

How daughters affect their legislator fathers' Voting on Women's Issues

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How Do Daughters Affect Legislator Fathers

Introduction

- Motivation

- It is commonly found in the literature that individuals' beliefs and behaviors are influenced by their surrounding environment.
- However, studies on children to parents influence are scarce, especially when applied to voting preferences

- Baseline

- Psychologists have shown that parenting daughters increase feminist sympathies

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Introduction

- Related literature
 - Edlund, Lena C., and Rohini Pande. 2002. Why Have Women Become Left-Wing? The Political Gender Gap and the Decline in Marriage. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 117(3): 917-61.
 - Gordon B. Dahl and Enrico Moretti. 2008. The Demand for Sons. *Review of Economic Studies*, 75: 1085-1120.

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Introduction

- Goal
 - The author wants to empirically test the hypothesis that children can in fact influence adult behavior.
 - In this case, the paper tests if daughters can influence their legislators parents' votes
- Contribution
 - The author demonstrated that the likelihood of voting liberally on reproductive rights is impacted by the ratio of daughters to sons in the legislators' household. Her results also show the importance of personal ideology in a legislator's voting decisions.

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Innovation

- Take the evidence of attitudinal shift concerning women's issues to the political area
- Ask whether parenting daughters increases a congress legislators propensity to vote liberally on womens issues bills.
- Use of congressional voting record scores compiled by the National Organization of Women (NOW) and the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) to show that the proportion of female children is a positive and significant predictor of voting on womens issues

The ratio of daughters explain 50% of the variation in voting on women's issues

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Innovation

- Given the context, this study also addresses the fact that the ideology of a legislator may factor in legislative decision making.

The author proves that personal preferences are in fact a important factor in a legislator's voting decision

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Data and Methodology

- Cross section of representatives and district characteristics from the 105th United States Congress (1997-1998):
 - 435 representatives in total
 - 374 who have at least one child
- Would be interesting to check how preferences change when legislators have a daughter but the data is limited in that regard since most legislators already ended their reproductive life
- The main dependent variable is the legislator voting score produced by the NOW:
 - Contains twenty pieces of legislation: equality, economic security, womens safety, education, lesbian rights, health and reproductive rights
 - Each vote in accordance with NOW awards 5 points, producing therefore a score ranging from 0 to 100. Democrats score 74 on average while republicans score 11

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Data and Methodology

- The impact of female children on legislative voting is driven primarily by reproductive rights legislation.
- The voting scores composed by the NRLC (National Right to Life Committee) are also used in order to demonstrate the robustness of the basic result across interest groups, political leanings and across time
- NRLC:
 - Chooses ten to twenty pieces of legislation each session and creates a score similar to NOW with the only big difference being the opposite ideals
 - The average score is 27 for Democrats and 89 for Republican members of the 105th congress

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The Model

- Estimation of an OLS linear regression:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{propdaughters} + \beta_2 \text{female} + \beta_3 \text{race} + \beta_4 \text{party} \\ + \beta_5 \text{servicelenght} + \beta_6 (\text{servicelenght})^2 + \beta_7 \text{age} + \beta_8 (\text{age})^2 \\ + (\beta_9 - \beta_{12}) \text{religion} + \beta_{13} \text{clintonvote} + \gamma + \phi + \epsilon$$

- Y is a legislator rating score (using either NOW or NRLC)
- propdaughters is the proportion of daughters the legislator parents
- γ is the set of dummies representing the total number of children in one's household
- ϕ is a fixed effect as measures of district's liberalness

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Table - Descriptive Statistics

TABLE 1: SAMPLE MEANS FOR 105TH CONGRESS

Variable	Full Sample	Democrats ¹	Republicans
<i><u>Independent Variables</u></i>			
<i>Legislator's Children</i>			
Any Female Children	.73	.71	.74
Number of Female Children	1.27	1.19	1.35
Number of Children	2.49	2.23	2.73
<i>Total Number of Children (%)</i>			
Zero	.14	.15	.13
One	.09	.13	.06
Two	.32	.34	.30
Three	.22	.20	.23
Four	.13	.10	.16
Five or more	.10	.08	.12
<i>Legislator Characteristics</i>			
White	.87	.75	.98
Female	.11	.16	.06
Mean age	52	53	51
Service length (years)	9	10	8
Protestant	.60	.49	.69
Catholic	.30	.37	.23
Other Christian	.04	.00	.07
Other religion	.06	.11	.01
None	.01	.03	0
Democratic Vote Share	.50	.59	.43

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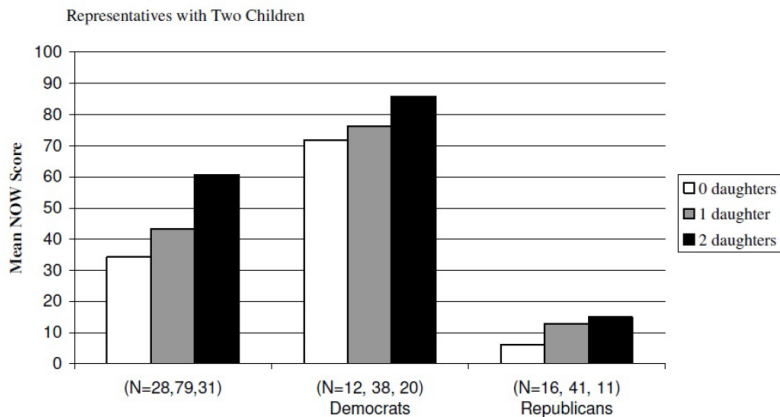
Possible Threats

- A threat to this identification strategy is that child gender may not in fact be randomly determined in this sample
- No natural methods that will alter the probability that any one child is a boy
- Stopping rule: Parents with male preferences will have a higher proportion of sons
- Small families and a smaller proportion of sons in large families
- Author decided to fully saturate the model in number of children. She assumes that conditional on total number of children, child gender can be thought of as random in the sample and run models of the form of Equation 1 to identify the impact of child gender on parental voting behavior

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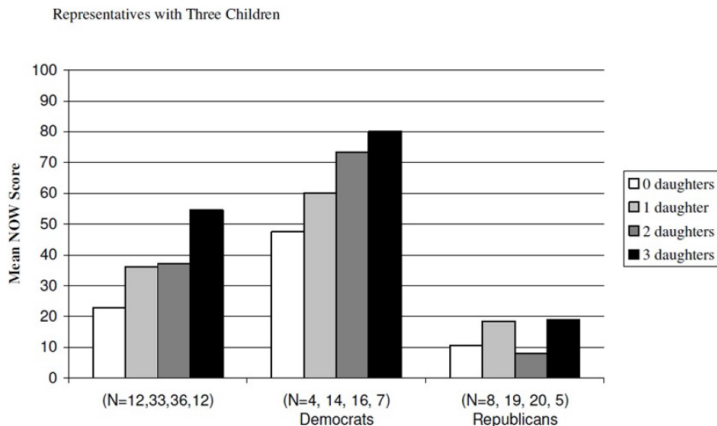
Table - More Descriptive Statistics

FIGURE 1: MEAN NOW SCORE, BY NUMBER OF FEMALE CHILDREN, 105TH CONGRESS



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Table - More Descriptive Statistics



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Table - More Descriptive Statistics

TABLE 5: DAUGHTER INFLUENCE ON LEGISLATIVE VOTING BY ISSUE TYPE

Issue	OLS: Fraction of Votes with Significant ¹ Daughter Coefficients	N
Moral, Religious Issues	.5	42
• Abortion	.62	29
• Church and State	.00	6
• Contraception ²	1.00	2
• Other	.20	5
Social Security, Medicare	.14	7
General Budget, Taxes, Spending	.14	99
Executive Branch Regulations	.26	23
Crime Policy, Civil law	.12	59
Business Regulation	.12	68
House Rules, Elections	.08	139
Health, Education, Welfare	.12	74
Labor Policy	.29	31
Agriculture, Fishing	.03	36
Defense, Veterans	.14	76
Public Works, Transportation	.18	51
Foreign Aid, Trade, Immigration	.12	137
Energy, Environment	.16	31

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Table - More Descriptive Statistics

TABLE 7: IMPACT OF FEMALE CHILDREN ON LEGISLATOR PARENT'S VOTING ON WOMEN'S ISSUES (EXPANDED MODEL), RIGHT TO LIFE SCORES

(Each cell presents the coefficient on proportion daughters from a different regression.)

Basic Model	Basic Model w/Expanded Sample	Expanded Model
	<u>105th Congress</u>	
9.31** (3.9) [374] ¹	10.09** (4.27) [333]	8.13** (4.15) [333]
	<u>106th CONGRESS</u>	
7.9* (4.14) [378]	6.22 (4.78) [301]	6.63 (4.49) [301]
	<u>107th CONGRESS</u>	
10.28** (3.9) [379]	10.73** (4.51) [311]	12.1*** (4.4) [311]
	<u>108th CONGRESS</u>	
5.63 (3.43) [378]	3.46 (3.87) [312]	2.31 (3.83) [312]

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Conclusions

- Conditional on number of children, parenting an additional female child increases a representatives propensity to vote liberally on womens issues, particularly reproductive rights
- Such a voting pattern does not seem to be explained away by constituency preferences, suggesting not only does parenting daughters affect preferences, but also that personal preferences affect legislative behavior
- The results tell us that besides of enviromental effects we should consider the impact that children have on parents attitudes and behavior
- This paper provides a robustness check on the finding that ideology impacts legislative voting, and also serves to identify an additional component of that ideology: child gender composition