

Citizen Support for the Pursuit of Gender Equality in US Foreign Policy

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Abstract

We ask two questions in this article: First, what is the level of public support for the pursuit of gender equality in foreign policy? Second, what are the most significant correlates of that support? We report the results of the first national opinion survey that queried citizens about their support for policies to increase global gender equality. We find that an average of 60 to 90 percent approve of pursuing gender equality and specific programmatic initiatives. Americans also strongly agree with one rationale for pursuing global gender equality: 65 percent agree that “The world would be a more peaceful place if more women were involved in making decisions.” Second, we find that a number of individual characteristics and personal values are strongly correlated with support for gender initiatives. Our results also suggest that women’s greater endorsement of universalism values explains their higher levels of support for global gender equality.

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In August 1995, President William Clinton established the President's Interagency Council on Women and declared "We are putting our efforts to protect and advance women's rights where they belong--in the mainstream of American foreign policy." Since 1995, presidents and secretaries of state from both parties have substantially increased US government initiatives in pursuit of global gender equality (Garner 2012; Hudson and Leidl 2015). Government officials have explicitly justified this increase in policy activity by citing the substantial body of social science research that confirms a positive relationship between a society's level of gender equality and the relative peacefulness of its foreign policies. Most recently, when the US House of Representatives deliberated on the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017, Chairman Edward Royce of the House Foreign Affairs Committee said on the floor of the House: "Simply put, when women are at the negotiating table, peace is more likely. Compelling research shows that peace agreements are more likely to be reached – and to last – when women's groups are meaningfully involved."¹

Although the Women, Peace, and Security Act was passed with bipartisan support and was signed by President Trump, there has been disagreement between the President and the Congress about the priority that should be assigned to the pursuit of gender equality in foreign policy. Controversy emerged in the very first months of the Trump administration when the President Trump proposed eliminating the Special Ambassador for Global Women's Issues in his first budget presented to Congress. Although the Congress rejected the budget cuts, an Ambassador was not nominated until 2019, and debate over gender policy has continued.²

One notable characteristic of these reports about political disagreement is the absence of any evidence about public support for global gender initiatives. As we note below, there has been very little polling on the issue of global gender equality and even less scholarly research. Accordingly, in this paper we focus on two important questions: First, what is the level of public support for the pursuit of gender equality in foreign policy? Second, what hypotheses explain that support? To answer these questions, we analyze the first national opinion survey that queried citizens in detail about their overall support for policies to increase global gender equality, support for specific policy initiatives and spending commitments, and support for the argument that increased representation of women in decision-making will increase the prospects for peace

Our research makes several important contributions. In addition to describing citizen support for global gender initiatives for the first time, we derive hypotheses from the literature on gender and conflict to estimate which variables most influence citizen support for the pursuit of gender equality in US foreign policy. We also report the first analysis of public agreement with the “women and peace” rationale that underlies the pursuit of gender equality in US foreign policy. Finally, our work contributes to the literature on gender difference in public opinion. We find that personal values --particularly universalism—are an important reason that women are more likely to endorse and express commitment to the pursuit of gender equality in foreign policy as well as more likely to agree with the women and peace hypothesis.

We proceed as follows. In the following section, we describe the three dependent variables in our analyses: *endorsement* of global gender equality policies; the degree of *commitment* to implementing those policies; and citizen agreement with the “*women and peace*” rationale. Following this description of the dependent variables, we turn to the literature on gender,

conflict, and war to derive hypotheses concerning what individual characteristics and personal values are likely to influence support for global gender policies.

We find that support for global gender initiatives is quite high, even allowing for some social desirability bias. An average of 60 to 90 percent of respondents approve of the general principle of pursuing gender equality and also approve of specific programmatic initiatives. Moreover, a majority endorses even the more controversial of these programs –programs to widen access to family planning services. Finally, Americans strongly agree with the rationale for pursuing global gender equality: 65 percent of Americans agree that “The world would be a more peaceful place if more women were involved in making decisions.” In summary, in terms of both broad policy goals and a number of specific programmatic initiatives, Americans exhibit consensus that the US government should make global gender equality a high priority.

Concerning our second research question, we find that gender itself is a strong correlate of support, as are partisanship, ideology, and a preference for global over nationalist approaches to international issues. Further, a commitment to egalitarian, universalism values are a very powerful correlates of support. Our analysis also provides insight into *why* women are more likely than men to support the pursuit of gender equality in foreign policy. Our results demonstrate that women’s greater endorsement of universalism leads to their higher levels of support for global gender equality initiatives. We close the paper with suggestions for further research and discuss the policy implications of our findings, in particular with respect to US policy in Afghanistan.

Dependent Variables: Citizen Support for the Pursuit of Gender Equality in US Foreign Policy

Although the pursuit of global gender equality has been a priority of the US government since the early 1990s, polling on the subject did not emerge until later. For example, from 2012 through 2016, several surveys found that 80 to 90 percent of respondents considered it important or very important to promote the full participation of women and girls in their societies around the world.³ Human rights scholars refer to these types of questions as measures of *endorsement*: support for the general principle of pursuing human rights. Scholars who study public opinion on human rights find interesting correlates of endorsement measures that we review in the next section of this paper (McFarland and Mathews 2005a, 2005b; Cohrs et. al. 2007). However, there are several reasons to avoid relying on endorsement measures alone. The first is that endorsement measures are vulnerable to social desirability concerns. As McFarland and Mathews put it, “Because many rights (freedom of speech, religion, etc.) are a vital part of the American creed, responses to statements reflecting these values are likely influenced by their strong social desirability and may reflect an endorsement of these ideals that is quite superficial” (2005a, 371). This concern likely applies to measures that seek endorsement for the general principle of “promoting opportunities for women and girls” or “promoting the rights of women and girls.” Second, endorsement measures such as those described above are very general – they elide the question of which specific programs or policies should be employed in pursuit of global gender equality. However, it is an open question whether support for the general principle translates into support for specific policies, such as promoting women’s access to education, political participation, or reproductive health services. Third, endorsement measures do not raise the possible costs or tradeoffs that might accompany attempts to promote women’s rights abroad. In fact, scholars of human rights have found that measures that mention potential costs form a separate dimension from endorsement measures. McFarland and Mathews label this a

commitment dimension, defined as survey measures that raise the prospect of financial or human cost such as budgetary expenditures, foregone trade opportunities, disagreement with allies, or even military operations (2005a, 2005b; see also Cohrs et. al. 2007). Importantly, the individual correlates of these commitment measures are different from the correlates of endorsement measures.

Finally, neither endorsement nor commitment measures address an important rationale for making gender equality a foreign policy priority: the argument that societies characterized by higher gender equality and the inclusion of women in decision-making will increase both domestic and international stability. We refer to this rationale as the *women and peace* argument.

In this paper, we analyze data from a national opinion survey that includes multiple measures of *endorsement* of global gender initiatives, *commitment* to the policy even in the face of costs, and a measure expressing agreement or disagreement with the *women and peace* argument. YouGov administered the survey online during the period Aug 31, 2017 - Sept 15, 2017. YouGov weighted the initial sample of 1799 respondents to produce a sample size of 1000 that is representative of the adult population of the US.⁴

Table 1 displays the survey items that we employ to measure endorsement, commitment, and the women and peace argument. Three characteristics of these measures are noteworthy. First, the measures are more comprehensive and detailed than existing measures of support for global gender policies. They measure both support and commitment to general principles and for specific policy choices, such as promoting educational opportunity, combatting violence against women, or allocating budgetary resources. Second, the commitment measures in particular challenge respondents much more vigorously than existing measures in the human rights literature by asking (twice) about willingness to support additional spending, by asking

respondents to rank the importance of global gender initiatives, and by inquiring of respondents' intention to vote for candidates who support gender equality policies. Third, comparison of the endorsement measures to the commitment and "women and peace" measures demonstrates that the former are indeed influenced by social desirability bias –support for the endorsement measures averages twenty percentage points higher than the other measures. A more accurate understanding of support for global gender policies clearly requires going beyond endorsement measures. After reviewing the scholarly literature on war, conflict, and gender to specify hypotheses on support for global gender policies, we construct three summary measures of the questions in Table 1 to serve as the dependent variables in our tests of these hypotheses.

Insert Table 1 here

Theorizing Citizen Support for Global Gender Equality as a Foreign Policy Goal

What considerations influence citizen support for a gender-sensitive foreign policy?

There is little research on this specific question, but a review and synthesis of the literatures on gender and conflict and feminist security studies provides considerable guidance. One body of literature emphasizes a consistent empirical finding: societies characterized by higher levels of gender equality and "security for women" are less prone to domestic conflict and less likely to engage in international conflict. For example, research by Caprioli demonstrates that societies characterized by higher gender equality are less likely to become involved in militarized disputes, less likely to initiate the use of force, and less likely to experience civil strife (Caprioli 2000, 2003; see also Caprioli and Boyer 2001). In a landmark study, Hudson, Ballif-Spanvill, Caprioli, Emmet, and McDermott measured the "security of women," including indicators of

violence against women, and found that societies with higher levels of physical security for women were also more peaceful in their foreign policies (2009). Marshall and Marshall (1999) similarly found that countries with higher levels of gender empowerment are more likely to use non-military strategies when dealing with interstate conflicts. In another cross national analysis, Regan and Paskeviciute (2003) found a correlation between higher levels of gender equality and lower levels of interstate military dispute involvement.⁵

What is the mechanism underlying this relationship? In an innovative study, Barnhart, Dafoe, Saunders, and Trager (2019) argue that two key factors are at work. The first is the now well-documented empirical finding that women are less likely to approve of the use of military force. Second, extension of the suffrage to women forces leaders to respond to these preferences. Barnhart and her colleagues confirm these relationships by performing a meta-analysis of nineteen experiments that studied support for using military force. They conclude: “In every study, support for the use of force is higher among men than among women” (2019, 20). Evidence for their second conclusion emerges from analysis of militarized international disputes between 1860 and 2010. The authors find that the introduction of female suffrage reduces the likelihood of dispute initiation and the use of force within disputes, demonstrating that “the divergent preferences of the sexes translate into a pacifying effect when women gain greater influence over national politics through voting” (2019, 44).

These relationships have clear implications for explaining public support for the pursuit of global gender equality initiatives. Most importantly, they suggest that support for gender equality has instrumental policy implications as well as normative value. To the extent that citizens believe that female citizens have preferences that differ from those of men, those who support the political and economic empowerment of women likely believe that more equal rights

for women will produce leaders and policies that differ from those in a male-dominated political system. For example, research shows that citizens attach highly gendered stereotypes to candidates for office and government officials (Dolan and Sanbonmatsu 2009; Sanbonmatsu 2002; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993). Moreover, these stereotypes are centrally relevant to issues of foreign policy. Lawless (2004), for example, found that survey respondents were more likely to associate male candidates and office-holders with traits such as “assertive,” “tough,” and “aggressive,” and also more competent to deal with issues such as handling a military crisis. Very small percentages associated these traits with female candidates and office holders. In contrast, respondents were more likely to associate female candidates and office-holders with traits such as “compassionate” and “compromising,” while very few associated these traits with male candidates and office holders (Lawless 2004, 482; see also Sanbonmatsu 2002).

Given these gendered appraisals of office holders, it seems likely that citizens also expect women and men to reach different decisions, and existing research suggests that they do. A large body of research shows that women in legislative bodies tend to focus on social service and “women’s issues” more than men (Swers 2002, 2013; see also Kliff 2017, and Wängnerud 2009 for useful overviews of research). Additional cross-national studies also show that as women’s representation in parliaments increase, spending for social welfare also increases (Bolzendahl and Brooks 2007), and spending for defense decreases (Koch and Fulton 2011).

Given evidence that women hold different policy preferences, gendered expectations of office holders, and ample evidence that women office holders place a lesser emphasis on defense spending and forceful instruments of policy, it seems likely that gender itself will be a strong correlate of support for global gender policies that erode patriarchal structures and yield preferred policy outcomes. Moreover, the finding by Hudson and her colleagues suggest that

gender equality is not merely a normative issue –it is an issue that affects the physical security of women. They argue that violence against women in particular is a template for broader social acceptance of violence both domestically and internationally, and as we noted above, there is robust evidence that women are more critical of the employment of violent instruments (Hudson et. al. 2009; Barnhart et. al. 2019, 7-12).

It also seems likely that support for global gender policies will be greater among other population groups that have experienced marginalization and discrimination, especially discrimination based on race. In fact, there is evidence of racial difference in support of domestic gender equality. Prior research finds greater support for the Equal Rights Amendment among African Americans than whites (Burris 1983). In one study of GSS data from 1974 to 2006, black women are the most liberal on gender role attitudes, measured as women’s suitability for politics and women’s traditional family responsibilities (Carter, Corra, and Carter 2009). Other research demonstrates that individuals from historically disadvantaged groups are more likely to support equality for members of other historically disadvantaged groups (Conover 1988; Grollman 2017; Howell and Day 2000). In summary, substantial evidence suggests that racial minorities are likely to exhibit stronger support for measures to increase global gender equality.

Finally, support for gender equality should be higher among citizens who favor egalitarian values and reforms more generally, both on grounds of fairness and on grounds of representation. Cohrs et. al. (2007) studied support for human rights in a 2001 sample of German respondents. They explored the influence of personal values using measures developed by Schwartz (Schwartz and Rubel 2005; Schwartz et al., 2001).⁶ Specifically, they studied the impact of the “universalism” item in Schwartz’s personal values battery. The universalism item

asks respondents if the following statement applies to them: “he/she believes all the world’s people should live in harmony. Promoting peace among all groups in the world is important to her/him.” This item universalism correlates strongly and positively with support for human rights policies.

These hypotheses can be summarized as follows:

H1: Support for global gender policies will be strongly correlated with gender (women will be more supportive);

H2: Support for global gender policies will be strongly correlated with race (nonwhites will be more supportive);

H3: Support for global gender policies will be strongly correlated with universalism values (those high on universalism values will be more supportive).

Further hypotheses can be derived from a second body of literature that emphasizes the gendered nature of thinking about war and the socialization of boys and men to martial, masculine norms and the socialization of women to “feminine” norms.⁷ The clearest articulation of this argument appears in the scholarship of Tickner (1988; 1992; 1997) and Goldstein (2001). Tickner argues that: “Masculinity and politics have a long and close association. Characteristics associated with ‘manliness,’ such as toughness, courage, power, independence, and even physical strength, have, throughout history, been most valued in the conduct of politics, particularly international politics” (1992, 6). Tickner sees parallels between the hierarchical distinctions in power, emotion, and reason that characterize social constructions of gender and the realist discourse of international relations: “The construction of this discourse and the way in which we are taught to think about international politics closely parallel the way in which we are socialized into understanding gender differences”(1992, 9).

Goldstein draws similar conclusions in his study of the gendered nature of war roles and thinking about war (2001). He reasons that because states must be attentive to threats to their security, "cultures mold males into warriors by attaching to 'manhood' or 'masculinity' those qualities that make good warriors...gender identity becomes a tool with which societies induce men to fight."⁸ The result is a set of socialization norms in which maleness equates with physical strength, willingness to fight, and an emotional stoicism, while society socializes women to represent the contrast of the feminine "other." Further, drawing on Gilligan (1982), Goldstein argues that , "men and women think differently about their separateness or connection with other people...Boys construct social relationships in terms of autonomous individuals, interacting according to formal rules, whereas girls construct social relationships as networks of connection." Men compete "to be alone" at the top of a hierarchy, whereas women seek to be at the center of a web (Goldstein 2001, 46). The preference for hierarchy and individualism is reinforced by socialization to the model of the masculine, individualist warrior (2001, 280). This reasoning resembles the arguments of Brooks and Valentino, who articulate a hypothesis that relates the "consensus orientation" of women to gender difference on the question of military intervention: "A large body of psychological research shows that women place greater value on group relationships than do men and that women are more likely to favor cooperation and compromise over aggression as a means for settling disagreement" (Brooks and Valentino 2011, 273, citing Bystydzienski 1993 and Beutel and Marini 1995).

The thinking of Tickner and Goldstein obviously reinforces our Hypothesis 1. Because of gendered socialization about international relations and war, women will be more likely to favor gender equality initiatives that are designed to erode patriarchal power structures by empowering women in the political and economic spheres (as illustrated by the items in Table 1).

The same reasoning about power structures reinforces our Hypothesis 3: those who favor egalitarian, universalism values will favor gender equality initiatives. Finally, the works of Tickner, Goldstein and others suggest that support for gender equality should be higher among an additional group of respondents of both genders: those who favor global approaches to international problems rather than national, unilateral approaches. McFarland and Mathews (2005a), for example, found that support for human rights generally correlates strongly (and positively) with their measure of “globalism.” This index measures the difference between an individual’s commitment to addressing global problems such as “combating world hunger,” and a preference for pursuing “nationalistic” priorities, such as “maintaining superior military power worldwide.” (2005a, 376). For obvious reasons, citizens who shun all international involvement in principle (isolationists) should be less likely to support the international activism represented by global gender initiatives.

H4: Support for global gender policies will be strongly correlated with support for globalism (those high on globalism will be more supportive);

H5: Support for global gender policies will be strongly correlated with support for isolationism (those high on isolationism will be less supportive).

Additional Independent Variables and Hypotheses

In addition to the foregoing hypotheses drawn from the literature on the gendered nature of conflict and war, several hypotheses can be derived from scholarship on support for gender equality and human rights policies more generally.

Partisanship and Ideology. Prior work establishes a consistent pattern of partisan and ideological difference in support for gender equality. For example, Democrats are more likely than Republicans to agree that the country has not done enough to ensure women's equal rights and that men in the United States have it easier than women. Democrats are also more likely to believe that the United States has not done enough to give women equal rights and to endorse equal gender roles (Horowitz, Parker, and Stepler 2017; Conover 1988; Blinder and Rolfe 2018). Ideology also predicts attitudes toward gender roles and gender equality. Liberal political identification predicts support for gender equality among both men and women (Bolzendahl and Myers 2004; Sapiro and Conover 2001). The importance of partisanship and ideology is reinforced by findings in the broader literature on citizen support for human rights policies. McFarland and Mathews (2005a) remains the seminal work. They find that support correlates with partisanship and ideology (those on the left are more likely to support pursuing human rights).

H6: Support for global gender policies will be strongly correlated with partisan identification (Democrats will be more supportive and Republicans less);

H7: Support for global gender policies will be strongly correlated with ideological self-identification (those on the Right will be less supportive).

Global interest and higher education. Finally, research on citizen support for human rights points to additional variables that may influence support for the pursuit of global gender equality. For example, McFarland and Mathews (2005a) find that support for human rights

policies correlates with individuals' level of education and global knowledge (those with higher education and levels of global knowledge show stronger support).

H8: Support for global gender policies will be strongly correlated with the level of educational attainment (those with higher attainment will be more supportive);

H9: Support for global gender policies will be strongly correlated with higher global knowledge (those with higher levels of knowledge will be more supportive).

Data and Method

Dependent Variables

Table 1 displayed the individual items that comprise our three dependent variables: *endorsement* of global gender initiatives; *commitment* to policies in pursuit of those policies; and agreement with the argument that involvement of women in decision-making will improve the prospects for peace (*women and peace*).

Measures. We operationalize endorsement and commitment by constructing additive indices from the variables shown in Table 1. The women and peace dependent variable is a single survey item that tests agreement with the women and peace thesis. In each case, we first generate a dummy variable that takes the value of 1 if the respondent chooses the highest level of approval or agreement with each statement listed in Table 1.⁹ We then sum these binary variables to yield the additive indices.¹⁰ In the case of women and peace, we construct a dummy

variable that takes the value of 1 if the respondent chooses “strongly agree” in response to the statement that the “The world would be a more peaceful place if more women were involved in making decisions,” and 0 otherwise.

Independent Variables

Our review of the literature suggested three groups of variables that are likely to influence support for the pursuit of gender equality in foreign policy: *individual characteristics* (gender, partisanship, ideology, race, educational attainment and interest in global affairs); *basic global attitudes* (globalism); and *personal values* (universalism). The measures that we employ to operationalize these variables are described in the Supplemental Online Appendix.

Analysis

In this section, we report analyses of three dependent variables: *endorsement, commitment, and women and peace*.¹¹ We begin by summarizing the results for three groups of independent variables taken individually (individual characteristics, global attitudes, and personal values). Following this summary, we present models that include all of these independent variables. Drawing on the findings, we then summarize the results of a mediation analysis designed to clarify why gender difference exists on attitudes toward global gender initiatives.

We began by conducting a sequence of three analyses (not shown) with each dependent variable regressed on the groups of independent variables described in the previous section: *individual characteristics* (gender, partisanship, ideology, race, higher education, and interest in global news); *basic global attitudes* (globalism and isolationism); and *personal values* (universalism).¹² The results revealed that gender has the largest and most significant impact on

support for global gender policies. Partisanship, ideology, higher education, and interest in global news were also consistently significant in the predicted direction, regardless of which group of independent variables are specified in the model. Being a woman, Democrat, a liberal, more educated, and interested in global news all increase support for each of the three dependent variable measures. In a separate analysis, globalism (a preference for global versus national solutions) exerted a very strong and significant positive influence on all three dependent variables, even when controlling for individual characteristics. Finally, among personal values, universalism values represent the largest and most consistent positive influence on all three dependent values. Comparing across the three groups of predictor variables, gender and universalism values emerge as the strongest correlates of support.

There are several surprises concerning the independent variables that unexpectedly proved consistently weak or only sporadically significant. First among these is race (Black and Hispanic). Prior research suggested that Black Americans were stronger in their support of equal rights for women with respect to domestic policy and gender roles (Carter, Corra, and Carter 2009), but we see no evidence for this relationship in our analysis. Among global attitudes, isolationism correlates (negatively) only with Endorsement.¹³

In summary, our preliminary analyses reveal that core political beliefs and life experience (gender, partisanship, ideology, education, and global interest), together with a belief in universalism values, are consistently significant influences on support for pursuing global gender equality, regardless of which other variables are included in the model. We investigate these relationships further in Table 2, which displays the results for Endorsement, Commitment, and Women and Peace in columns 1-3. When all three groups of independent variables are included in the model, the results are somewhat different from the analysis of each group separately described above. For example, in the equation for Endorsement, higher education is

no longer significant, but isolationism has a significant negative influence. Other variables follow the pattern described above –gender, partisanship, ideology, gender, global interest, globalism, and universalism values are highly significant.

Insert Table 2 here

Commitment and Women and Peace are more challenging measures of support for global gender initiatives, and the results in Table 2 suggest that additional variables condition the attitudes of respondents on these variables. . In the case of Commitment, higher education is significant. Otherwise, the results are very similar to those for Endorsement. Results for the Women and Peace dependent variable are similar to those for Commitment, but gender is more significant than in the equation for Commitment.

A visual summary of the coefficients and their confidence intervals makes several things clear (see Figure 1). First, four variables stand out as consistently significant with large positive impacts: gender itself, Democratic partisanship, preference for global solutions, and belief in universalism. Second, although gender is significant for all three dependent variables, its substantive impact is largest for the women and peace variable. That is, although women are more likely to favor all three measures of global gender equality, it is on the proposition that “the world would be a more peaceful place” that gender itself exerts the largest impact. This result is strong evidence for the plausibility of hypotheses drawn for the literatures on gender and conflict. It suggests that survey respondents are aware the women bring different preferences to foreign policy and are likely to implement those preferences under conditions of increased empowerment of women.

Insert Figure 1 here

Mediation Analysis

Scholarly studies of gender difference examine how gender matters by employing two strategies: positional gender differences and structural gender differences (see Sapiro and Conover 1997 for a lengthy discussion). Positional differences occur when men and women have differing positions on the same attitude, such as foreign policy preferences. Research on positional differences employs mediational analysis to identify a variable that explains why men and women differ in their attitudes. Structural differences occur when men and women depend on different factors in their assessment of an attitude object such as a foreign policy goal. Moderation analysis investigates such structural differences. Our analysis focuses on positional differences using mediational analysis. We do not include a discussion of structural differences because our analyses did not reveal that men and women rely on different factors when evaluating our dependent variables.

In this section, we present additional analyses to investigate mediating relationships. Specifically, we analyze the extent to which universalism values mediate the influence of gender on support for pursuing gender equality through foreign policy. Mediation occurs when the inclusion of a third variable partially or fully explains the effect of an independent variable, which results in the reduction of the size and significance of the independent variable when the mediating variable is included. For example, if the inclusion of universalism values significantly reduces the effect of gender, then this is a strong indication of mediation. That is, a reduction in the effect of gender would signify that the mediating variable, in this case universalism, is the

reason for the gender difference (that is, men and women differ in their commitment to global gender equality because women are more likely to believe social justice should be a societal priority). We also report the percent mediation according to the Sobel-Goodman mediation test.¹⁴

According to the Sobel-Goodman mediation test, universalism values are partially mediating the gender effect on all three dependent variables. Universalism mediates 23.18 % of the effect of gender on endorsement of gender equality as a foreign policy goal. Including universalism reduces the size of the Female coefficient, but it remains highly significant. This means that part of the reason for women's greater endorsement of gender equality is due to their greater valuing of social justice and equality. The mediation results for the commitment dependent variable are even stronger, with universalism mediating 36.18% of the effect of gender on commitment. With the inclusion of universalism, there is a reduction in the size of the Female coefficient, so that the effect of gender is no longer statistically significant. This strongly indicates that women compared to men are more committed to specific policies promoting gender equality because of their more general support for equality and justice. Universalism also partially mediates the gender difference on support for the women and peace hypothesis, with a percent mediated of 17.33%. The size and significance of the Female coefficient decreases slightly with the inclusion of universalism. Similar to the endorsement mediation results, these results suggest that part of the reason for women's higher levels of agreement with the women and peace hypothesis is a result of their belief in equality and welfare for all individuals. Nonetheless, gender does remain significant even with the inclusion of universalism. As noted above, our interpretation of this result confirms the reasoning of scholars of gender and conflict: women favor gender equality for specific instrumental reasons: the likelihood that empowering women will yield more peaceful outcomes. .

Discussion and Conclusions

We asked two questions in this paper. First, how strongly does the American public support the pursuit of global gender equality as a foreign policy goal? Second, what hypotheses explain variation in that support? Concerning the first question, we showed in Table 1 that support for global gender initiatives is quite high, even allowing for some social desirability bias. An average of 60 to 90 percent of respondents approve of the general importance of pursuing gender equality and approve of specific programmatic initiatives. Moreover, a majority endorses even the more controversial of these programs –programs to widen access to family planning services. Finally, Americans strongly agree with the rationale for pursuing global gender equality: 65 percent of Americans agree that “The world would be a more peaceful place if more women were involved in making decisions.” In summary, in terms of both broad policy goals and a number of specific programmatic initiatives, Americans demonstrate broad consensus that the US government should make global gender equality a high priority.

Our analysis also reveals consistent answers to the second question concerning the correlates of support. We analyzed three dependent variables: *endorsement* of global gender initiatives, concrete *commitment* to pursue these programs, and agreement with the “*women and peace*” rationale that underlies policy efforts. We find that all three dependent variables correlate with core political attitudes and individual characteristics, most importantly gender, partisanship, ideology, educational attainment, and interest in global affairs. In addition, we find that a preference for global over nationalist approaches and a commitment to universalism values are very powerful correlates of support. The mediation results also suggest that women’s greater support for gender equality as a foreign policy goal is partially because they value social justice and equality (universalism).

Our analysis points to several important avenues of inquiry to pursue in future research. First, there is more work to be done on the question of whether gender difference in universalism values also mediate gender difference in support for military interventions or other foreign policy preferences. Second, we might ask what concrete actions that citizens are likely to support in the pursuit of gender equality. We have seen that they support programs to extend access to education or business opportunities, but would they support more overt and intrusive intervention, including the use of military force? This is an option that has been discussed –and often criticized—in the debate about “feminist hawks,” but there has been no research to explore the correlation between support for global gender equality and support for forceful intervention.¹⁵ This is a lamentable gap given the centrality of gender equality as a justification for intervening in Afghanistan, and the issue will surely color any debate about potential withdrawal of US troops.

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Table 1. Dependent variables: survey questions employed to measure endorsement, commitment, and women and peace

Dependent Variable	Very important or strongly approve	Somewhat important or somewhat approve	Total important or approve
Endorsement			
Importance of promoting the rights of women and girls in countries around the world	44	41	85
Agree US should promote rights of women and girls in other countries	28	46	74
Approve protect women and girls from sexual harassment and sexual violence	69	24	93
Approve help women and girls gain access to education	63	29	92
Approve help women and girls receive training for jobs and business	55	37	92
Approve empower women and girls to participate in elections and other forms of political activity	55	35	90
Approve ensure that women participate in all aspects of conflict prevention and peace negotiations	41	46	87
Approve help women and girls gain access to family planning services	50	34	84
Average Endorsement	51	37	89
Commitment**			
Agree reduce foreign aid to countries that discriminate against women and girls	31	41	72
Agree restrict international trade with countries that discriminate against women and girls	25	46	71
Agree reduce military assistance to countries that discriminate against women and girls	28	43	71
Agree increase spending for programs that promote the rights of women and girls in other countries	27	36	63
Rank equal rights for women and girls first or second among five rights*	25	26	51

Choose "increase" spending for gender equality programs (versus keep same/decrease)	29		
More likely to vote for midterm candidate who supports global policies to support women and girls (versus won't affect vote or would make less likely to vote for candidate)	33		
Average Commitment	28	38	66
 Women and Peace			
Agree world would be more peaceful if women participate in decision-making	26	41	67

Note: percentages based on weighted sample.

*Percentage who ranked first are listed under "strongly" approve and those who ranked second under "somewhat" approve.

** The question on restricting international trade stated "even if that means we will be selling fewer goods and buying fewer goods from other countries." The questions on reducing foreign aid and military assistance stated "even if it causes some disagreement with friends and allies."

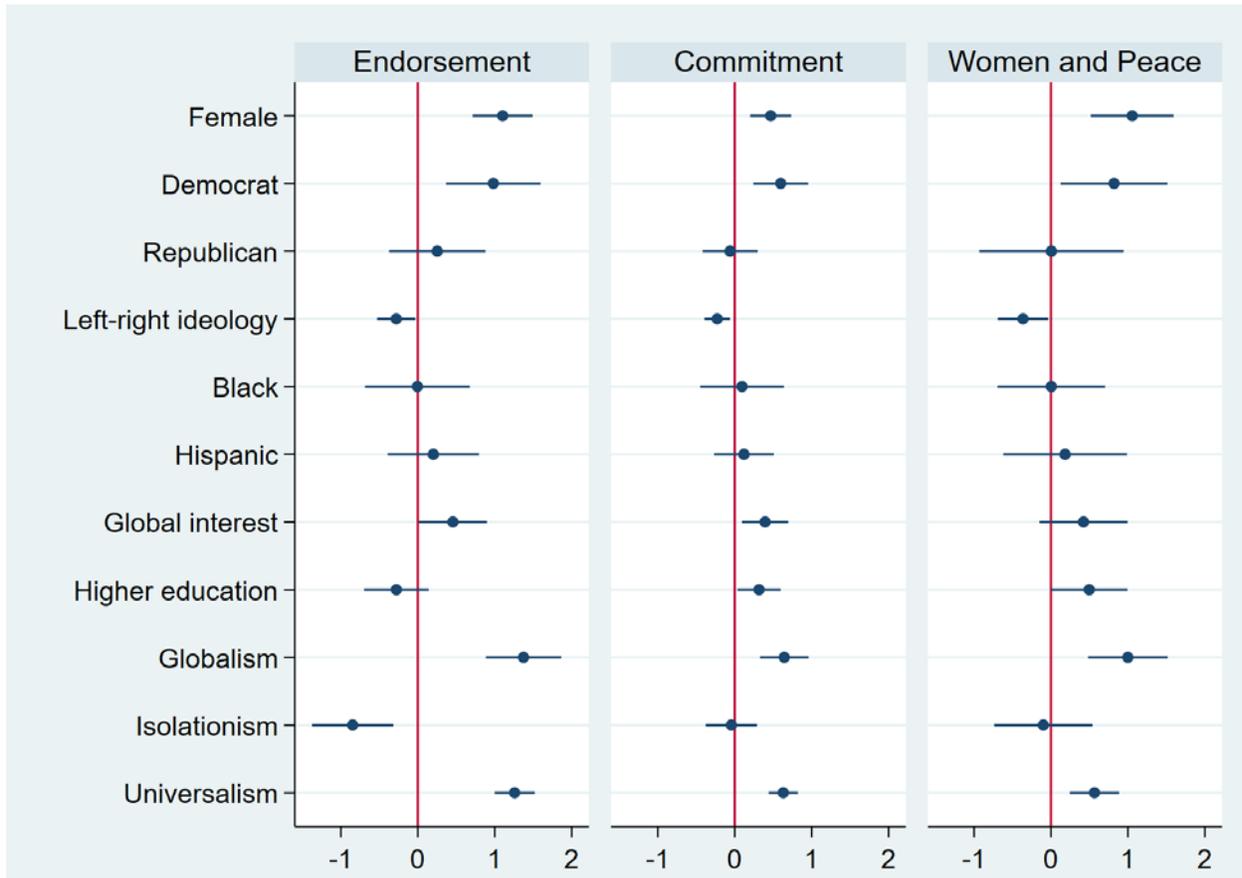
The supplemental appendix contains additional information on sample weighting and complete question wording for all measures.

Table 2. Analysis of endorsement, commitment, and women and peace

VARIABLES	(1) Endorsement	(2) Commitment	(3) Women and Peace
Female	1.102*** (0.199)	0.467*** (0.136)	1.056*** (0.275)
Democrat	0.982*** (0.313)	0.597*** (0.182)	0.820** (0.354)
Republican	0.253 (0.319)	-0.0604 (0.182)	0.00587 (0.478)
Left-right ideology	-0.280** (0.127)	-0.228*** (0.0845)	-0.363** (0.167)
Black	-0.00519 (0.347)	0.0945 (0.277)	0.00468 (0.356)
Hispanic	0.202 (0.302)	0.120 (0.198)	0.183 (0.410)
Global interest	0.456** (0.225)	0.395** (0.153)	0.422 (0.292)
Higher education	-0.278 (0.214)	0.316** (0.143)	0.497* (0.253)
Globalism	1.374*** (0.250)	0.644*** (0.161)	0.999*** (0.264)
Isolationism	-0.847*** (0.269)	-0.0441 (0.170)	-0.0993 (0.326)
Universalism	1.259*** (0.133)	0.631*** (0.0967)	0.566*** (0.163)
Constant	2.725*** (0.591)	1.504*** (0.391)	-2.853*** (0.751)
Observations	879	877	878
R-squared	0.439	0.351	

Note: Columns 1-2 are OLS regressions; column 3 is a logistic regression. Standard errors in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The models also include control variables for age, religiosity, parental status, parents of sons, parents of daughters, ethnocentrism, and traditional values. The full results are displayed in Supplemental Appendix Table C1.

Figure 1. Visual display of coefficients and confidence intervals



Note: The figure displays the coefficients and confidence intervals from the analyses reported in Table 2.

Appendix

YouGov sampling and weighting information

YouGov interviewed 1799 respondents who were then matched down to a sample of 1000 general population respondents and 500 respondents age 18-30 to produce the final dataset. The respondents were matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, race, education, party identification, ideology, and political interest. The frame was constructed by stratified sampling from the full 2010 America Community Survey (ACS) sample with selection within strata by weighted sampling with replacements (using the person weights on the public use file). Data on voter registration status and turnout were matched to this frame using the November 2010 Current Population Survey. Data on interest in politics and party identification were then matched to this frame from the 2007 Pew Religious Life Survey. The matched cases were weighted to the sampling frame using propensity scores. The matched cases and the frame were combined and a logistic regression was estimated for inclusion in the frame. The propensity score function included age, gender, race/ethnicity, years of education, and ideology. The propensity scores were grouped into deciles of the estimated propensity score in the frame and post-stratified according to these deciles.

Question wording and supplemental analyses

These are included in a Supplemental Online Appendix that will appear simultaneously with the published article.

Endnotes

¹ Press Release, Foreign Affairs Committee, US House of Representatives, September 28, 2017. The bill was signed into law by President Trump on October 6, 2017. The press release is available from the Website of the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom (2017).

² For additional reporting on Trump administration policies on gender, administration's lesser commitment to gender equality, see Nahal Toosi, "State Department report will trim language on women's rights, discrimination," *Politico*, February 22, 2018, <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/02/21/departement-women-rights-abortion-420361>, and Hilary Matfess, "Do women matter to international security? Trump just changed the U.S. government's answer to that question," *Washington Post*, January 4, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/01/04/do-women-matter-to-international-security-trump-just-changed-the-u-s-governments-answer-to-that-question/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.de2bbe5e33be.

³ Surveys conducted for Kaiser Family Foundation, February 2-12, 2012, August 6-20, 2013, and March 1-26, 2016; and Chicago Council on Global Affairs, June 10 - June 27, 2016.

⁴ The online supplemental appendix contains complete details on YouGov's sample matching and weighting procedures as well as complete question wording and response codes for all questions that we employ in our analysis.

⁵ For detailed reviews of this literature, see Hudson and Leidl (2015, 68-73) and Barnhart, Dafoe, Saunders, and Trager (2019).

⁶ The Schwartz value types measure 10 cross-culturally consistent value types-- achievement, power, stimulation, hedonism, self-direction, benevolence, universalism, conformity, tradition, and security--that are comprised of sets of conceptually similar personal values.

⁷ The following paragraphs draw on our earlier research on gender difference in attitudes toward war (Eichenberg 2019).

⁸ We draw this and other quotations in this paragraph from Goldstein 2001, 251-321, 410-411.

⁹ In the case of *commitment*, the dummy variable for the ranking of the rights of women and girls takes the value of 1 if respondents ranked this item first from among a list of five human rights. In addition, the dummy variable for the second spending item in Table 1 takes the value of 1 if the respondent chooses "increase" from three alternatives (increase, keep spending same, decrease). In the case of the voting item (the last variable listed under commitment), the dummy variable takes the value of 1 if the respondents chooses "more likely to vote for the candidate" in the 2018 midterm election. Full wording for these and all questions in Table 1 appear in the Supplemental Online Appendix (provided for review purposes).

¹⁰ In response to a reader's suggestion, we also analyzed versions of the endorsement and commitment dependent variables that includes the sum of the full range of response codes from the component variables. The results, displayed in Supplementary Appendix table A1, are generally the same as those reported here. There is one important exception: the influence of having daughters on parents is highly significant in the analysis of *commitment*. We pursue the analysis of parents and children in a separate body of research.

¹¹ We employ OLS for Endorsement and Commitment, which are additive indices. We employ logistic regression for Women and Peace, which is a binary dependent variable. The regressions included a number of control variables that proved insignificant, so they are excluded from the following discussion. The full results are displayed in Supplemental Appendix Table C1. Data are weighted using the survey weights provided by YouGov.

¹² These preliminary analyses are presented in Supplementary Appendix Tables B1-B3.

¹³ We also found that several additional variables unrelated to our theory were largely insignificant and are thus omitted from this discussion, although they appear in Appendix Tables B1-B3. Specifically, ethnocentrism shows no relationship to any dependent variable, and perhaps most surprising, a measure of "traditionalism" (respect for authority) shows no relationship to any of our dependent variables. Despite the fact that realization of gender equality represents a direct challenge to traditional authority, our measure of respect for traditional authority is not significant in any model.

¹⁴ We are unable to report the percent mediation according to the Hicks and Tingley (2011) mediation package (based on the new mediation procedure from Imai, Keele, Tingley, and Yamamoto, 2011), because it is not compatible with the weighted survey commands in Stata.

¹⁵ On "feminist hawks," see Hudson and Leidl (2015, 34-60).