (296)	35.0% (179)	7.0% (36)	100.0% 511
Female % Conservative	62.9% (445)	33.9% (240)	3.2% (23)	100.0% 708

Female % Republican	7.8% (46)	9.4% (55)	18.9% (111)	32.2% (9189)	15.7% (92)	9.5% (56)	6.5% (38)	100.0% (587)
Total N Respondents	103	172	253	329	164	85	63	1169
<hr/>								
Male % Conservative	9.3% (65)	15.9% (111)	20.6% (144)	25.0% (175)	15.0% (105)	7.0% (49)	7.2% (50)	100.0% (699)
Female % Conservative	8.0% (65)	9.3% (75)	15.5% (125)	27.2% (220)	15.7% (127)	11.6% (94)	12.7% (103)	100.0% (809)
Total N Respondents	130	186	269	395	232	143	153	1508
<hr/>								
Independent Samples T-Test						Standard Error Diff	95% Low	CI Upper
	F	t	df	Sig	Mean Diff			
Rep 7pt Gov Services/Spending	1.571	-5.78	1167	.000	-.52	.08	-.69	-.34
Cons 7pt Gov Services/Spending	1.271	-5.60	1506	.000	-.49	.08	-.66	-.32

Source: 1988 and 1998 American National Election Study (Republican and conservative identifiers only). Total N within gender in parentheses. Equal Variances assumed in the t-tests, Sig (2-tailed).

A combination of the descriptive statistics and the independent samples t-test also contained in *Table III* allows us to accept H_3 that *among Republicans and self-professed conservatives, women are more likely than men to support increased government spending for more government services*. The t-statistic for both conservatives and Republicans is high indicating that there is a significant difference between the mean response of men and women as can be seen in the p-value of less than .001 for Republicans and for the conservatives. We can be 95% confident that the difference between the means for each of these categories is not 0. There is strong evidence against the null hypothesis that there is no difference.

Religiosity

The indicators of religiosity that include church attendance, authority of the Bible, personal religious guidance, and the importance of religion in the respondents' lives are utilized to test H_4 that *among Republicans, women are more likely than men to attend church regularly*, H_5 that *among Republicans, women are more likely than men to believe that the Bible is God's word*, H_6 that *among Republicans, women are more likely than men to claim a great deal of religious guidance in their day to day lives*, and H_7 that *among Republicans, women are more likely than men to claim religion as an important part of their lives*.

As evidenced in *Table IV*, there are some stark differences in religiosity between Republican men and women. Women show significantly higher levels across all four indicators. 46.3% of the Republican women in the sample claim to attend church every week or almost every week, while only 33% of the males claim that they attend church every week or almost every week. Only 30.7% of the men in the sample say that they get a great deal of guidance from their religion while 43% of the women say they get a great deal of guidance. Women also say that the Bible is God’s word, and that religion is an important part of their life, at a significantly higher proportion than do men. These descriptive statistics clearly indicate a gender difference within the Republican Party.

The t-statistic is high across all four religiosity measures indicating that there is a significant difference between the mean response of Republican men and Republican women across all four categories (*Table IV*). We can be 95% confident that the difference between the means for each of these categories is not 0. There is strong evidence against the null hypothesis that there is no difference, as can be seen in the p-values of less than .001 for church attendance, authority of the Bible, and the importance of religion. The p-value is also significant for the religious guidance test at .022. These t-tests in combination with the descriptive statistics allow us to accept **H₄** that *among Republicans, women are more likely than men to attend church regularly*, **H₅** that *among Republicans, women are more likely than men to believe that the Bible is God’s word*, **H₆** that *among Republicans, women are more likely than men to claim a great deal of religious guidance in their day to day lives*, and **H₇** that *among Republicans, women are more likely than men to claim religion as an important part of their lives*.

Table IV- Religiosity Indicators by Gender and Republican

	Church Attendance Every week and Almost every week	Authority of Bible God’s word/all true	Personal Religious Guidance- a great deal	Religion is an important part of Life				
Republican Male %	33.5 % (321)	41.4 % (237)	30.7% (180)	70.9 % (416)				
Republican Female %	46.3 % (518)	54.0 % (351)	43.0% (275)	82.7 % (529)				
Total N In Sample	2077	1223	1227	1227				
Independent Samples T-Test	F	t	df	Sig	Mean Diff	Standard Error Diff	95% Lower	CI Upper
Church Attendance	.548	7.019	2075	.000	.53	.07	.38	.67
Authority of the Bible	.194	4.568	1221	.000	.17	.03	.09	.24
Guidance from Religion	28.615	2.299	1225	.022	.18	.07	.02	.33
Importance of Religion	99.124	4.947	1225	.000	.12	.02	.07	.16

Source: American National Election Studies 1968-1998 (all Republican identifiers). Percentage refers to the number of respondents within each category by gender. The N number of respondents within each category by gender is in parentheses. Equal variance is assumed in the t-test, Sig (2-tailed).

Social Spending Vs Religiosity

In order to provide support for assertions that the Republican Party pursues a social spending agenda that is not congruent with its female constituency, while also creating a public image that is in accordance with their religious values, it is necessary to examine the party's positions. Republican Party positions can be extracted from past platforms and member agendas. The Republican Party Platform of 1996 and 2000 both reveal the clear distinction between their agenda and their female constituencies' preferences concerning social spending. Their 1996 platform, as does their 2000 platform, repeatedly refers to local control of schools,³ which in turn calls for lowering the amount of federal dollars funneled into the public school system. This agenda favors their male constituency.

The Republican agenda to cut government spending and decrease the size of the bureaucracy is not a new one. Nixon also made campaign promises to cut spending. Oddly enough, Nixon's administration reigned during the highest growth in domestic spending over the previous one hundred years (Steuerle and Mermin 2002). George Bush, Sr. reigned during the fifth highest growth of domestic spending in the last 100 years (Steuerle and Mermin 2002). While these Presidents did make campaign promises to lower spending, Ronald Reagan performed closer to expectations. Domestic spending fell by two percent of GDP, which is the largest drop of all 20th-century administrations other than that of FDR (Steuerle and Mermin 2002), but military spending went up significantly during the Reagan years. These inconsistencies of government spending and campaign promises (Nixon and Bush) must be qualified. They both governed in an era of divided government, facing congressional opposition.

While the Republican Party has pursued an agenda of cutting back the size of government, it has also been associated with the Christian Right since the 1980s, creating an appeal for their female constituency (Green, Guth, and Hill 1993; Jelen 1992 and 1993; Green and Guth 1988; Miller and Wattenberg 1984). Green, Guth, and Hill (1993) find that from 1978-1988 the activism of the Christian Right greatly increased and they became an integrated part of the Republican Party. Considering that the Christian Right is not only a dominant force in the Republican Party, but an actual functioning part of the party, provides ample reason for those with high levels of religiosity to be attracted to the Republican Party. Miller and Wattenberg (1984) suggest that congressional election outcomes are greatly impacted by the high turnout of Christian Right supporters in favor of the Republican Party. While many of the supporters of the Republican Party are attracted to the party for reasons other than religious connections, those who clearly

³ Platforms are available at <http://www.rnc.org/GOPInfo/Platform/2000platform3> and <http://www.rnc.org/2000/96platform6>.

indicate high levels of religiosity are essential to Republican success. If the Republican Party were to split from the Christian Right, these supporters may defect as well.

On the other hand, the Democratic Party does very little to win these voters over, possibly in fear of alienating loyal partisan voters. The Democratic Party platform of 2000, which is substantially longer than that of the Republicans, only mentions religion in one sentence, where it calls for providing grants to faith-based organizations to provide services to their communities.⁴ In addition, Bill Bradley, in his bid for the 2000 presidential nomination, openly refused to disclose any information regarding his own personal religious beliefs in a Democratic presidential debate. This is quite a contrast to George W. Bush's open declaration. The point is that the Democratic Party is not publicized as a party driven by religious values. While the Republican Party is publicized as a party in support of small government, it clearly also is recognized by the public as the party of the Christian Right. The theory is that this allows the party to secure the votes of both people who prioritize their religious values, and those who prioritize domestic economic preferences. The descriptive and inferential statistics up to this point have supported the theory that Republican and conservative men largely prioritize their economic preferences and the Republican women largely make up those who prioritize their religious values. The next question is simply, are these men and women consistently providing support to Republican candidates at the voting booth? How is the Republican Party addressing these differences? And, how are they maintaining consistent support from Republican men and women?

Vote Choice

The vote choice indicators are intended to test H_8 that *self-identified Republican men and women consistently vote Republican at proportions in excess of 60%*. High levels of party loyalty (in excess of 60%) provide support to this hypothesis. Consistent vote choice for Senatorial and Congressional candidates provides support for the assertion that Republican men and women are not significantly defecting from the Republican Party.

**Table V- Male and Female Vote Choice
by Party of Senatorial and Congressional Choice**

	Democratic Senatorial Choice	Republican Senatorial Choice	Total %	Democratic Congressional Choice	Republican Congressional Choice	Total %
% Male Republicans	21.8 % (135)	78.2 % (485)	100% (620)	23.1 % (187)	76.9 % (624)	100% (811)
% Female Republicans	19.4% (130)	80.6% (540)	100% (670)	22.2% (201)	77.8% (706)	100% (907)
Total N	265	1025	1290	388	1330	1718

Total N within gender in parentheses.

Source: 1968-1998 American National Election Study (all Republican identifiers).

⁴ Platform available at <http://www.democrats.org/issues/platform/platform.html>.

As evident in the descriptives provided in *Table V*, self-identified male and female partisans choose candidates of their respective parties at an extremely high rate. Each defect at rates no higher than 23.1%. The men vote for Republican candidates for Senate and Congressional races at an aggregated rate of 78.2 % and 76.9 % respectively, and the women at an aggregated rate of 80.6% and 77.8%, allowing us to accept **H₈** that *self-identified Republican men and women consistently vote Republican at proportions in excess of 60%*.

Conservatism Conceptualized

While just showing that these men and women continue to vote Republican regardless of their differences in social spending attitudes and levels of religiosity does not allow us to definitively make the leap that the reason that they continue to vote Republican is because of a differing conceptualization of conservatism, it does provide support to the premise of a “woman’s perspective.” It is logical that if the Republican Party presents and pursues a conservative agenda concerning both social spending issues and religious issues, and these men and women classify themselves as conservative they may be conceptualizing conservatism in different ways. The assertion herein is that the men tend to think of conservatism in economic terms and the women tend to think of it in terms of moral values. Before addressing this assertion, it is necessary to show that these men and women who identify themselves as Republican also identify themselves as conservative at significant rates. The Pearson’s correlation test in *Table VI* indicates support for **H₉** that *those who identify themselves as Republican are likely to identify themselves as conservative*. Because there is a direct correlation between identifying with the Republican Party and identifying as a conservative, and Republican men and women differ on social spending and religiosity but consistently vote for the conservative party, it is likely that they conceptualize conservatism differently. Some of the results of this diverging conceptualization are ascertained by comparing feelings about big business and Protestants along gender lines.

Table VI - Pearson’s Correlation of Republican Party ID and Conservatism

	Republican Party ID	Self-Professed Conservatism
Republican Party ID	1.000 N (3167)	.217** N (2088)
Self-Professed Conservatism	.217** N (2088)	1.000 N (2088)

Source: American National Election Studies 1968-1998

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The descriptive statistics and t-tests in *Table VII* are intended to provide support for **H₁₀** that *among Republicans, women are more likely than men to express negative feelings about big business* and **H₁₁** that *among Republicans, men are more likely than women to express negative feelings in regards to Protestants*. In doing so, support is provided to the premise that male and female Republicans conceptualize conservatism

differently. These statistics do not establish causality, but they clearly indicate the actualization of diverging attitudes as a result of a systematic underlying difference. Different conceptualizations lead to different attitudes. The descriptive statistics clearly indicate that Republican women have better feelings about Protestants and worse feelings about big business than do Republican men. Approximately fifty-two percent of the female respondents are “cool” towards business on the feeling thermometer in regards to big business, while only 40.7% of the males rank lower than fifty on the feeling thermometer. Both male and female Republicans feel warmly towards Protestants. Neither of the groups register in great numbers below 50 concerning feelings about Protestants, but regardless, nearly 6% more of the men in the sample express a view of Protestants in the form of the feeling thermometer lower than 50.

Table VII- Conceptualizations of Conservatism

	Big Business Thermometer			Protestants Thermometer		
	50 or lower	Higher than 50	Total	50 or lower	Higher than 50	Total
Male % Rep	40.7 (243)	59.3 (353)	100% (596)	22.3 (54)	77.7 (187)	100% (241)
Female % Rep	52.6 (341)	47.4 (309)	100% (650)	16.7 (45)	83.3 (226)	100% (271)
Total N	584	309	1246	99	413	512

Independent Samples T-Test					Mean Diff	Standard Error Diff	95% CI	
	F	T	df	Sig			Lower	Upper
Big Business Thermometer	0.059	1.853	1244	.064	2.05	1.11	-.12	4.22
Protestant Thermometer	4.961	-2.013	510	.045	-3.15	1.57	-6.23	-.08

Source: American National Election Studies 1968 and 1988 for the big business statistics and 1998 (all Republican identifiers). Percentage refers to the number of respondents within each category by gender. The N number of respondents within each category by gender is in parentheses. Equal variance is assumed in the t-test, Sig (2-tailed).

The t-statistic is high for the Protestant thermometer and relatively high for the big business thermometer indicating that there is a significant difference between the mean response of men and women. The p-value of .064 for the big business thermometer test is not significant at a .05 alpha level but it is significant at the .10 level. We can be 90% confident that the difference between the mean for this category is not 0. There is strong evidence against the null hypothesis that there is no difference between the mean feeling thermometer score for men and women concerning feelings about Protestants with a p-value of .045 and a confidence interval bounded away from 0. A combination of the descriptive statistics and t-test provides moderate support for H_{10} that *among Republicans, women are more likely than men to express negative feelings about big business*. There is support for H_{11} that *among Republicans, men are more likely than women to express negative feelings in regards to Protestants*. Men are a little more likely

than women to express negative feelings towards Protestants. The Republican Party manages to address both the male and female issues, and in doing so, appeal to their differing conceptualization of conservatism. The differences between Republican and conservative men and women regarding social spending attitudes, religiosity, and feelings about Protestants and big business suggest that men view conservatism differently, predominately in economic terms, and women tend to conceptualize it in religious terms.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to test theories asserting that women are generally more religious, and also more liberal than men concerning social issues and in doing so provide support to the theory that there is in fact a “woman’s perspective.” Previous research primarily focused on the shifting two-party gender balance, while this research focuses only on the Republican Party and those who identify themselves as conservatives. By focusing only on groups of people who think of themselves as similar in some major regards, such as partisanship and ideology, evidence of underlying gender differences is more convincing. Tests of the relationship between gender and national problem identification, school spending, government spending for services, attitudes about big business and Protestants and religiosity indicate that there is a clear gender difference. While these findings provide evidence of a “woman’s perspective,” they do not address the origins of this perspective. These differences may stem from socialization processes that encourage women to assume more nurturing roles, as well as more religious activity. As the roles of women in society continue to change, this socialization process may change as well, leading to less divergence between men and women concerning these issues. The construction of these perspectives offers a broad array of potential hypotheses.

It is evident in the Republican Party’s platform that they clearly pursue a social spending agenda that is less in step with their female constituency and more in step with their male constituency, while simultaneously pursuing a religiously based public presentation that is more in step with their female constituency, and less in step with their male constituency. The combination of a conservative social spending agenda and religious based public presentation allows them to secure their base of both males and females. Whether or not this is an intentional strategy cannot be supported with the data in this study, but this does offer another agenda for research. Further, this brings into question the strategy of Democrats. If the Democratic Party seems to be more in step with female Republican identifiers concerning social spending issues, what could they do to appeal to the religious values of these women without alienating their base? Clearly, if Democrats were to change their position on abortion they would alienate a significant proportion of their base, but they may be able to offer more symbolic representation. Perhaps more open declaration of religious values by those Democrats who are religious would win them some of these women’s vote, but again this is running the risk of alienating those liberals who are less favorable towards organized religion.

It appears that currently the gender differences within the Republican Party are not a threat to their continued support from both males and females, and Democrats have not

been able to dominate the female vote with the same command they have of the African-American vote. This is not to imply that women have not defected from the Republican Party because of their liberal views, but rather to suggest that some women have stayed because of their religious views. Further inquiry into the effects of religion on the vote choice of Republican females and the differing conceptualization of conservatism is necessary, but for now we can clearly accept the premise that there is in fact an issue gender gap among Republicans and self-professed conservatives.

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