Abstract

If I Get Married Will I Become a Republican?: The Impact of Age, Gender, and Marital Status on Party Identification, Policy Preference, and Voting Behavior

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This thesis examines the impacts of age, gender, and marital status on an individual’s party identification, policy preferences, and political participation. Focusing on the trends in preferences, behaviors, and lifestyles of young and middle-aged unmarried women as compared to other demographic groups, I offer insight into how marital status, age, and gender impact an individual’s political identity. Through quantitative analysis, I confirm that each of these factors—age, gender, and marital status—deeply impact an individual’s party identification, policy preferences, and political participation. I also identify the importance of the lifestyle changes of women beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s related to older median age of marriage, higher first-birth rates for women over 35, and increased labor force participation of mothers. Finally, I argue that, due to these lifestyle changes, it will be increasingly important to finely study the factors that impact young and middle-aged women’s preferences to reach one of the fastest-growing voting blocs in the nation.