

Gendered Issues or Partisan Priorities?

The Policy Priorities of Men and Women at Partisan Think Tanks

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between gender, partisanship, and authorship of partisan think tank reports. Scholars often observe a gendered dimension to issues, where women are associated with issues related to child-rearing, education, and social welfare while men are associated with issues related to violent state action, such as foreign policy and crime. However, these studies are often limited by the confounding variable of partisanship, where political parties tend to prioritize certain issues, and gender gaps between parties. We solve these problems by analyzing the policy content and authors of partisan think tank reports in the United States. We introduce a dataset of 16,229 authors of 10,386 reports from partisan think tanks in the U.S., coded for their policy content using the Comparative Agendas Project subtopic coding system. We find that while women elites tend to prioritize issues often associated with women in both parties, prioritization of issues by sex is more complicated than much of the literature suggests.

Keywords: agenda setting, women's issues, think tanks, issue ownership

Introduction

Phyllis Schlafly reached the height of her fame and political influence in the Republican Party while working to defeat the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in the 1970s. Just a few years after the amendment passed Congress with minimal opposition, Schlafly's Eagle Forum effectively reversed the tide of bipartisan support for the ERA by persuading elites and grassroots activists in the Republican Party to coalesce against it (Wolbrecht 2000). And although Schlafly spent the remainder of her career working in opposition to the ERA, abortion and liberal feminist ideology, her original foray into politics looked much different.

Before shifting toward women's issues, Schlafly worked on national security issues such as anti-communism and opposition to arms control treaties at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), a conservative think tank that is closely aligned with the Republican Party. She wrote prolifically on similar topics outside of AEI as well. Her first book, *A Choice Not an Echo*, which sold 3 million copies, argued that Republicans should select Barry Goldwater as their presidential nominee in 1964 because of his hawkish foreign policy positions. Her seven subsequent books, ending with *Ambush at Vladivostok* in 1976, all addressed Cold War foreign policy. But Schlafly's career in the elite, male-dominated, foreign policy community quickly stalled when she was sidelined to become the face of anti-feminism—an area in which being a woman ostensibly gave her a particular kind of authority. Of the next eighteen books that she would publish before her death in 2016, none would primarily discuss foreign policy.

Schlafly's initial path is an anomaly in research about female candidates and representatives. Scholars interested in linking women's descriptive and substantive representation routinely theorize that when more women run for and are elected to public office, there will be a relative increase in the prioritization of feminine-coded issues, including those understood as women's traditional area of concern, like education, healthcare, and social welfare, as well as those for which women are the primary target population, like abortion and childcare (Bratton and Ray 2002; Reingold 2000; Swers

2002; Thomas 1994). The literature often explains this tendency by positing that, to the extent women have different life experiences than men, so too do they have different policy priorities than men.

However, there is a gendered left-right divide among elites, with more women in left-leaning parties (Elder 2012, 2014; Sundström, Akse, and Stockemer 2022). Issues that are typically associated with women also tend to be associated with left-leaning parties, while more masculine-coded issues like defense and law enforcement tend to be associated with right-leaning parties (Egan 2013; Petrocik 1996; Seeberg 2017). It might be the case, then, that women elites choose to prioritize feminine-coded issues, not because they are women, but because they are members of left-leaning political parties. Indeed, recent studies suggest that partisanship is a better predictor than gender for explaining candidates' relative attention to masculine and feminine issues (Dolan 2014; Lawless and Hayes 2016).

To complicate matters further, women may be incentivized to run on feminine issues if they believe it will boost support (Dolan 2005; Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes 2003). Since women are seen as warmer and more compassionate than men, they are assessed as possessing the necessary traits for handling feminine-coded issues (Alexander and Andersen; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Leeper 1990). If female candidates and elected officials believe making gender salient will improve their standing with voters, they might strategically prioritize feminine issues and conform to gender stereotypes to gain an electoral advantage, and not necessarily because their gender or party membership compels them to.

To disentangle the role of gender and party in shaping women's issue priorities, we study the policy agendas of men and women elites at partisan think tanks in the United States. Partisan think tanks are non-profit organizations that have become de facto party organizations as close policy advisors to the Republican and Democratic parties (Fagan 2019). Partisan think tank researchers, like Phyllis Schlafly, often move between their think tank and government, serving the executive or legislative branches in a staffing role (Rich 2005). They are rarely former or future elected officials and are thus not subject to electoral pressures from voter expectations. By comparing the activities of men and women at partisan

think tanks, we can examine within-party, between-gender policy priorities of elites who are not pressured by gendered issue ownership in the electorate.

This paper proceeds as follows. In the first section, we review the literature on the gendering of issues, finding that while the literature tends to agree on the gendering of some issues, there is inconsistent conceptualization and measurement. In the next section, we argue that party issue ownership represents a serious confounding variable in the study of gendered issue priorities. We then sharpen the conceptualization of issue gendering by classifying four types of issues: core women's issues where women are the target population or directly implicated, issues that are coded as feminine or masculine and issues without a gendered dimension. Next, we detail our research design. We used data on the authors of 10,386 reports from four partisan think tanks: the Democratic-aligned Center for American Progress and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and Republican-aligned American Enterprise Institute and Heritage Foundation. Each report is coded for its Comparative Agendas Project major topic, as well as whether it involves a core women's issue. In the fourth section, we analyze these data, finding that women in each party's think tanks tend to prioritize some issues that are coded as feminine, while they are excluded from issues coded as masculine, with a few interesting exceptions. In the final section, we discuss the results and offer our conclusions and suggestions for future research.

Gender and Issue Prioritization

Several lines of research within the gender and politics literature—from public opinion and political psychology to political communication—contribute to the notion that some issues are “women's” or “feminine” issues and suggest that female political elites are more likely to prioritize feminine-coded issues than male political elites. First, there are connections between gender and policy preferences among voters. Analyses of public opinion data over time indicate the existence of a relatively stable gender gap, with disparities between women and men in levels of support for “use of force and violence” issues, as well as “compassion” issues (Shapiro and Mahajan 1986). Relative to men, women

tend to be less supportive of spending on defense and punitive measures and more supportive of spending on programs related to social welfare, education, and health (Shapiro and Mahajan 1986).

Studies that aim to link substantive and descriptive representation ask if gender gaps found in the electorate are echoed by elites and whether female politicians are more likely than their male counterparts to prioritize issues that matter to women voters or have a disproportionate impact on women (Bratton 2005; Osborn 2012; Reingold 2000; Swers 2002; Thomas 1991, 1994). The concept of women's issues often takes on more than one dimension in this strand of the literature because researchers are interested both in women's and men's relative attention to feminine-coded issues, like education, healthcare, and social welfare, as well as their tendency to prioritize "bills that are particularly salient to women because they seek to achieve equality for women, [or] they address women's special needs..." (Swers 2002, 34–35).

But despite theories of descriptive and substantive representation that undergird scholars' assumptions about the relationship between women and feminine-coded issues, findings concerning a gender gap in legislative priorities are mixed. While some find attention to issues that benefit women increases as a function of women's election to legislatures (Thomas 1994; Swers 2002; Wolbrecht 2000), others find that the effect of gender on increased attention to feminine-coded issues is minimal (Reingold 2000) or constrained by partisanship (Osborn 2012).

Thomas's (1994) survey of state legislators reveals that women were more likely than men to have their name on at least one "women's" bill, champion at least one women/children/family policy, and serve in committees dedicated to health, education, and welfare policy. Conversely, Reingold (2000) examines levels of commitment to and leadership activity in the Arizona and California legislatures and uncovers more similarities between female and male politicians than differences on two types of feminine-coded issues: those that are about women exclusively (e.g., abortion, sex discrimination) or almost exclusively (e.g., domestic violence, breast cancer) and those that reflect women's traditional areas

of concern, including children, families, education, health, poverty, and the environment. Thus, it remains unclear whether female political elites are drawn to, or otherwise pushed toward, working on these issues *because* they are women or because they are partisans. Similarly, it is unclear whether we would continue to observe women's relative attention to feminine-coded issues without partisan constraints or electoral pressures.

Next, experimental research establishes that voters stereotype candidates, issues, leadership traits, and political parties in gendered terms (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Bauer 2018; Hayes 2011; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Schneider and Bos 2014; Winter 2010). Further findings suggest that voters evaluate female and male candidates as possessing different gendered traits and go on to infer their issue competencies based on those gendered assessments (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993).

Without any information about the candidate's party identification or positions on the issues, researchers find that male candidates are stereotyped as strong, ambitious, assertive, and competitive—all traits that respondents more commonly associate with political leadership and being better than women at handling issues, like criminal justice, war, or terrorism (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Holman et al. 2016; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Lawless 2004), which respondents rate as among the most masculine duties performed by elected officials (Rossenwasser et al. 1987; Rossenwasser and Seale 1988). Female candidates, on the other hand, are typically appraised as warmer, more compassionate, and more ideologically liberal than their male counterparts (Koch 2002; Schneider and Bos 2014) and, with no information about partisanship or issue positions, are perceived by voters as better at handling "feminine" issues like welfare, health, education, and abortion (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Lawless 2004; Sapiro 1981; Sanbonmatsu 2002), which are rated as the most feminine duties elected officials perform (Rossenwasser et al. 1987; Rossenwasser and Seale 1988). We should not confuse gender stereotypes for women prioritizing those issues.

Given that candidates are known to strategically prime issues and traits they believe will give them an edge over an opponent (Druckman et al. 2004, Funk 1999; Iyengar and Kinder 1987), later studies build on previous experimental findings to test the hypothesis that women candidates will strategically prioritize the campaign issues that are congruent with perceptions of their areas of competence (Dolan 2005; Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes 2003; Schneider 2014). Some scholars suggest female candidates might gain an advantage over their male opponents by highlighting feminine-coded issues (Dolan 2005; Herrnson et al. 2003), but content analyses of campaign websites and other kinds of political communication offer mixed results as to if and under which conditions women's campaigns are more likely to be distinct from men's, once again complicating the notion that feminine-coded issues belong to women.

Indeed, women running for senate or governor tend to stay away from "women's" issues, unless a male opponent strategically draws her into a feminized debate, at which point, he can label her as a single-issue candidate (Windett 2014). Dolan (2005, 2008) finds no difference between the issue agendas of female and male Congressional candidates, and additional content analyses of campaign communications and media reveal that female candidates run on a broad set of issues similar to male candidates and that, especially in the context of partisan polarization, party identity trumps gender when shaping candidates campaigns and influencing how the public ultimately votes (Bystrom et al. 2004; Banwart and Winfrey 2013; Dolan 2014; Hayes and Lawless 2016).

Several lines of research within the gender and politics literature work together to construct and reinforce the concept of "women's" or "feminine" issues. However, some neglect the role of partisanship in shaping women's interests and relative attention to issues, others implicate societal and/or electoral pressures that might otherwise condition how women elites set their issue agendas. Public opinion research on the gender gap is one strand of the fiber connecting gender to issue, but normative theories about democratic representation suggesting that women should focus on feminine-coded issues do not always bear out empirically when party identification enters the equation. Some scholars argue that a

candidate's party affiliation, and not her gender, is the best predictor of her attention to issues (Dolan 2014, Hayes and Lawless 2016).

Although political psychologists show that voters hold strong associations between a candidate's gender and their issue competencies, being stereotyped by the public as having the requisite feminine or masculine traits necessary for dealing with a given set of issues is certainly not equivalent to that set of issues being of particular interest to women. Neither is strategically running on a set of issues to gain electoral favor. And given that many studies of women's issue prioritization define those issues in liberal feminist terms (Bratton 2005; Saint-Germain 1989, Wolbrecht 2000), they ignore how partisanship and political ideology impact women's preferred policy alternatives and how legislative parties shape elected women's policy agendas (Celis and Childs 2012; Osborn 2012).

For the remainder of this paper, we refer to three types of issues based on the conceptualization used in the literature. The first, "core women's issues," refers to where women or mothers are directly implicated in public policy, such as equal pay, abortion, or paid parental leave. As with any other target population for a range of public policy, we expect women to prioritize these issues far more than men. The second, "feminine issues," refers to issues where women are not necessarily the target population but have traditionally been coded as associated with women. These include education, health care, and social welfare policy. Third, we contrast feminine issues with "masculine issues," or issues with a dimension of physical strength or violence that tended to be coded as associated with men. These include foreign policy, defense, and law enforcement (Holman et al. 2016; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Lawless 2004).

Partisan Priorities as a Confounding Variable

A similar, but largely unconnected, literature examines the policy priorities of political parties. Early scholars observed that political parties tend to emphasize different issues in electoral campaigns, rather than offering different positions on similar issues (Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996; Petrocik,

Benoit, and Hansen 2003). Public opinion surveys find a consistent and stable set of issues that the public trusts one party to handle over the other, known as issue ownership (Banda 2019; Bélanger and Meguid 2008; Walgrave, Tresch, and Lefevere 2015). At the same time, political parties prioritize the same issues when in government (Egan 2013; Green and Jennings 2017). Scholars disagree about the origins of issue ownership and the relationship between owned issues and priorities in government. Parties may either strategically prioritize issues in government where they have an advantage with voters, or the priority may derive from the party's relationship with core constituencies and interest groups (Egan 2013). Similar parties prioritize similar issues across party systems, adding support for issue ownership being derived from the structure of parties rather than short-term factors like media attention or performance (Seeberg 2017). Left-leaning parties tend to prioritize redistributive social policy issues like health care and social welfare policy, as well as education, labor, and the environment. Right-leaning parties tend to prioritize issues related to foreign policy and defense, crime, and taxes.

There is considerable overlap between gendered issue priorities and the issue priorities of political parties. Most issues that are traditionally prioritized by women are also associated with left-leaning parties, such as health care, education, and social welfare policy. Most issues that are traditionally prioritized by men are also associated with right-leaning parties: defense, foreign policy, and crime. To make matters worse, women in elected office are disproportionately members of left-leaning political parties. In the United States, more than two thirds of women elected to Congress since 1992 have been members of the Democratic Party (Leppert and Desilver 2023). As a result, most studies of the issue priorities of women have been studies of the issue priorities of a largely Democratic population. These overlaps make disentangling partisan and gendered issue priorities challenging.

Thus, partisan issue ownership represents a potential confounding variable when considering gender differences in issue priorities. Men and women may select into political parties for other reasons and then adopt the policy priorities of the parties. When predicting the issue priorities of women elites, we must control for political party. If we want to examine something closer to the underlying priorities of

men and women when making policy, we must also control for the expectations of voters. Many elected officials may hold different issue priorities than the issues they prioritize in public-facing roles. While it is impossible to control for all the pressures of society to encourage that men and women adopt gendered priorities in their professional lives, we can at least attempt to eliminate the influence of voters on political elites.

Research Design

To study the issue priorities of women and men, we observe the issue priorities of party elites at partisan think tanks.¹ These organizations are close advisors to political parties and elected officials (Rich 2005). They engage in policy entrepreneurship (Stone 1996), strategic planning (Halpin and Fraussen 2019), and legislative subsidies (Hall and Deardorff 2006) to assist their allies in making policy decisions. They are useful to measure gendered issue priorities in a few ways. First, they are partisans, allowing us to separate gendered priorities from partisan priorities when analyzing gendered issue priorities. Second, while they are public figures, partisan think tank researchers are not candidates or elected officials who may need to act strategically to meet the gendered expectations of their constituents. Most think tanks, even those that more strategically set their agenda like the Heritage Foundation, allow their employees significant discretion about what issues to publish reports on (McGann 2016). Thus, their observed issue priorities are likely much closer to their true issue priorities than elected elites or political appointees and staff.²

¹ Non-profit think tanks in the U.S. are incorporated as 501(c)3 non-profit organizations. They cannot legally identify with a political party. Technically, they are non-partisan think tanks with an ideological mission. However, they often perform explicitly partisan activities performed by formal party organizations in other systems (see (Campbell and Pedersen 2014; Fagan 2022). We refer to them here as “partisan” think tanks for shorthand and identify them with their allied political party, but it would be equally valid to refer to them as ideological and identify them as progressive or conservative.

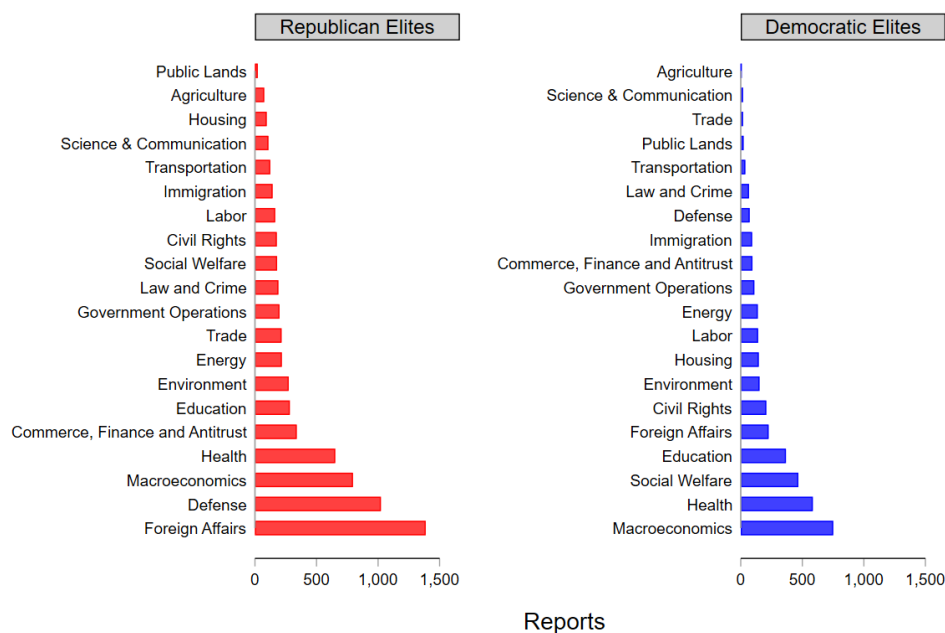
² There are still potential sources of bias, where think tank researchers are pushed toward issue priorities. For example, employers may discriminate against researchers specializing on issues associated with the other gender.

Drawing on data from Fagan (2019), we observe the policy content of white papers posted on the websites of the four largest partisan think tanks between 2007 and 2017. On the Republican side, we include the Heritage Foundation and American Enterprise Institute. On the Democratic side, we include the Center for American Progress and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. These data were previously coded for their policy content using the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) topic coding system. CAP assigns each policy output to one of 20 major topic areas, such as defense, energy, or education policy. CAP is commonly used by scholars studying attention to issues, including numerous studies of party politics (Fagan 2019; Fagan 2018; Fagan, McGee, and Thomas 2019; Froio, Bevan, and Jennings 2017; Wolbrecht and Hartney 2014). A trained research assistant read each report's title and any available summary, abstract and metadata. They then assigned the report to one of 20 major topics.³⁴ The partisan think tanks published reports on a wide variety of topics, but there is also tremendous variation in the amount of attention received by each (Figure 1). Attention to policy by partisan think tanks is largely driven by their party's core priorities (Fagan 2019). Issues that the party's coalition and elite care intensely about receive more attention than issues relative to the formal agenda than issues that are not prioritized.

³ Two trained research assistants read the same text and coded a sample of these data. They agreed on 86% of observations.

⁴ We dropped all observations that contained no policy content, such as reports on horse race polling or normative political theory.

Figure 1. Distribution of Attention in Partisan Think Tank Reports



We then collected the authors of each report and identified their gender. Using web scraping programs, we identified all authors on the think tank’s website for each report.⁵ A research assistant identified the gender that each author presented as. Names that are traditionally associated with male or female genders, such as “Matthew” or “Emily” were assigned to their corresponding gender. When names were ambiguous or uncertain, the research assistant used internet searches to find a biography with pronouns or a picture of the report’s author. If we were unable to ascertain the author’s gender or they identified as non-binary or if the report had no author, we dropped the observation.⁶ This yielded 16,229 author-report pairs.

Next, we calculated the proportion of female authors of each report. The average report contained 1.59 authors, with many containing more than four or five authors. For example, a report with five authors, two men and three women, would receive a value of 0.60. Overall, women represented 29% of

⁵ 459 papers listed either no author or the author was identified generically, such as “staff.”

⁶ Two authors in the sample identified as non-binary, both at the Center for American Progress. They authored two reports as the sole author and two reports as coauthors.

authors, but with significant differences between parties (Figure 2). Women represented 42% of the authors of Democratic partisan think tank reports but only 19% of Republican partisan think tank reports. These differences have grown between 2007 and 2017 (Figure 3). The female share of Republican report authors remained constant at about 20% during the period. Women reached a majority of Democratic partisan think tank report authors by the end of the period.

Figure 2: Female Authorship by Party

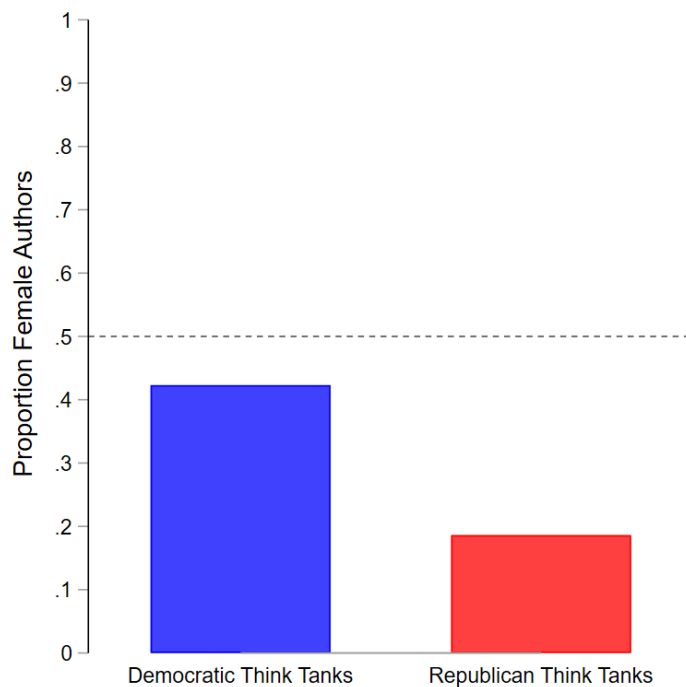
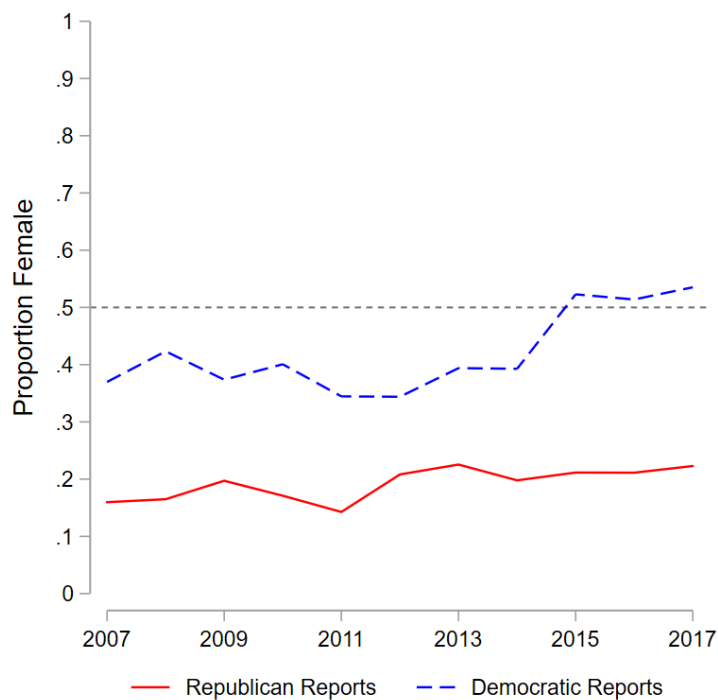


Figure 3: Female Authorship of Partisan Think Tank Reports, 2007-2017



We assigned each of the Comparative Agendas Project major topics to categories based on the literature on partisan priorities and gendered issues. Following Fagan (2019) and Seeberg (2017), we assigned the redistributive domestic social policy areas of health care, labor, housing, and social welfare policy as well as environmental and education policy to the Democratic Party. We assigned the three foreign policy subtopics, defense, foreign affairs, and trade as well as law and crime to the Republican Party. We assigned health care, education, and social welfare policy to the feminine category and defense, foreign affairs, and law and crime to the masculine category. Table 2 summarizes this relationship. There is a substantial overlap between partisan and gendered issues, with about half of Democratic issues coded as feminine and half of Republican issues coded as masculine.

Table 2: Gendered and Partisan Priorities of Issues

Policy Topic	Gendered	Partisan
Macroeconomics	Neither	Neither
Civil Rights	Neither	Neither
Health Care	Feminine	Democratic
Agriculture	Neither	Neither
Labor	Neither	Democratic
Education	Feminine	Democratic
Environment	Neither	Democratic
Energy	Neither	Neither
Immigration	Neither	Neither
Law and Crime	Masculine	Republican
Social Welfare	Feminine	Democratic
Housing	Neither	Democratic
Commerce, Finance and Anti-Trust	Neither	Neither
Defense	Masculine	Republican
Space, Science and Communication	Neither	Neither
Trade	Neither	Republican
Foreign Affairs	Masculine	Republican
Government Operations	Neither	Neither
Public Lands	Neither	Neither

Finally, we read each report title and abstract and identified 145 reports on core women's issues, where women were directly implicated (Table 3). We organized these reports into five categories: general women's rights issues, abortion, parental leave and childcare, family issues and gender pay equality.

Table 3: Core Women's Issues in Partisan Think Tank Reports

Topic	Count	Example Report
General Women's Rights	13	"The Women's Leadership Gap" - Center for American Progress
Abortion	28	"Stupak Amendment Changes Abortion Status Quo" – Center for American Progress
Parental Leave and Childcare	64	"Affordable and Targeted: How Paid Parental Leave Could Work" - American Enterprise Institute
Family issues	15	"The Limited Reach of the Child Support Enforcement System" - American Enterprise Institute
Equal pay	25	"Making Ledbetter Better, or at Least Less Bad" - Heritage Foundation

We test seven related hypotheses. First, we test if men and women have different policy priorities overall, regardless of party. If so, we should observe considerable between-party variation in the issues that men and women write reports on. Men will write more reports on issues associated with masculinity, while women will write reports on issues associated with femininity. We also test the hypothesis that attention to topics without strong gendered associations will not significantly differ by gender.

H1a: Women will more strongly prioritize core women's issues than feminine issues

H1b: Women will prioritize feminine issues relative to men

H1c: Men will prioritize masculine issues relative to women

H1d: Men and women will equally prioritize issues that are not associated with gender

Next, we examine the impact of gender on elite priorities within each party. We expect the same relationship within-party, where men and women prioritize the issues that are associated with their gender.

H2a: Democratic men will prioritize masculine issues relative to Democratic women

H2b: Republican men will prioritize masculine issues relative to Republican women

H3a: Democratic women will prioritize feminine issues relative to Democratic men

H3b: Republican women will prioritize feminine issues relative to Republican men

Results

First, we test our hypotheses by comparing authors at both Republican and Democratic-aligned think tanks (Table 4). We estimate the equation using logistic regression, as the dependent variable follows a binomial distribution. These models all include the partisanship of the think tank to control for the larger proportion of female authors at Democratic think tanks. We find support for our first three hypotheses. Unsurprisingly, reports on core women's issues contain six times as many women authors as those on other subjects ($p < 0.001$). Reports on feminine issues contain 75% more women authors as non-feminine issues ($p < 0.001$). There is no significant difference for masculine issues ($p = 0.345$).

Table 4: Logistic Regression Estimates of Female Percent of Authors, All Think Tanks

Independent Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Core Women's Issue	6.10*** (1.41)		
Feminine Issue		1.75*** (0.09)	
Masculine Issue			0.95 (0.05)
Democratic Think Tank	3.94*** (0.18)	3.67*** (0.17)	4.00*** 0.19
n	10,177	10,177	10,177

Odds ratios. Standard errors in parentheses * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Next, we turn to examining within-party variation in female authorship (Table 5). Here, we observe remarkable party symmetry on core women's issues and feminine issues, but a surprising asymmetry on masculine issues. Both Democratic and Republican think tank reports on core women's issues are overwhelmingly authored by women ($p < 0.001$), especially Democratic reports, which contain 11 times more female than male authors. We also observe that women author more reports on feminine-coded issues at both Republican and Democratic think tanks ($p < 0.001$). The result is remarkably symmetrical; issues coded as feminine have 75% more female authors when compared with non-feminine coded issues in Democratic reports and 89% more in Republican reports. These results support our hypothesis on within-party variation on feminine issues. However, our results are more complicated for issues associated with men. On masculine-coded issues, Democratic think tank reports contain about 30% fewer female authors ($p = 0.003$), while Republican-aligned reports contain about 35% more female authors ($p < 0.001$). We can reject the null hypothesis on the hypothesis that Democratic men will prioritize men's issues but fail to reject the null on the hypothesis that Republican men will do the same.

Table 5: OLS Estimates of Female Percent of Authors, Within Party

Independent Variable	Democrats	Republicans
Core Women's Issue	10.56*** (4.15)	3.64*** (1.26)
Feminine Issue	1.75*** (0.13)	1.89*** (0.15)
Masculine Issue	-0.70** (0.08)	1.35*** (0.09)
n	3,520	6,657

Standard errors in parentheses * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Next, we can observe these dynamics in more depth by examining gender differences on individual policy topics. Table 6 shows difference of means tests for Democratic-aligned think tank reports on each major topic, compared with the average report, which contained 42% female authors. These categories are mutually exclusive; reports are assigned to just one CAP major topic or to the core women's issue category. Three of twenty major topics have significantly more female authors than average, in addition to core women's issues. All three are core Democratic priorities: social welfare (60% female authors) and education (55% female authors) and environment (48% female) reports contain considerably more women authors than the average report. On ten policy topics, women are not significantly more likely than average to author reports. We note that two of these topics, health care and law and crime, are gender coded. Finally, women are significantly less likely to author reports in seven issues, including both the masculine issues of defense and foreign affairs (20% and 23%, respectively) and macroeconomics (30%).

Table 6: Difference of Means Tests, Female Authorship, Democratic Reports

Policy Topic	Proportion		n
	Female	t	
Core Women's Issue	0.85***	15.29	109
Social Welfare	0.60***	8.25	367
Education	0.55***	5.76	357
Environment	0.48*	2.00	147
Health Care	0.46	1.79	540
Civil Rights	0.47	1.48	207
Agriculture	0.58	1.04	6
Public Lands and Native American Affairs	0.51	1.02	23
Law and Crime	0.46	0.92	59
Labor	0.44	0.62	134
Energy	0.38	-1.24	138
Housing	0.37	-1.36	126
Trade	0.27	-1.62	18
Government Operations	0.35	-1.76	108
Immigration	0.33*	-2.07	92
Space, Science and Communication	0.21*	-2.49	18
Commerce and Finance	0.29**	-3.28	92
Transportation	0.20***	-3.73	37
Defense	0.20***	-5.51	72
Foreign Affairs	0.23***	-8.38	226
Macroeconomics	0.30***	-8.84	686

Notes: Major topics exclude observations which were coded as core women's issues. Two-tailed test.

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$. Mean for all reports = 0.423

Next, we examine Republican think tank reports on each issue (Table 7). Women were just 18.7% of the authors of Republican-aligned think tank reports, but there is significant variation between issues. Six topics plus core women's issues had significantly more women authors than average: the feminine-coded issues of education policy (35%) and social welfare policy (32%), but also the masculine-coded defense policy (25%), as well as trade (25%), immigration (25%) and public lands (43%). Just five issues showed no significant difference by gender, including the gender-coded health care and law and crime. Nine issues had significantly fewer female-coded issues than average, with only foreign affairs (16%) as a masculine-coded issue. Women made up only a tiny fraction of Republican-aligned think tank authors of

a number of large issue areas, including Space, Science and Communications (6%), energy (9%), and labor (9%).

Table 7: Difference of Means Tests, Female Authorship, Republican Reports

Policy Topic	Proportion Female	t	n
Education	0.35***	6.25	282
Social Welfare	0.32***	4.31	174
Defense	0.25***	4.90	1022
Core Women's Issue	0.44**	3.36	35
Public Lands and Native American Affairs	0.43*	2.48	22
Trade	0.25*	2.22	216
Immigration	0.25*	1.98	143
Civil Rights	0.20	0.43	153
Health Care	0.20	0.87	650
Transportation and Infrastructure	0.20	0.43	124
Agriculture	0.19	0.11	74
Law, Crime	0.18	-0.29	182
Domestic Commerce and Finance	0.15*	-2.10	339
Government Operations	0.14*	-2.22	199
Foreign Affairs	0.16**	-2.66	1,385
Labor	0.09**	-4.48	164
Environment	0.13***	-4.26	274
Housing	0.07***	-4.72	95
Energy	0.09***	-5.77	218
Macroeconomics	0.13***	-5.78	795
Space, Science and Communication	0.06***	-6.22	109

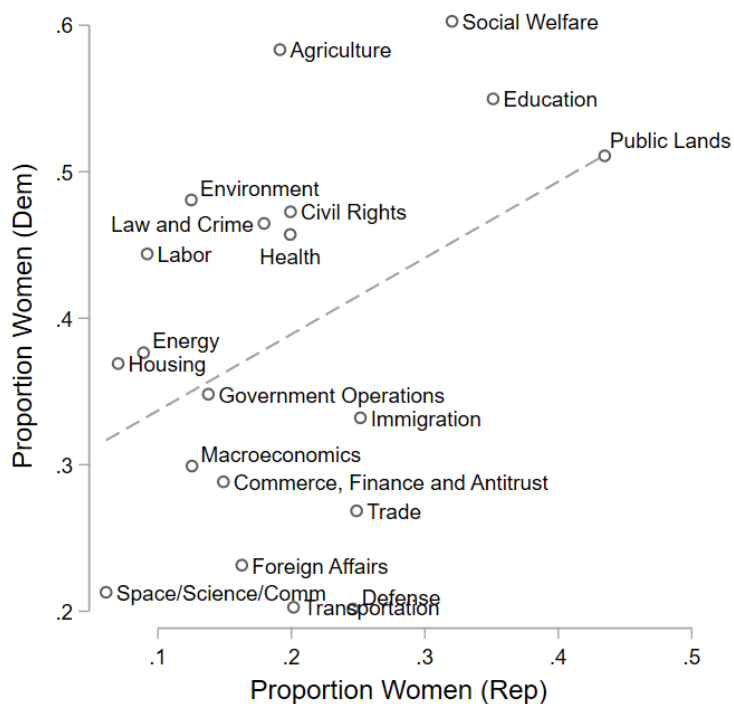
Notes: Major topics exclude observations which were coded as core women's issues. Two-tailed test.

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$. Mean for all reports = 0.187

Finally, we can compare relative female authorship within both parties (Figure 6). We find that a clear relationship exists in female authorship rate by topic between parties, although with considerable error. These results suggest that there are two dimensions to female authorship; one that is shared by political parties, which we believe is driven by issues coded as feminine, as well as some orthogonal

dimension excluding women from authoring think tank reports, particularly among Republicans on issues like Space, Science and Communication, Housing and Energy.

Figure 6: Comparing Female Authorship of Republican and Democratic Think Tank Reports by Topic



Discussion

Our results suggest that gender plays an important role in determining the issue priorities of U.S. elites, even when they are removed from electoral issues, but with some significant complications. Women are not only the overwhelming majority of authors on issues related to core women's issues, but also are more likely to author some issues coded as feminine. In both the Republican and Democratic parties, reports on education and social welfare policy contained more female authors than the average report, but not reports on health care. The picture was more complicated on masculine issues, where reports on foreign affairs have fewer female authors in both parties, but there is no significant difference on crime in either. Republican white papers on defense policy contain more female authors than their average report. Our results suggest a gendered dimension to issues that is independent of party issue ownership, but that dimension does not map cleanly onto how issues are coded.

The results are also substantively important on their own. The authors of reports at partisan think tanks impact public policy, both through the provision of information and as future executive or legislative branch staffers. Our results reveal huge disparities in women's representation in these policy debates, which likely translates to substantive underrepresentation in those areas. In addition, our data reveal a severe underrepresentation of women overall in the Republican Party's policy workforce, where women represent just 1 in 5 report authors.

However, the feminine and masculine connotations of issues do not explain women's underrepresentation across many issues. Three major topic areas that scholars usually do not consider gendered—energy, macroeconomics, space, science, and communication—have severe underrepresentation in both parties. At Republican-aligned think tanks the severest underrepresentation extends to huge policy areas such as government operations, domestic commerce, and environmental policy. Scholars should explore the causes of these deficiencies that cause women to be excluded from these issue areas. We speculate that the exclusion of women from some academic disciplines, such as economics or public policy, leads to these huge differences in the issue topics of men and women elites. Future research could repeat our analysis for academic articles, non-partisan think tanks white papers and government publications to examine the gender dynamics of issue priorities more deeply.

Because our data cover only a limited period, future research should explore more recent developments in gendered issue priorities among elites. Our data cover only one year of the Trump Administration, during which the political system saw considerable change relating to gender and politics. Women became a majority of the authors of reports at Democratic-aligned think tanks by the end of our sample but may have continued to grow as a share of total authors. Republican-aligned think tanks may also have tried to hire more women. If so, researchers should explore the issue priorities of new hires.

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