

Gender and Political Attitudes of Young People

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PS115: Public Opinion and Survey Research

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PS 115

Bipartisanship is a term that has seemingly recently increased in both its use and its relevance in politics. Aware of certain divisions, politicians commonly accept being labeled as either “liberal” or “conservative,” and tend to cater towards people of similar interests. My study attempts to more thoroughly explore these divisions by identifying differences between men and women’s beliefs and tendencies. Furthermore, it serves to isolate the two broad issues of economic and political views. This information is to be ascertained upon receiving the results of the distribution of the online survey to participants in Polimetrix PollingPoint. My study will therefore rely upon the results gathered from this survey, in reference to three specific questions to be described later, and it will analyze economic and political views and how these views differ between men and women.

Before delving into the actual results of the survey, and before even describing the expected findings as related to my hypothesis, it is important to explain the conceptual underpinnings of this study. This is to say that the central concept must first be identified in order to shed light upon the soon-to-be-identified hypothesis, as the hypothesis’ meaning may be elucidated by understanding the root of the issue. In essence, this issue is that men and women differ in their ideologies and views. This concept is that it is not enough to simply and broadly categorize men and women as either conservative or liberal in his or her views. A few studies have sought to explain the reason for this, and two of the larger findings are credited to the Pew Research Center, and Wake Forest University’s Teresa Ciabattari.

First, the Pew Research Center analyzed this issue by breaking down Republican men’s and women’s views. The study was meant to show that men and women within the Republican Party differed in their degrees of conservatism within certain topics. Many of these topics deal with issues that pertain to PS115’s administered survey, and more specifically, the questions that

I intend to use to explore my hypothesis. For example, there were questions in which Pew sought to target economic views of men and women within the Republican Party. An example of one of these questions would be that when asked if business corporations make too much profit, 33% of Republican men found this to be true, whereas 44% of Republican women agreed that this was true. When asked if stricter environmental regulations should be instituted, 50% of the men thought that this would “cost too many jobs/hurt the economy,” whereas only 37% of women felt this way. 69% of men thought that “poor people have it easy,” and only 62% of women felt this way. These three questions would certainly indicate that among Republicans, men tend to be more economically conservative than women. Unfortunately, the questions asked did not come in the form of Likert scales, so the degree to which they agree or disagree with the questions asked is not measured. For instance, a Republican man responding to the question asking if poor people had it easy, may have actually felt that they have it easy in the sense that some receive welfare but not easy in regard to carrying out the tasks of everyday life; he might have therefore rather responded that he partially/moderately agreed with the question, however, upon finding that such a category did not exist, simply answered that he did not agree. In general though, there appeared to be a trend that men were more economically conservative than women.

This Pew study also measured the men and women’s views regarding certain policies, to be classified as “political views,” as opposed to economic views. One such example would be that they were asked what the best way to ensure peace would be. 57% of men responded that this would be through war, and 57% of women responded that this would be through diplomacy. When asked about homosexuality, 29% of men answered that it should be accepted, and 38% of women thought so. There were numerous examples in this survey, and this trend tended to show women being less conservative in these political/social-type issues. Although this research by Pew was done solely for the Republican Party, I felt that the Democratic Party would be polled

similarly, and this is largely why I have attempted to measure the degree to which men and women feel about economic and political issues. I believe that both parties, and more broadly, people in general, will prove to follow the trend as follows: men are more economically conservative than women are and women are more politically liberal than men are (this hypothesis will shortly be both more clearly and thoroughly explained).

The other key study in which this research topic is rooted is in Ciabattari's Gender & Society, which looks at potential reasons behind disparities between men and women's economic and political views. This study asserts that men would tend to be more economically and socially conservative because of a deep-rooted mentality acknowledging a traditional male as the "breadwinner/homemaker" of a family. Although Ciabattari states that there are many reasons for a particular man's level of conservatism or liberalism, she has found that on a scale of 1 to 7 (1 being the most liberal and 7 being the most conservative), men of present, born post-baby-boom, were found to be approximately a 4. This would indicate that men were generally slightly more conservative. Teresa argues that historical context and family situation play large roles in the forming of a man's ideologies and views on social and economic issues, essentially meaning that his views will differ on these issues. This is related to my study, as I have hypothesized that there will be visible rifts between men and women on issues of the economy and policy. Thus, these two studies have provided much background information, and it is my goal to further expand upon them by including men and women of all political, geographical, ethnic, financial, and social backgrounds; it will ultimately serve the purpose of exploring my hypothesis.

My hypothesis is that for 18-24 year olds, men are more economically conservative than women are and that women are more politically liberal than men are. This will show that men are generally more conservative and women are more liberal. However, by dividing the study in terms of both political and economic views, it will be shown that men and women differ in the

degrees to which they are “liberal” or “conservative” in these two different categories. I expect my hypothesis to be proven true because of the studies that have been completed previously. As previously mentioned, the Pew study has shown patterns that are similar to the ones that I have predicted, and the Wake Forest University study gives insight as to why certain views are formed within each individual. More specifically, the Pew study serves to account for the patterns or distributions that I expect to find, and the Wake Forest study rather accounts for possible interpretations of the found data.

Before analyzing this hypothesis any further, the exact questions and question wordings must first be presented, as they are crucial in attaining the desired information. The first question, serving as the independent variable, is labeled “xgender” and is worded as follows: Please indicate your gender. The options are male or female, and this question will yield the independent variable, as this response does not depend upon any other variables. There are two other questions to be used as dependent variables and they are as follows. The economic views of the respondents are to be measured by the question “econorient,” which asks: How would you describe your views on economic issues. The options are presented in a 5-point Likert scale as follows: conservative, moderate leaning conservative, moderate, moderate leaning liberal, liberal, I don’t know. The political views are measured similarly, in question polorient, through this 5-point Likert scale, and the question is worded as: When it comes to most political issues, do you think of yourself as a liberal, moderate, or conservative. The options are conservative, moderate leaning conservative, moderate, moderate leaning liberal, liberal, and I don’t know. These two questions serve as two separate dependent variables, as I am asserting that these responses will depend upon the gender of the respondent. Although there are technically six options in each of these two questions, polorient and econorient, I am moving to disregard any responses of “I don’t know,” as these results do not have much of a bearing on the study. The

responses will therefore be limited to conservative, moderate leaning conservative, moderate, moderate leaning liberal, and liberal in the analyses of the questions of political and economic orientation.

Now that the actual questions have been presented, my hypothesis can be more clearly seen. The aforementioned Likert scales for both questions of political and economic orientation will aid in demonstrating the degree to which each person, and more largely, each group, feels both politically and economically. It will serve to show that although women and men may be pooled together into a single category of conservative, liberal, or moderate, there are many differences within these given categories. Furthermore, I expect that this survey will show men to be more economically conservative on the 5-point Likert scale, as they will choose options “conservative” or “moderate to conservative.” It will show women to be more moderate to liberal on this issue, as they will primarily choose options “moderate” or “moderate to liberal”. Politically, I expect much different results, as I don’t expect as many women to be moderate in this category; it will rather be the men who are moderate politically. I believe that it will show men to be more moderate to conservative, as they will choose categories “moderate” or “moderate leaning conservative,” and it will show women to be more liberal, as they will select options “moderate leaning liberal” or “liberal.” Overall, this will go to show a pattern of men being more conservative economically and moderate politically and women being more moderate economically and liberal politically. There are other factors that may certainly influence the degree to which men and women care about economic and political issues, such as state of residence, race, and socioeconomic status, however, these factors are not going to be thoroughly explored in my particular study. I am rather more interested in the general disparities between men and women. College attendance will be taken into account; as such will dictate the sample of the underlying population. Next, I will include a table of the expected results of the pattern that I intend to find based upon these results. The labeled sections will correspond with the

patterns, or rather, the label that a cell receives, “most” or “less,” will show the areas in which I expect to find more, or less, men or women. (See tables 1.1 and 1.2.)

Table 1.1: Economic Orientation of Men and Women

		Gender	
		Men	Women
Economic Orientation	Conservative	Most	Less
	Moderate leaning Conservative	Most	Less
	Moderate	Less	Most
	Moderate leaning Liberal	Less	Most
	Liberal	Less	Less

Table 1.2: Political Orientation of Men and Women

		Gender	
		Men	Women
Political Orientation	Conservative	Less	Less
	Moderate leaning Conservative	Most	Less
	Moderate	Most	Less
	Moderate leaning Liberal	Less	Most
	Liberal	Less	Most

These tables therefore coincide with my hypothesis; the areas shaded in/labeled “most” indicate that more men or women are expected to be found in these categories, and the areas labeled “less” indicate that fewer men or women are expected to be found in these categories. Thus, these three questions are linked through these two tables, and they serve the purpose of visually

presenting the expected findings of men and women's economic and political views. It is important to note that there are more questions contained within the survey that essentially measure either economic or political views, but these are not to be analyzed in my study. The reason is that I am rather seeking to understand broader trends based upon men and women's views of these two issues at large. By looking at the data in this fashion, the found results can more easily and effectively be used to show that differences between men's and women's views might be more important than once thought.

Although these questions may measure both economic and political views quite broadly, they may actually lack the depth to make sweeping conclusions about men's and women's views on specific issues related to both topics. It is important to consider that my study seeks broad generalizations and that it is not complex enough to analyze peoples' views on certain topics. For example, if a man was found to follow the predicted patterns and is economically conservative and politically moderate, he may not necessarily favor all economically conservative practices and he may not hold all politically moderate ideals. By asking these broader questions, the survey will rather seek to explore how men and women generally view economic and political issues. It will serve as an interesting parallel to the standard measure of partisan views on these issues. In other words, it is rather measuring views in terms of men and women as opposed to Democrat and Republican. It is both a valid and a legitimate study, as although it may be a broader topic that has the potential to be explored through all different populations, it will only measure the given population of 18-24 year old non-military members. It is important to explore this information for this given population because of various substantive reasons. This group may fall into these patterns because they are following traditional older men and women surveyed similarly, or they may deviate from the pattern, indicating that the younger generation is possibly changing. The two sources that I am using as

the springboards to this study were conducted in the mid-1990s, and therefore, it is important to once again analyze trends among men and women to try to find any changes or deviations from the patterns already discovered. By gaining insight into current views of 18-24 year old men and women, politics at large can be elucidated, and politicians can gain greater understandings of what it is that this age group is interested in. Of course, this would be all the more thorough by including views on specific issues within politics and economics; however, as was mentioned earlier, this study will serve to solely analyze the broader trends.

The population of the survey was 18-24 year old men and women living in the United States who are not serving in the military full-time. The sample size was 1,000 men and women of all different ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, religions, beliefs, and backgrounds in general. Half of the respondents were to be full-time college students and the other half were to be non-college students. The way in which the sample was distributed is as follows. Upon deciding on the sample, and after extensively editing and reviewing the survey, the class decided that it was time to send the survey to Polimetrix PollingPoint. We collectively decided that this service [of Polimetrix PollingPoint] was to be used because of the fact that it had been used in the survey conducted last year. Because of this, money constraints were not as big of a problem, as this service was able to accommodate all of the changes that the class wished to make to the survey already in the system (after numerous edits and many cuts to previously suggested questions). We were able to institute the new survey within the bounds of the specific amount of money that was designated to our study as made available by the Tisch College of Citizenship and other sources and donors. The idea was that it would be cheaper to use the same service, as we would be keeping some of the original questions and merely adding and deleting others; this would help defray the total cost. Another reason behind choosing this service was that the results were shown to be reliable, as the previous class had already conducted a survey; there is

also a sizable base of Polimetrix PollingPoint participants aiding in the randomness of the results of the survey. After making further edits and revisions, the survey was finally completed, and Polimetrix PollingPoint distributed the survey to its participants; the participants make up a database of over 20,000 people across the United States. They have a system in place that weights the results according to their distributions. For example, this is to say that the 1,000 surveys selected will be chosen to most closely match the desired sample. To obtain the results directly would therefore not yield completely accurate representation. It similarly uses this system to more accurately represent other factors like geographic region. The survey is therefore targeting a stratified random sample, as the population is essentially divided into two groups, and people are selected randomly from each of these two groups. This type of survey is a beneficial way of eliminating misrepresentation among the survey respondents. In the case of our survey, it ensures that 500 college students and 500 non-college students are to be sampled. Had the sample not been stratified, these numbers would not have been guaranteed, as all respondents would then have been selected randomly. The disadvantage is therefore that this means of sampling does eliminate some of the randomness of the survey. However, it is advantageous in the sense that the variable of college attendance is to be guaranteed, and this is a central concept of this study.

For my survey, response rate and refusal rate are not all that important because of the fact that my hypothesis simply deals with the variable of gender. Therefore, regardless of the response rate, the people who do respond to the survey will either be men or women. The geographic region, age of the respondents (18-24), and many other more complicated factors will be affected; however, when dealing with my hypothesis that has an independent variable of gender, this does not present much of a problem. One way in which the response rate may affect my hypothesis, and all hypotheses alike, would be that if it is extremely high or low, then the

men and women responding may be exhibiting some sort of bias in either vehemently wanting to take or avoid the survey. My variable of men and women would remain largely unaffected, but the interpretation of the data would have to be questioned, as a bias may exist. The response rate information, as stated from the Polimetrix Response Rate Report, is as follows: “We conducted a total of 1,629 interviews with our panelists, and selected the 1,000 closest matching cases to the target sample. Post-stratification weights for the final sample were constructed by ranking the sample marginals to the population marginals for age, race, education, and gender in two ways. One set of weights represents the characteristics of the college and non-college respondents separately. The second set of weights represents the 18-24 population as a whole on these four variables. There were two groups of respondents for [the] study. 993 respondents were invited directly to [the] study from the set of active panelists. Of these, 95.2% qualified for the study. The within-panel response rate for those invited was 31.2%. The remaining 636 interviews were conducted with screenouts from other studies that were fielded at the same time. Of the eligible respondents who were redirected to [the] study, 66.7% completed.” This is therefore clearly not a probability sample; essentially, 1,000 of the 1,629 panelists that most closely match the CPS survey were selected. A certain degree of nonrandomness is being accepted in exchange for a higher response rate, although the implications of this are not all that clear. Based on the content of the survey and the results that are expected, this is the way in which the class felt best about handling any possible bias or misrepresentation.

The next section will explain the results. They will first be shown in their respective tables in order to give a vivid visual representation of what was found. After these are shown, they will be analyzed with respect to my study.

Table 2.1: Economic Orientation of Men and Women

		Gender		
		Men	Women	Total (%)
Economic Orientation	Liberal (%)	20.4	24.7	22.3
	Moderate leaning Liberal (%)	10.6	18.1	13.9
	Moderate (%)	22.5	26.6	24.3
	Moderate leaning Conservative (%)	15.8	10.9	13.7
	Conservative (%)	30.6	19.7	25.8
	Total (%)	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table 2.2: Political Orientation of Men and Women

		Gender		
		Men	Women	Total (%)
Political Orientation	Liberal (%)	29.2	34.3	31.6
	Moderate leaning Liberal (%)	13.9	15.8	14.8
	Moderate (%)	18.0	21.0	19.4
	Moderate leaning Conservative (%)	10.3	10.1	10.2
	Conservative (%)	28.5	18.8	24.0
	Total (%)	100.00	100.00	100.00

These two tables therefore portray the two separate issues of men's and women's economic and political orientation. It is first of all important to identify that of the 1,000 respondents chosen to make up the sample group, 51.6% were men and 48.4% were women. The independent variable is therefore fairly accurate in relation to the approximate 50% male, 50% female breakdown of society. The analysis to ensue is that which is to explain the found patterns and how they compare to my original hypothesis and predictions.

Economic orientation provided relatively accurate results compared to my hypothesis. I predicted that the majority of men would fall within the two subgroups of "conservative" and "moderate leaning conservative." It is found that at 30.6% of the men falling within the conservative category, this is, in fact, their most frequent category. However, the next most frequent category is not moderate leaning conservative but rather moderate, at 22.5%. With moderate leaning liberal and liberal being 10.6% and 20.4% respectively, it is clearly shown that at a mere combined 31.1% of the men, their economic views are evidently not liberal. When combining categories of moderate leaning conservative and conservative, the result is that 46.3% of men fall into this grouping. This shows a clear trend of men being more economically conservative than economically liberal. However, in regard to my hypothesis, this data partially refutes the expected patterns. It is true that the most frequent group that men fell into was conservative as I had expected, however, as moderate was the next most frequent choice, my expectation that moderate leaning conservative would be one of the two most frequent groups was refuted.

My predictions for economic orientation of women were similarly partially confirmed and partially refuted. The majority of the women fell into the moderate category, at 26.6%, as I had predicted, however, the category of moderate leaning liberal was not the next most frequent, as I had initially predicted. The second most frequent category was liberal, at 24.7%. This

finding shows that women are generally more liberal than I had originally expected. This finding is similar to that in which I found men to be more moderate and less conservative than I had originally anticipated. Although my findings are not perfectly in line with my predictions, there is some evidence that points to my hypothesis regarding economic orientation being largely correct. The reason why this can be stated is as follows: when any two adjacent groups are added together in the men's and women's columns separately, the two groups that I had predicted to be the most frequent were found to be the largest combined groups. This is to say that, for men, by adding the conservative frequency to the moderate leaning conservative frequency, a combined frequency of 46.3% was found. This combined frequency is larger than any other frequency that is found when adding two adjacent categories. For example, this means that by adding moderate to moderate leaning conservative, a combined frequency of 38.3% was found, which, along with all other such combinations, is less than the combined frequency of 46.3%. This finding is similar for women, as when moderate and moderate leaning liberal are added together, the combined frequency is 44.7%. These two adjacent groups are larger than any other two adjacent groups added together. Thus, for economic orientation of men and women, my results are partially confirmed and partially refuted. When looking at the groups singularly and more specifically, my patterns are not as accurate; however, when groups are combined, and trends are looked at more broadly, my predictions are fairly accurate.

The topic of political orientation is now to be analyzed. My hypothesis in regard to this topic was shown to be incorrect. I had originally predicted that the majority of women were to be found in the categories of liberal and moderate leaning liberal. 34.3% chose the "liberal" option, which was the highest frequency, showing that I was once again, partially correct. The next most common response was moderate, at 21.0%, meaning that my original prediction was not totally correct. However, when using the same logic as was used in the economic orientation

analysis, it can be shown that my predictions are not totally off-based. The reason is that when two adjacent categories are added together, it is once again shown that the two groups (liberal and moderate leaning liberal) have a higher frequency than any other two adjacent groups, as they have a total of 50.1%.

My prediction for men's political orientations was substantially incorrect. I predicted that the majority of men would fall into the moderate leaning conservative and moderate categories. The majority of men (two largest groups of men) actually fell into the polar opposites of liberal and conservative, with respective frequencies of 29.2% and 28.5%. When the same logic of combining adjacent categories is applied, this part of my hypothesis is even more greatly refuted, as the highest combined frequency from two of these groups was found when liberal (29.2%) and moderate leaning liberal (13.9%) were added. This yielded a total of 43.1%. This even more importantly shows that men and women followed a much more similar pattern in politics than in economics. Although the 50.1% of women falling within these two categories (of liberal and moderate leaning liberal) is substantially higher than the 43.1% of the men within these categories, it refutes my hypothesis in regard to men's and women's political orientation; it clearly shows men to be more liberal politically than I had predicted.

The findings show that the topic of politics is generally more polarizing between genders than the topic of economics is. When it came to economics, men and women seemed more inclined to choose more specific categories, as there were much higher frequencies of both men and women choosing the categories of moderate leaning conservative or moderate leaning liberal. For economics, these four categories combined to tally 27.6% of the respondents. For politics, these four categories (men choosing moderate leaning liberal, men choosing moderate leaning conservative, women choosing moderate leaning liberal, women choosing moderate leaning conservative) combined to total 25% of the respondents; this gives a full 2.6% difference

between politics and economics. Economically, men and women were also much more likely to respond that they were moderate, as they combined to yield 24.3% as compared to men and women combining to a 19.4% choosing the politically moderate category. This is a whole 4.9% difference between the two in terms of distribution of the category of “moderates.” When added together, this 2.6% and 4.9% gives a full 7.5% difference; this is to say that 7.5% more men and women chose from the categories of moderate leaning liberal, moderate, and moderate leaning conservative for economic orientation. Political orientation is therefore found to be more polarizing, as this 7.5% not selecting any of the moderate categories is rather pooled into either the liberal or conservative categories in the political Likert scale distribution. This is to say in general, that men and women are more likely to feel more strongly about political issues, as they are more inclined to be labeled as a political “liberal” or a “conservative” than an economic “liberal” or “conservative.”

These results largely show that men and women seem to have greater differences in their economic views than in their political views. It is interesting that such is the case, as it would seem that the inextricable link between economics and politics would yield different results than what were found. My hypothesis follows the expected trends, yet this study shows that gender is not as big of a factor in political orientation as it is in economic orientation; this is because the rift between men and women is much larger for economics than it is for politics. The economic views fell roughly in line with the Pew study mentioned earlier, and the second study, from Wake Forest University, must now be considered in further analyzing the results and presenting possible implications of the study.

The reason for differences between men’s and women’s views could be due to many factors, some of which have been referenced by the Wake Forest study. These include such factors as history and circumstance. It suggests that men may be more economically

conservative because of traditional views of men serving in the household's breadwinner role and of women relying upon their husbands for support. This conversely implicitly suggests that women may be more economically liberal because of the fact that they had been reliant upon men for so long and now desire a higher degree of economic liberalism. There may be some truth to this, as the distribution of women's economic orientation followed a trend of high liberalism while men's economic orientations were much more conservative. Of course, this is just one interpretation, and there are many possible explanations as to why the results were as they were found. The people taking the survey may have been influenced by a certain event in the news, a spouse or friend, or they may very well explicitly fall into one of the five categories on the Likert scale. In such a broad study, it is very difficult to narrow down the field of all of these possible interpretations. For example, it may seem likely that men and women alike tend to be more politically liberal because of current events regarding the war in Iraq and strategies regarding Pakistan, yet without polling the sample group on these issues, it is not possible to make such a statement. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of political and economic orientations in their entirety, a series of questions would have to be asked addressing numerous issues, and this would become quite complicated very quickly. Budgetary constraints largely contributed to the reason behind why so many of these questions were not to be included.

Furthermore, of course it is possible for the results to be affected by the distribution of the respondents in regard to age, race, education, and other such factors; however, based upon the fact that Polimetrix PollingPoint has instituted a weight system, we can be fairly certain that these will not play all that important of a role in affecting the given distributions.

The largest critique that I have for my study is that it lacked depth in its overall questions. It would be more compelling to address more specific questions in order to give insight to the actual roots of the political and economic orientations. However, it would be very

difficult to include so many questions on this survey because of budgetary issues; there would need to be a substantial number of questions added, and to put these on top of all of the already existing questions might tire out the respondents, leading to misrepresentative answers. The questions used for my broad study were sufficient and were able to attain the desired results of discovering general trends of men's and women's political and economic views. Both the population and the sample were accurate, as in the case of my study, primarily had to just involve both men and women. Although the results were limited to 18-24 year olds, this serves in exploring trends among the younger generations, meaning that this limitation did not necessarily prove to be much of a restriction. The survey was also implemented correctly, as an online means of administering a survey to a sample of 18-24 year olds is likely to yield an accurate representation of the population in general; Polimetrix PollingPoint was also a proven reliable source, and its distribution of the survey is therefore to be trusted. There is not all that much that could have been done differently in this particular study, as it was broad and served the purpose of seeking trends in general. The one change that could potentially improve the accuracy of the results would be that randomness of the survey could have been better. The fact that the survey was stratified eliminated some of this randomness; due to the nature of the class, this was essential, though. The college/non-college breakdown did not play much of a role in my analysis, and it therefore would have been more accurate to eliminate this stratification and simply make the survey distributed completely randomly.

Thus, my hypothesis can be partially confirmed and partially refuted. When using the combination of adjacent cells, my predictions were largely correct; however, the extent of their correctness was heavily dependent upon the topic. My predictions for economic views were more accurate than my predictions for political views. It was shown that men and women are relatively politically similar, as they were both found to be more politically liberal. It was

also shown that men and women differed much more greatly in their economic views, as men tended to be more conservative and women tended to be more liberal. There are many potential reasons as to why this is the case, and this speculation has been addressed earlier. The results may be based on an individual's view on a particular event, or they might actually be a correct measurement of a person's overall economic and political views. It would be interesting to distribute a panel survey, in which this same group of polled individuals was given the same poll in the future. This would serve to show that the results may be based upon recent news in the political and economic spheres. Results might be vastly different if the United States' current situation were different. Overall, the results were partially as predicted, and partially in opposition to what was predicted. It has been a worthwhile study that inevitably provides insight to the idea that men and women differ, to various degrees, in their economic and political orientations.

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