

Gender Gap in Social Welfare Policy Attitudes

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ABSTRACT

Gender differences in public opinion and policy attitudes have been a hallmark of American politics for many years. Gender differences account for how women and men respond to contemporary issues. For example, women are more likely than men to support gun control measures, access to abortion, and increased spending on social welfare programs. Women are less likely than men to support the death penalty, the use of military force to settle international disputes, and stricter immigration policies. Furthermore, gender patterns in public opinion extend to several other public policy issues under the umbrella of social welfare. Political science studies show that women are more likely to identify as Democrats than men and are more likely to express opinions that are consistent with Democrats' policy positions. However, there are more important differences between women based on race, ethnicity, and other demographic factors. Why are there systematic gender differences in attitudes to public policy issues? What are the factors driving these differences? What role do other factors, such as partisanship and racial and ethnic identity, play? This study explores the dynamics of these gender differences and how they shape American politics. This study sheds light on what gendered patterns of public opinion look like in the United States, what underlying factors drive these patterns, and how gender interacts with other identities to influence political attitudes. To examine how partisanship and other identities influence gender disparities in social welfare policy attitudes, this study analyzes data from the 2021 General Social Survey.

The gender gap is usually interpreted as the distinct difference in earnings between men and women. The most common statistic cited when discussing the gender gap and its effects (“for every dollar earned by men, women earn between 80 – 83 cents”) confines the gender gap into a discussion about wages. While this is one of the most harmful effects that has resulted from the perceived societal difference between men and women, the gender gap also exists in healthcare, education attainment, and economic and political participation. The gender gap is a polarizing issue and as such, there has been an inconsistent effort to address it in the form of legislation. The formally proposed Equality Act (2021) could have addressed gender inequality in a significant way by “prohibiting discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity in public facilities, education, federal funding, employment, housing, credit, and the jury system” (H.R. 5 2021). At a time with incredibly thin margins for both Democrats and Republicans, the Equality Act failed to achieve ratification. The difference in ideological beliefs and values between the two political parties is the strongest explanation for the failed legislative act but, considering that the objective was to address discrimination on the basis of sex, it must also be considered how the gender makeup of each party contributed to the outcome of this act and other legislation proposed to mitigate similar problems (Pearson 2010). The failed result is indicative of a partisan difference between gender issues and sex, but does that same difference exist among American citizens?

Despite targeted legislation proposed and, sometimes, enacted to mitigate the differences in treatment between men and women, the gender gap is deeply engrained in many facets of social and political environments. Men and women often hold different views on legislation and proposed policies, but do these differences align with the differences observed between party lines? This study will focus on national spending policies and the attitudes observed between men and women. It will seek to understand the difference between men and women in their attitudes towards specific national spending amounts and if those differences exist more between gender or between party affiliation. To test party affiliation on a more inclusive scale, this study will incorporate political ideology as an indicator for anticipated political behavior, using a scale from liberal to moderate to conservative. This study will also explore if other factors, such as race, age, class, and religion, have a substantial effect on the observed differences between men and women on policy attitudes.

Gender and Political Attitudes

Research done on gender in political science typically applies socially perceived phenomena as an explanation to political behavior, such as political participation, voting behavior, and other forms of civic engagement. Common stereotypes and observed personality traits associated with men and women strongly affect their political behavior (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Kaufmann 2002). If we treat women as an isolated monolithic block, stereotypes naturally lead us to believe that women are

matronly, compassionate, gentle, and passive individuals. Contrastingly, stereotypes indicate that men are aggressive, dominant, and tough individuals. These stereotypes play into political behavior by suggesting that women will support policies that are compassionate and gentle and men will support policies that are tough and aggressive, especially policies that mediate threats to security (Huddy and Terkliden 1993; Kaufmann 2002). In the instance of foreign policy and foreign aid, specifically, women are conventionally seen as more “peace-loving and pacifistic” than men (Togeby 1994). Issues that women are more likely to support because of their compassionate and matronly qualities are regarded as “compassion issues”; compassion issues include policies that aid the disabled, impoverished, sick, and homeless, among others. Women are consistently more likely to support compassion issues than men (Shapiro and Mahajan 1986).

The above phenomenon developed after the 1980s. Prior to the 1980s, women were typically more politically conservative than their male counterparts. This introduces the effect that cultural issues have on perceived stereotypes and political attitudes. The political environment of the 1980s shifted women’s behavior from conservative to liberal. Women, as a group, are more likely to be affected by current cultural issues and, as such, are more likely to support issues that mediate tension and support disadvantaged groups (Shapiro and Mahajan 1986; Welch 1977). Barring the obvious relationship between women and reproductive rights, this theory explains women’s overwhelming support for reproductive rights, LGBTQ+ rights, police/prison reform, and immigration reform. This is more evidence in support of the “compassion issues” theory. Additionally, when analyzing attitudes towards national *spending*, it is imperative to include how the likelihood of economic stability/vulnerability may influence one’s opinion. As women are more likely to experience economic vulnerability than their male counterparts, they are more likely to rely on government assistance, which helps to explain their support for such programs (Kaufman 2002).

Political Ideology and Political Attitudes

An individual’s political ideology is one of the most influential factors in predicting and explaining political behavior. Challenging the notion that party identification determines attitudes on specific political issues, some scholars (Cann and Levendusky 2011; Carsey and Layman 2006) argue that charged political issues and polarization determine party identification and subsequently political ideology. Cann and Levendusky (2011) describe the phenomenon of “party sorting” as individuals adjusting their ideology and “sorting” themselves within the party to align more with their new ideology depending on the cultural issue. For example, a Republican voter who is against the use of the death penalty may “sort” themselves as a conservative democrat because of the severity of capital punishment in their personal view (Cann and Levendusky 2011). This is further evidence that political issues influence political ideology more than any existing loyalty to a specific party. Other scholars partially reject this phenomenon by suggesting that partisanship and political attitudes fluctuate and inform each other instead of causing each other. Carsey and Layman (2006) qualify this theory with the condition that individuals who make this shift in their political ideology must be aware of a distinct difference between the parties (and loosely the political ideologies) on the issue in question. Despite the research conducted on political issues informing party identification, there is substantial research indicating that political ideology is one of the most powerful predictors of political attitudes (Grossman and Hopkins 2015; Kaufmann 2002).

The Intersection of Gender and Political Ideology

There is overwhelming research that finds that Democrats are in support of “compassion issues.” The liberal political ideology observed in the US is largely centered around the government being responsible for the safety and welfare of the public. Additionally, Grossmann and Hopkins (2015) consistently describe the Democratic Party as a coalition of different forces, usually social groups, united to achieve tangible government action “who are engaged in politics not merely to seek power for its own sake but also to advance particular government policies.” In contrast, Grossmann and Hopkins (2015) describe the Republican party as “an agent of ideological movement” who value small government and individual responsibility. Thus, consistent with previous research, women are more likely to identify with liberal political ideologies and vote Democrat, while men are more likely to identify with conservative political ideologies and vote Republican (Barnes and Cassese 2017; Eagly, Diekman, Johannesen-Schmidt, Koenig 2004; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986). This is supported when applying the earlier theory of men and women voters and “compassion issues.” The extent to which sex and political ideology affect political attitudes will be analyzed further in this study.

Critical Review

Research on gender and political behavior/expression often fails to consider the immense variability within large monoliths. While some scholars (Foster 2008) do analyze the combined effects that race and gender have on political attitudes and behavior, most treat women as a single functioning body. There is substantial evidence of women of different races and classes holding competing views based on certain issues. Cassese and Barnes (2018) determine a difference in support of childcare policies

based on the race of the mother and children who would receive the welfare. Notably, black mothers are particularly against childcare given to white mothers regardless of the class of the latter. This study alone challenges the notion that all women share the same political tendencies and attitudes. As race significantly contributes to an individual's personal experiences, it is an important factor to consider when analyzing the effects sex has on political attitudes. To correct for this, this study will add race as an independent variable when predicting attitudes toward national spending amounts.

Theory and Hypotheses

The following framework for understanding attitudes towards national spending amounts can be understood based on research surrounding this topic. First, based on gendered differences in political participation and social attitudes, women are more likely to support higher spending amounts on policies such as welfare, healthcare, education, childcare, poverty relief, foreign aid, etc. For a multitude of reasons, many lying within the stereotypes and perceived personality traits women are associated with (compassionate, gentle, community-oriented, passive), women are more likely to identify with liberal ideologies. Based on opposite stereotypes and perceived personality traits (individualistic, aggressive, assertive, dominant), men are more likely to support policies that enhance these traits on a larger scale. Examples include seeking individualist/protectionist policies in foreign affairs and supporting increased national security. As such, men are more likely to identify with conservative ideologies. This framework is largely based on supported sociopolitical phenomena that link these specific traits and behaviors to civically engaged men and women. From this theory, two hypotheses can be formed. Note the relationship between men who identify with liberal ideologies and women who identify with conservative ideologies will be explored more.

As mentioned earlier, the tendency for women to support increased spending on social welfare can be, in part, explained by the economic vulnerability of women. Women are more likely to experience lower income, poverty, and domestic and sexual abuse, leaving them more likely to rely on the government for jobs and assistance than their male counterparts (Kauffman 2002). In tandem with the increased susceptibility for harm, women are more likely to support "compassion issues" (Huddy and Terklidsen 1993). This theory yields the first hypothesis:

H1: Women will support higher national spending on childcare, welfare, and foreign aid than men.

Combining the effect that political ideology has on political attitudes with gender, there is the potential for a slight difference within one sex based on political ideology (Eagly, Diekman, Johannesen-Schmidt, and Koenig 2004; Eichenberg and Stoll 2012). Along with the liberal tendency to support "compassion issues," focusing on men and the male tendency to support aggressive and assertive policies, the following hypothesis emerges:

H2: Men will support higher national spending on defense and crime reduction polices than woman.

Data and Variables

The General Social Survey, conducted every other year, tracks information on United States citizens' concerns, expressions, attitudes, and practices. For the purpose of this study, the results from the 2021 General Social Survey were used and analyzed. This study uses ten independent variables and five dependent variables measuring attitudes toward national spending. The main independent variables this study will focus on are sex and political ideology. The variable sex is measured as '1' for male and '2' for female. The variable measuring political ideology represents the respondent's self-placed political ideology measured on a seven-point scale with '1' being extremely liberal and '7' being extremely conservative. A higher score on *polsview* indicates that the respondent identifies their political beliefs as more conservative, while a lower score indicates that the respondent identifies their political beliefs as more liberal.

Five national spending variables were used to measure respondent's attitudes toward existing spending amounts. The national spending variables were measured on a three-point scale with '1' being "too little," '2' being "about right," and '3' being "too much." Lower scores on these national spending variables indicate that the respondent supports additional spending on the policies that fall under the spending category. Higher scores indicate that the respondent supports decreased spending on the policies in question. The following five national spending variables were used in this study: *nataid* (measuring attitudes towards national spending amount on foreign aid), *natarms* (military, armaments, and defense), *natchld* (assistance for childcare), *natcrime* (halting the rising crime rate), and *natfare* (welfare).

While sex and political ideology are important factors when determining the respondent's attitudes toward policy spending amounts (Barnes and Cassese 2017; Eagly Diekman, Johannesen-Schmidt, and Koenig 2004; Grossman and Hopkins 2015), they are not the only factors that inform one's attitudes and as such, should not be strictly considered when predicting political attitudes. When conducting multiple logistic regression analyses for each spending variable, this study included the additional independent variables of race, religion, age, class, education, and confidence in military, Congress, and banks and financial institutions, as there is consistent research that proves that these factors influence respondents' political attitudes and behavior (Barnes and Cassese 2017; Foster 2008; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986; Togeby 1994; Watts 1999).

The confidence variables (*conarmy*, *conlegis*, *confinan*) were measured on a three-point scale with ‘1’ being “a great deal,” ‘2’ being “only some,” and ‘3’ being “hardly any.” The race variable (*race*) is measured as ‘1’ being white, ‘2’ being black, and ‘3’ being other. The religion variable (*protestant*) is measured as 0 being “other religion” and ‘1’ being Protestant religion. The education variable (*degree*) is measured on a five-point scale, with ‘0’ being “less than high school” and ‘4’ being a “graduate degree.” The class variable (*class*) is measured on a five-point scale from “lower class” to “upper class,” including a “no class” option. The score on the age variable (*age*) is directly correlated with the respondent’s age (measuring 1 – 88) except for respondents who are 89 and older.

Measurement

The variables selected from this study all have categories that are mutually exclusive, exhaustive, and relatively homogenous. The variables sex, race, and Protestant are all at the nominal level of measurement as these variables are non-numerical and cannot be ranked. The following variables are at the ordinal level of measurement as the categories that GSS2021 provides can be ranked from high to low or low to high, depending on the variable: national spending variables (*natarms*, *nataid*, *natchld*, *natcrime*, *natfare*), political ideology (*polsview*), class (*class*), education level (*degree*), confidence variables (*conarmy*, *confinan*, *conlegis*). Finally, age (*age*) is at the interval-ratio level of measurement.

Methods

To test these hypotheses, this study will first demonstrate a crosstabulation between sex and the national spending amount variables. This bivariate correlation will provide information on the existing relationship between sex and attitudes toward national spending amounts and if these relationships are statistically significant. Following this, this study will conduct multinomial logistic regression analyses that can be used to both predict attitudes towards national spending amounts and provide clarity as to what effect the independent variables have on national spending amount attitudes. As the dependent variables in this study are at the ordinal level of measurement, ordinal logistic regression is usually conducted to produce the results intended for this study. However, one of the assumptions underlying ordinal logistic regression is that the coefficients that describe the relationship between higher categories of the response variables are the same as those that describe the relationship between the next lowest category and all higher categories. In this study, this parallel regression assumption was violated, indicating that there is a difference in the coefficients between models. As such, this study will use multinomial logistic regression.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 is a frequency table for the variable *sex*. There is a slight majority of female respondents with 55.9% being women and 44.1% being men.

Table 1

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
<i>male</i>	1736	43.1	44.1	44.1
<i>female</i>	2204	54.7	55.9	100
<i>Total</i>	3940	97.7	100	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
<i>male</i>	1736	43.1	44.1	44.1
<i>female</i>	2204	54.7	55.9	100
<i>Total</i>	3940	97.7	100	

Table 2 is a frequency table for the variable *polsview*. Based on this figure, the most represented political ideology among respondents is moderate (34.7%). There is a steady decline on each side of the spectrum in terms of representation with “liberal” (15.7%) as a slight plurality over “conservative” (15.6%). As anticipated, the two extremes, “extremely liberal” and “extremely conservative,” are in the minority with 5.2% and 4.4%, respectively.

Table 2

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
<i>extremely liberal</i>	207	5.1	5.2	5.2
<i>liberal</i>	623	15.5	15.7	20.9
<i>slightly liberal</i>	490	12.2	12.4	33.3
<i>moderate, middle of the road</i>	1377	34.2	34.7	68
<i>slightly conservative</i>	476	11.8	12	80
<i>conservative</i>	617	15.3	15.6	95.6
<i>extremely conservative</i>	174	4.3	4.4	100
<i>Total</i>	3964	98.3	100	

Bivariate Comparison

Bivariate comparisons analyze and compare measures of associations between two variables. These crosstabulations also assess the strength and pattern of relationships between variables, which is helpful when determining how variables are related to each other and potentially inform each other.

Table 3 depicts information collected from running a crosstabulation between *sex* and all national spending variables, *nataid*, *natarms*, *natchld*, *natcrime*, *natfare*.

Table 3

	<i>nataid</i>	<i>natarms</i>	<i>natchld</i>	<i>natcrime</i>	<i>natfare</i>
<i>Pearson Chi-Square</i>	0.263	9.599	32.277	25.608	0.618
<i>Asymptotic (2-sided) Significance</i>	0.877	0.008**	<.001**	<.001**	0.734
<i>df</i>	2	2	2	2	2
<i>N of Valid Cases</i>	1914	1919	3892	1915	1915
<i>Phi</i>	0.012	0.071	0.092	0.116	0.018
<i>Cramer's V</i>	0.012	0.071	0.092	0.116	0.018

Out of the five national spending variables selected for this study, three had a significant relationship with sex: national spending amount on defense, childcare, and crime reduction policies. National spending on foreign aid (Chi-Square = .0263, *df* = 2, Cramer's V = .012, *p*-value = .0877) and national spending on welfare (Chi-Square = .618, *df* = 2, Cramer's V = .018, *p*-value = .0734) had insignificant relationships with sex. Despite the relationships between sex and national spending on military, armaments, and defense (Chi-Square = 9.599, *df* = 2, Cramer's V = .071, *p*-value = .008), national spending on childcare (Chi-Square = 32.277, *df* = 2, Cramer's V = .092, *p*-value <.001), and national spending on crime reduction policies (Chi-Square = 25.608, *df* = 2, Cramer's V = .116, *p*-value <.001), being significant, all relationships were relatively weak. This is indicated by the low Cramer's V value of .071, .092, and .116, respectively. The relationships between all national spending variables and sex, as well as other demographic factors, will be explored further.

Multinomial Logistic Regression

By conducting a multinomial logistic regression analysis, the probability of the score on the dependent variable can be generated. Multinomial logistic regression also provides salient information on which variables have the strongest effect on the dependent variable and the total amount of variance in the dependent variables that the combined effects of all independent variables are responsible for. This information is crucial when revising and editing theories and hypotheses. Multinomial logistic regression is used for predicting scores on a categorical dependent variable, in this case, the national spending amount attitudes. For this study, the third category in the national spending variables ("too much") was treated as the reference category. To create a binary of support for either more or less national spending, results were focused on analyzing the Beta coefficients from the "too little" category. **Table 4** displays the Pseudo R Square values, measured using Nagelkerke, for all independent variables.

Table 4

	Pseudo R Square	R value, Nagelkerke
Foreign aid (<i>nataid</i>)	0.247	
Military, armaments, defense (<i>natarms</i>)	0.417	
Childcare (<i>natchld</i>)	0.153	
Crime reduction (<i>natcrime</i>)	0.121	
Welfare (<i>natfare</i>)	0.296	

Table 5 is the collected information from running multinomial logistic regression on the variable *nataid* (measuring attitudes on national spending on foreign aid), specifically displaying the factors and covariates that had a significant relationship with the dependent variable. The full table with all independent variables (sex, race, and religion as factors and age, class, education attainment, political ideology and confidence variables (*conarmy*, *confinan*, *conlegis*) as covariates) is available in the appendix in **Table 10**. The Pseudo R Square value of .247 indicates that 24.7% of the variance in attitudes toward national spending on foreign aid can be explained by the factors and covariates listed below (Nagelkerke = .247, **Table 4**). The intercept for “too little” was 1.301, with a standard error of .959 and a p-value of .175. The intercept for “about right” was 1.732 with a standard error of .597 and a p-value of .004. All of the Beta coefficients for variables with a significant relationship with *nataid* are negative, indicating that respondents with higher scores on those independent variables have a greater possibility of supporting less spending on foreign aid (*age*, B = -.021, p-value = .005; *polsview*, B = -.0451, p-value <.001; *confinan*, B = -0.161, p-value = .044; *conlegis*, B = -.74, p-value <.001). Except for individuals in a higher socioeconomic class (*class*, B = .372, p-value = .001) who are content with the current spending amount on foreign aid, no group of respondents indicate a desire for increased foreign aid spending. Of note, the main independent variable of concern for this study, sex, does not have a significant relationship with national spending on foreign aid. This indicates that a respondent’s sex is not responsible for explaining one’s attitude toward current national spending on foreign aid.

Table 5, nataid (significant values)

	B	Std. Error	Sig.	
"too little"	Age of respondent (age)	-0.021	0.007	0.005
	Think of self as liberal or conservative (<i>polsview</i>)	-0.451	0.092	<.001
	Confidence in banks & financial institutions (<i>confinan</i>)	0.161	0.209	0.44
	Confidence in congress (<i>conlegis</i>)	-0.74	0.203	<.001
"about right"	Subjective class identification (<i>class</i>)	0.372	0.113	0.001
	Think of self as liberal or conservative (<i>polsview</i>)	-0.48	0.054	<.001
	Confidence in congress (<i>conlegis</i>)	-0.734	0.127	<.001

Table 6 is the collected information from running multinomial logistic regression on the variable *natarms* (measuring attitudes on national spending on military, armaments, and defense), specifically displaying the factors and covariates that had a significant relationship with the dependent variable. The full table is available in the appendix in **Table 11**. The Pseudo R Square value of .417 indicates that 41.7% of the variance in attitudes toward national spending on defense can be explained by the factors and covariates listed below (Nagelkerke = .417, **Table 4**). Notably, this is the highest Pseudo R-Square value of the five dependent variables. The intercept for “too little” was -1.549 with a standard error of .813 and a p-value of .057. The intercept for “about right” was .374, with a standard error of .671 and a p-value of .577.

Overall, the results for national spending on military, armaments, and defense were mixed. The independent variables with a significant relationship with *natarms* and negative Beta coefficients signal that respondents are less likely to select “too little” to measure their opinion on current military spending; from here, we can purport that they would be in support of greater military spending. These variables are: class (*class*, B = -.533, p-value <.001), education level (*degree*, B = -.335, p-value <.001), confidence in the military (*conarmy*, B = -1.006, p-value <.001), sex (*sex*, B = -.0657, p-value = .002), and religion (*protestant*, B = -.67, p-value = .002). These results are consistent with previous research stating that men, conservative

respondents, wealthier individuals, and religious individuals are in support of higher national spending on defense (Shapiro and Mahajan, 1986; Welch, 1977).

However, age ($B = .03$, p -value $<.001$), political ideology ($B = .921$, p -value $<.001$), and confidence in Congress ($B = .357$, p -value = $.044$) have positive Beta coefficients, indicating that higher scores on these variables have a lower probability of indicating “too little” or “about right” when assessing their attitude towards national spending amount on defense. These results indicate that older individuals, Conservative respondents, and those who are confident in Congress’ abilities may disapprove of more spending on the military. This is supported when reviewing the “about right” reference category (*age*, $B = .03$, p -value = $<.001$; *polsview*, $B = .584$, p -value = $<.001$), though surprising when applying conventional knowledge and previous research conducted on conservative individuals and policies, which typically prioritize national defense.

The following variables shared a negative Beta coefficient with *natarms* in the “about right” reference category: education (*degree*, $B = -.187$, p -value = $.009$), confidence in the military (*conarmy*, $B = -.747$, p -value = $<.001$), confidence in financial institutions (*confinan*, $B = -.351$, p -value = $.018$) sex (*sex*, $B = -.372$, p -value = $.026$) and religion (*protestant*, $B = -.564$, p -value = $.002$). This signals that respondents here are less likely to indicate “about right,” though the direction in which they might record their attitude is unclear. However, from the behavior of the sex variable in the “too little” category, the results show that men are more likely to support higher spending on national defense, as predicted.

Table 6, natarms (significant values)

		<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Er-</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
			<i>ror</i>	
"too lit- tle"	Age of respondent (age)	0.03	0.006	<.001
	Subjective class identification (class)	-0.533	0.154	<.001
	Respondent’s highest degree (degree)	-0.335	0.086	<.001
	Think of self as liberal or conservative (polsview)	0.921	0.08	<.001
	Confidence in military (conarmy)	-1.006	0.172	<.001
	Confidence in congress (conlegis)	0.357	0.177	0.044
	Respondent’s sex = male	-0.657	0.2	0.001
"about right"	Protestant = other religion	-0.67	0.213	0.002
	Age of respondent (age)	0.03	0.005	<.001
	Respondent’s highest degree (degree)	-0.187	0.071	0.009
	Think of self as liberal or conservative (polsview)	0.584	0.067	<.001
	Confidence in military (conarmy)	-0.747	0.142	<.001
	Confidence in banks & financial institutions (confinan)	-0.351	0.148	0.018
	Respondent’s sex = male	-0.372	0.168	0.026
Protestant = other religion	-0.564	0.185	0.002	

Table 7 is the collected information from running multinomial logistic regression on the variable *natchld* (measuring attitudes on national spending on childcare), specifically displaying the factors and covariates that had a significant relationship with the dependent variable. The full table is available in the appendix in **Table 12**. The Pseudo R Square value of $.153$ indicates that 15.3% of variance in attitudes towards national spending on childcare can be explained by the factors and covariates listed below (Nagelkerke = $.153$, **Table 4**). The intercept for “too little” was 6.68 with a standard error of $.787$ and a p -value of $<.001$. The intercept for “about right” was 5.321 with a standard error of $.788$ and a p -value of $<.001$. Here, there are only three variables that have a significant relationship with *natchld* for the category “too little” and four variables under “about right.” All of these variables have a negative Beta coefficient, signaling respondents with higher scores on these demographic factors are less likely to support more spending on childcare: political ideology (*polsview*, $B = -.641$, p -value $<.001$); confidence in Congress (*conlegis*, $B = -.491$, p -value = $.006$), and sex (*sex*, $B = -.699$, p -value $<.001$). For the “about right” categories, respondents that fall under these independent variables (high confidence in military and Congress and men) are less likely to be content with the current amount of spending on childcare (*polsview*, $B = -.0336$, p -value = $<.001$; *conarmy*, $B = -.361$, p -value = $.015$; *conlegis*, $B = -.567$, p -value = $.002$; *sex*, $B = -.425$, p -value = $.014$). Here, sex has a significant relationship with childcare. However, according to the results of running multinomial logistic regression, the negative Beta coefficient indicates that compared to their female counterparts, men are more likely to indicate higher national spending on childcare. This result is surprising and partially disproves hypothesis one. A possible explanation as to why this result came about, despite previous research suggesting

that women, on average, support more national spending on childcare than men, can be found in the summary of findings section.

Table 7, natcld (significant values)

		<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
"too little"	Think of self as liberal or conservative (polsview)	-0.641	0.067	<.001
	Confidence in congress (conlegis)	-0.491	0.178	0.006
	Respondent's sex = male	-0.699	0.173	<.001
"about right"	Think of self as liberal or conservative (polsview)	-0.336	0.067	<.001
	Confidence in military (conarmy)	-0.361	0.148	0.015
	Confidence in congress (conlegis)	-0.567	0.179	0.002
	Respondent's sex = male	-0.425	0.174	0.014

Table 8 is the collected information from running multinomial logistic regression on the variable *natcrime* (measuring attitudes on national spending on halting the rising crime rate), specifically displaying the factors and covariates that had a significant relationship with the dependent variable. The full table is available in the appendix in **Table 13**. The Pseudo R Square value of .121 indicates that 12.1% of the variance in attitudes toward national spending on crime reduction policies can be explained by the factors and covariates listed below (Nagelkerke = .121, **Table 4**). The intercept for "too little" was 2.967 with a standard error of 1.006 and a p-value of .003. The intercept for "about right" was 2.527 with a standard error of 1.055 and a p-value of .017. The results for *natcrime* functioned similarly to how the variables responded when analyzing *natarms*. This is expected as defense and crime reduction fall into the same category of policies aimed at enhancing security and mediating threats. The independent variables with significant relationships with *natcrime* for the "too little" category were age (*age*, *B* = .025, p-value <.001), political ideology (*polsview*, *B* = .254, p-value = .002), confidence in the military (*conarmy*, *B* = -.577, p-value = .002) and sex (*sex*, *B* = -.961, p-value <.001). The positive Beta coefficients for age and political ideology operated in a similar fashion when discussing military defense. Older and more conservative individuals here appear to not support higher spending on crime reduction policies. However, the Beta coefficient for the main independent variable of sex in both the "too little" (*B* = -.961) and "about right" (-.498) category indicate that men are in support of greater or consistent spending on halting the rising crime rate. This affirms hypothesis two.

Table 8, natcrime (significant values)

		<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
"too little"	Age of respondent (age)	0.025	0.007	<.001
	Think of self as liberal or conservative (polsview)	0.254	0.083	0.002
	Confidence in military (conarmy)	-0.577	0.185	0.002
	Respondent's sex = male	-0.961	0.234	<.001
"about right"	Confidence in military (conarmy)	-0.517	0.195	0.008
	Confidence in congress (conlegis)	-0.498	0.227	0.028
	Respondent's sex = male	-0.693	0.245	0.005

Table 9 is the collected information from running multinomial logistic regression on the variable *natfare* (measuring attitudes on national spending on welfare), specifically displaying the factors and covariates that had a significant relationship with the dependent variable. The full table is available in the appendix in **Table 14**. The Pseudo R Square value of .296 indicates that 29.6% of variance in attitudes towards national spending on welfare can be explained by the factors and covariates listed below (Nagelkerke = .296, **Table 4**). The intercept for "too little" was 3.036 with a standard error of .756 and a p-value of <.001. The intercept for "about right" was 3.119 with a standard error of .656 and a p-value of <.001. Of the independent variables in the "too little" category with a significant relationship with *natfare*, political ideology (*polsview*, *B* = -.868, p-value <.001) and confidence in Congress (*conlegis*, *B* = -.4, p-value = .013) had negative Beta coefficients while confidence in military (*conarmy*, *B* = .443, p-value = .003), and race (*race*, *B* = 1.228, p-value = .004) had positive Beta coefficients. Sex here is insignificant. Of note, this is the only dependent variable in which race had a significant relationship.

Table 9, natfare (significant values)

		<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>"too little"</i>	Think of self as liberal or conservative (polsview)	-0.868	0.073	<.001
	Confidence in military (conarmy)	0.443	0.151	0.003
	Confidence in congress (conlegis)	-0.4	0.16	0.013
	Race of respondent = black	1.228	0.422	0.004
<i>"about right"</i>	Think of self as liberal or conservative (polsview)	-0.463	0.06	<.001
	Confidence in congress (conlegis)	-0.549	0.141	<.001

Conclusion

This study analyzed and explored the relationships between sex, political ideology, and attitudes towards specific national spending amounts with the objective of better understanding the gender gap in social welfare policy attitudes. Based on previous research, a theoretical framework connecting the sociopolitical behavior of men and women to their predicted attitudes toward national spending was developed and tested using a bivariate comparison. Finally, multinomial logistic regression analyses were used to explore the relationship between national spending amount attitudes and a range of important demographic factors typically taken into consideration when analyzing political attitudes and behaviors. These additional variables included race, age, class, education attainment, religion, political ideology, and confidence in the military, banks and financial institutions, and Congress.

The bivariate comparison between sex and each national spending amount revealed three significant relationships, those being between sex and military, armaments, and defense, childcare, and crime reduction policies. Although significant, the relationship was weak. Multinomial logistic regression was conducted for all five spending variables using race, sex, and religion as factors and age, class, education, political ideology, and confidence in the military, banks and financial institutions, and Congress as covariates.

Based on the bivariate comparison and multinomial logistic regression results, hypothesis one – *women will support higher national spending on childcare, welfare, and foreign aid than men* – was completely rejected. The bivariate comparison indicated a significant, though weak, relationship between *sex* and *natchld*. (Chi Square = 32.277, df = 2, Cramer's V = .092, p-value = <.001). Additionally, the results from the multinomial logistic regression analysis between sex and national spending on childcare indicated that male respondents are in higher support of more spending on childcare than their female counterparts (B = -.699, p-value <.001), as male respondents are more likely to indicate "too little" when asked to evaluate the amount of national spending on childcare. The results from the bivariate comparison revealed an insignificant relationship between *sex* and both *nataid* (Chi Square = .263, df = 2, Cramer's V = .012, p-value = .877) and *natfare* (Chi Square = .618, df = 2, Cramer's V = .018, p-value = .734). This was consistent with an insignificant relationship between sex and both *nataid* and *natfare* during multinomial logistic regression.

A possible explanation for the insignificant relationships between *sex*, *nataid*, and *natfare*, lies in how the question is posed to respondents. Respondents are asked to evaluate their opinion on amounts spent on "foreign aid" and "welfare;" no further elaboration is provided to the terms. These terms are often used to describe an amalgamation of policies, resources, and strategies, and as such, it is difficult to evaluate one's opinion of the encompassing term. Additionally, previous research implies that foreign aid, welfare, and childcare policies are more complex than conventionally treated (Cassese and Barnes 2018).

Regarding the unanticipated regression results for sex and childcare, a theoretical explanation relying on gender essentialism-based pressures should be considered. Gender essentialism is the theory that innate qualities and abilities assigned to the two biological sexes inform, in totality, the roles and functions that men and women must play in society. This theory informs men and women in multifaceted ways – both in external expectations enforced by society and internal expectations perpetuated by the family unit. Scholars (Harris 2000; Nedelsky 2012) posit that gendered division observed in the traditional organization of household labor (laundry, cleaning, cooking, etc. as well as all aspects of childcare) may prevent women from claiming their rights in the political sphere and workforce. This is supported by the notion that women, as a group, face stronger barriers of entry to political and corporate fields than their male counterparts.

The resulting conflicting position that women may find themselves in is threefold: In essence, (i) the gender essentialist view that women are intrinsically better and more capable of providing and organizing childcare combined with (ii) insurmountable barriers of entry to political or corporate spaces and (iii) the immense pressure of assuming the expected, though antiquated, role of a woman in society may result in an *internalized* belief that childcare is not a government expense but rather, a mandatory obligation to women in society. Further, gender essentialism indicates that men are better providers for and protectors of the family unit and that this should be their role in society. This is supported by previous research on gender stereotypes that tend to inform political behavior. The point of contention arrives when an individual departs from their expected role. Whereas a man who steps outside of his designated responsibilities to participate in childcare is often received positively, a woman who

steps outside of her designated responsibilities to participate in the workforce is almost always received negatively. This social phenomenon may explain why a man may regard childcare as an expense and service that must be provided by another entity *other* than himself, while a woman may regard childcare as an obligation of her personhood that should be provided by herself and herself alone. This proposed theory requires its own review and experimentation but, as an exercise, could provide one explanation for the regression result between sex and childcare.

Based on the results from the bivariate comparison and multinomial logistic regression, hypothesis two – *men will support higher national spending on defense and crime reduction policies than women* – is accepted. Both the bivariate comparison and multinomial logistic regression analyses completed between sex and attitudes towards national spending amounts on defense and crime reduction policies, indicated significant relationships. Of note, the Cramer's V value between *sex* and *natcrime* was the largest out of the five spending variables at .116 (*natarms*, Chi Square = 9.599, df = 2, Cramer's V = .071, p-value = .008; *natcrime*, Chi Square = 25.608, df = 2, Cramer's V = .116, p-value <.001). Additionally, the Nagelkerke value for *natarms* was the largest and most significant at .417. The results from completing multinomial logistic regression between sex and *natarms* and *natcrime* support the proposed hypothesis that men are more likely to support higher amounts of spending on defense and crime reduction policies (*natarms*, B = -.657, p-value = .001; *natcrime*, B = -.961, p-value <.001).

By analyzing respondents' attitudes towards national spending amounts, we can better understand the degree of responsibility and obligation individuals place on the national government. The proposed theory linked sociopolitical traits to men's and women's anticipated attitudes toward national spending. This connection theorized that men and women largely act within certain perceptions and conditions placed on them outside the political realm. Based on the results, it does appear that men and women follow these trends in their attitudes toward national spending. However, there is significant space for other factors to affect this. For example, with the exception of *sex* and *natarms* (Nagelkerke = .417, **Table 4**), the Nagelkerke values for the spending variables were low, ranging between .12 – .29. This is indicative of other demographic factors not being taken into consideration that may influence attitudes towards national spending more. Particularly for the relationships between sex, foreign aid (Nagelkerke = .247), and welfare (Nagelkerke = .296), which had low Pseudo R-Square values and lacked significance, this theory needs to be revised to give more space to include alternative factors.

There was only one dependent variable, national spending on welfare, in which race played a significant role when analyzing spending attitudes. This fact, combined with the research proving that race plays a pivotal role in attitudes toward childcare (Cassese and Barnes 2018) and political behavior in general (Foster 2008), signifies the importance of exploring the impact of race in future studies. Some scholars (Eichenberg and Stoll 2012; Foster 2008) identify class as an important factor to consider in predicting political attitudes. Based on the context being national *spending*, and deciding where government funds should be allocated, perhaps the class variable, which measures class on a four-point scale from lower class to upper class, is not enough to provide information on respondents' financial situations. Including one or more detailed variables, such as income or tax level, could also provide more clarity as to what drives political attitudes. Finally, the unpredictability of the independent variable measuring political ideology highlights an important issue to consider. Similar to problems with treating one gender as a monolithic block, it appears as if we cannot treat one point on the ideological scale as a uniform functioning body. Perhaps these results confirm Cann and Levendusky's theory of "party sorting," in which individuals sort themselves into an ideological grouping based on a specific issue. For future studies, including more independent variables that can describe one's ideological or political alignment may help determine where these groups lie on a specific issue. This could also include testing other commonly associated political questions to correct for respondents who may self-report based on a particular "passion" issue (e.g., gun control, reproductive rights, or immigration reform).

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Appendix

Table 10

	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Er-</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
		<i>ror</i>	
<i>"too lit- tle"</i>	Age of respondent (age)	-0.021	0.007 0.005**
	Subjective class identification (class)	0.312	0.18 0.084
	Respondent's highest degree (degree)	0.167	0.101 0.099
	Think of self as liberal or conservative (polsview)	-0.451	0.092 <.001**
	Confidence in military (conarmy)	0.088	0.199 0.659
	Confidence in banks & financial institutions (confinan)	-0.161	0.209 0.44**
	Confidence in congress (conlegis)	-0.74	0.203 <.001**
	Race of respondent = white	-0.524	0.37 0.157
	Race of respondent = black	0.54	0.456 0.237
	Race of respondent = other	0 ^b	
	Respondent's sex = male	-0.042	0.239 0.859
	Respondent's sex = female	0 ^b	
	Protestant = other religion	0.173	0.274 0.529
	Protestant = Protestant religion	0 ^b	
<i>"about right"</i>	Age of respondent (age)	0.005	0.004 0.271
	Subjective class identification (class)	0.372	0.113 0.001**
	Respondent's highest degree (degree)	0.097	0.062 0.12
	Think of self as liberal or conservative (polsview)	-0.48	0.054 <.001**
	Confidence in military (conarmy)	0.155	0.124 0.212
	Confidence in banks & financial institutions (confinan)	-0.118	0.13 0.364
	Confidence in congress (conlegis)	-0.734	0.127 <.001**
	Race of respondent = white	-0.084	0.258 0.745
	Race of respondent = black	0.418	0.331 0.207
	Race of respondent = other	0 ^b	
	Respondent's sex = male	-0.01	0.145 0.946
	Respondent's sex = female	0 ^b	
	Protestant = other religion	0.179	0.158 0.258
	Protestant = Protestant religion	0 ^b	

Table 11

		<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Er- ror</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>"too lit- tle"</i>	Age of respondent (age)	0.03	0.006	<.001**
	Subjective class identification (class)	-0.533	0.154	<.001**
	Respondent's highest degree (degree)	-0.335	0.086	<.001**
	Think of self as liberal or conservative (polsview)	0.921	0.08	<.001**
	Confidence in military (conarmy)	-1.006	0.172	<.001**
	Confidence in banks & financial institutions (confinan)	-0.273	0.178	0.125
	Confidence in congress (conlegis)	0.357	0.177	0.044**
	Race of respondent = white	0.179	0.372	0.63
	Race of respondent = black	0.003	0.471	0.994
	Race of respondent = other	0 ^b		
	Respondent's sex = male	-0.657	0.2	0.001**
	Respondent's sex = female	0 ^b		
	Protestant = other religion	-0.67	0.213	0.002**
	Protestant = Protestant religion	0 ^b		
<i>"about right"</i>	Age of respondent (age)	0.03	0.005	<.001**
	Subjective class identification (class)	-0.149	0.13	0.249
	Respondent's highest degree (degree)	-0.187	0.071	0.009**
	Think of self as liberal or conservative (polsview)	0.584	0.067	<.001**
	Confidence in military (conarmy)	-0.747	0.142	<.001**
	Confidence in banks & financial institutions (confinan)	-0.351	0.148	0.018**
	Confidence in congress (conlegis)	-0.131	0.144	0.364
	Race of respondent = white	-0.16	0.282	0.569
	Race of respondent = black	0.026	0.362	0.943
	Race of respondent = other	0 ^b		
	Respondent's sex = male	-0.372	0.168	0.026**
	Respondent's sex = female	0 ^b		
	Protestant = other religion	-0.564	0.185	0.002**
	Protestant = Protestant religion	0 ^b		

Table 12

		<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Er-</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
			<i>ror</i>	
<i>"too lit- tle"</i>	Age of respondent (age)	-0.003	0.005	0.638
	Subjective class identification (class)	0.077	0.137	0.574
	Respondent's highest degree (degree)	-0.066	0.078	0.396
	Think of self as liberal or conservative (polsview)	-0.641	0.067	<.001**
	Confidence in military (conarmy)	-0.233	0.146	0.111
	Confidence in banks & financial institutions (confinan)	0.227	0.155	0.142
	Confidence in congress (conlegis)	-0.491	0.178	0.006**
	Race of respondent = white	-0.581	0.389	0.136
	Race of respondent = black	0.352	0.531	0.508
	Race of respondent = other	0 ^b		
	Respondent's sex = male	-0.699	0.173	<.001**
	Respondent's sex = female	0 ^b		
	Protestant = other religion	0.287	0.178	0.107
	Protestant = Protestant religion	0 ^b		
<i>"about right"</i>	Age of respondent (age)	0.004	0.005	0.421
	Subjective class identification (class)	0.067	0.137	0.624
	Respondent's highest degree (degree)	-0.048	0.078	0.541
	Think of self as liberal or conservative (polsview)	-0.336	0.067	<.001**
	Confidence in military (conarmy)	-0.361	0.148	0.015**
	Confidence in banks & financial institutions (confinan)	0.023	0.155	0.88
	Confidence in congress (conlegis)	-0.567	0.179	0.002**
	Race of respondent = white	-0.491	0.393	0.211
	Race of respondent = black	-0.004	0.54	0.994
	Race of respondent = other	0 ^b		
	Respondent's sex = male	-0.425	0.174	0.014**
	Respondent's sex = female	0 ^b		
	Protestant = other religion	0.319	0.178	0.074
	Protestant = Protestant religion	0 ^b		

Table 13

		<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Er-</i> <i>ror</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>"too lit- tle"</i>	Age of respondent (age)	0.025	0.007	<.001**
	Subjective class identification (class)	0.049	0.175	0.782
	Respondent's highest degree (degree)	-0.107	0.101	0.287
	Think of self as liberal or conservative (polsview)	0.254	0.083	0.002**
	Confidence in military (conarmy)	-0.577	0.185	0.002**
	Confidence in banks & financial institutions (confinan)	-0.022	0.206	0.916
	Confidence in congress (conlegis)	-0.43	0.219	0.05
	Race of respondent = white	-0.597	0.417	0.152
	Race of respondent = black	-0.066	0.552	0.905
	Race of respondent = other	0 ^b		
	Respondent's sex = male	-0.961	0.234	<.001**
	Respondent's sex = female	0 ^b		
	Protestant = other religion	-0.05	0.266	0.852
	Protestant = Protestant religion	0 ^b		
<i>"about right"</i>	Age of respondent (age)	0.013	0.007	0.085
	Subjective class identification (class)	0.038	0.184	0.834
	Respondent's highest degree (degree)	0.055	0.105	0.602
	Think of self as liberal or conservative (polsview)	0.136	0.087	0.119
	Confidence in military (conarmy)	-0.517	0.195	0.008**
	Confidence in banks & financial institutions (confinan)	-0.126	0.215	0.559
	Confidence in congress (conlegis)	-0.498	0.227	0.028**
	Race of respondent = white	0.041	0.451	0.928
	Race of respondent = black	0.06	0.596	0.92
	Race of respondent = other	0 ^b		
	Respondent's sex = male	-0.693	0.245	0.005**
	Respondent's sex = female	0 ^b		
	Protestant = other religion	0.149	0.28	0.595
	Protestant = Protestant religion	0 ^b		

Table 14

		<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Er-</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
			<i>ror</i>	
<i>"too lit- tle"</i>	Age of respondent (age)	0.006	0.005	0.252
	Subjective class identification (class)	-0.177	0.137	0.197
	Respondent's highest degree (degree)	0.17	0.078	0.029**
	Think of self as liberal or conservative (polsview)	-0.868	0.073	<.001**
	Confidence in military (conarmy)	0.443	0.151	0.003**
	Confidence in banks & financial institutions (confinan)	0.064	0.161	0.691
	Confidence in congress (conlegis)	-0.4	0.16	0.013**
	Race of respondent = white	-0.022	0.319	0.945
	Race of respondent = black	1.228	0.422	0.004**
	Race of respondent = other	0 ^b		
	Respondent's sex = male	-0.031	0.179	0.861
	Respondent's sex = female	0 ^b		
	Protestant = other religion	0.14	0.195	0.475
	Protestant = Protestant religion	0 ^b		
<i>"about right"</i>	Age of respondent (age)	0.008	0.005	0.103
	Subjective class identification (class)	0.047	0.121	0.696
	Respondent's highest degree (degree)	0.016	0.068	0.819
	Think of self as liberal or conservative (polsview)	-0.463	0.06	<.001**
	Confidence in military (conarmy)	0.209	0.136	0.125
	Confidence in banks & financial institutions (confinan)	-0.217	0.141	0.125
	Confidence in congress (conlegis)	-0.549	0.141	<.001**
	Race of respondent = white	-0.135	0.285	0.635
	Race of respondent = black	0.298	0.403	0.459
	Race of respondent = other	0 ^b		
	Respondent's sex = male	0.025	0.155	0.871
	Respondent's sex = female	0 ^b		
	Protestant = other religion	0.042	0.16	0.8
	Protestant = Protestant religion	0 ^b		