

The gender gap role



There are many differences between men and women which created what is called the gender gap. The gender gap is the differences between women and men, in comparison with social, political, intellectual, cultural, and economic approaches. Throughout history, men and women have had differences which have given women voters more attention in the media that led to the occurrence of the gender gap as well. The gender gap has played many roles in elections, it has persisted from its origins, and has given way to different types of explanations.

The statistical definition of the gender gap is the difference between women and men who support a specific politician, political party, or policy issue. An example of the gender gap in support of a specific politician was in the 2008 presidential elections between Senator Barack Obama and Senator John McCain. Barack Obama won fifty-six percent of women's votes compared with forty-nine percent of men's votes, leaving a gender gap of seven percentage points. The gender gap also developed because of voting behaviors of women in the electorate. For example, history shows that women tend to vote more in favor of the Democratic Party because Democrats support abortion, gay marriage, decreased spending in war, community and social responsibility. Women that are of color and that are not married have different voting behaviors which also tend to vote Democrat because they do not depend on men, support affirmative action, minimum wage, and social programs which contribute to the gender gap. Another example of how the gender gap has developed is whether a person running for office is a male or female. Since women show more support for the Democratic Party than the Republican Party, having more woman run for

elections for the Democrats will lead to a gender gap. Fifty-six percent of women say that they are affiliated with the Democrats and only thirty-three percent of women say that they are affiliated with the Republican Party leaving a gender gap of twenty-three percentage points showing how the gender gap developed. Other factors that developed the gender gap have been of race or ethnicity, age, marital status, parental status, and employment status. Also feminism, the economy, and the role of government developed the gender gap.

The gender gap has also played a role in elections. Before the 1980s gender was not a big deal when it came to voting. Nowadays, gender has played a big role when it comes to political candidates. Today, politicians need to pay a lot of attention to women voters and they need to know what their interests are and how they can win them over and obtain their vote.

Candidates whether male or female, need to meet their specific needs like education, health, and equal rights which are some issues women take seriously in order to win elections. A gender gap in voting displays that the role of women has had an impact in the last eight presidential elections showing that a greater amount of women than men have voted for the Democratic Party. An example of one of the presidential elections where more women voted than men for the Democratic Party was in the 2004 elections between George W. Bush and Senator John Kerry. In this election, fifty-one percent of women voted for Senator John Kerry compared to forty-four percent of men which displayed a difference of seven percentage points in the gender gap. Another role that gender gap has played in elections has been in primary elections. It is rare to see candidates of the same party

going against each other because they usually share the same issues. The only difference and deciding factor that can give an advantage to someone in the Democratic Party who is going against someone else within their party is whether the candidate is a male or female which then creates a gender gap. In a national poll by the Pew Research Center, it was discovered that among Democratic voters women supported Hilary Clinton with fifty-two percent of the votes and for men it was forty-two percent resulting of ten percentage points in the gender gap. Not only does this show that women are more likely to support women like Hilary Clinton, but that women tend to vote more for Democrats at the national level. Another example of Clinton being supported by women and having a role in elections was in the New Hampshire and South Carolina exit polls. In New Hampshire, Hilary Clinton won forty-six percent of the women's votes, but she only won twenty-nine percent of the men's votes which left a gap of seventeen percentage points. In South Carolina, the gender gap in the role of elections was much smaller. Thirty percent of women voted for Hilary, and twenty-three percent of the men voted for her leaving a gap of seven percent. When Barack Obama entered the race against Hilary Clinton, it changed the gender gap role in elections. It is a given that women heavily support and vote for the Democrats and one would assume that they will extend more abundant support to a woman candidate representing the Democratic Party.

The gender gap persists because of political attitudes, choices, and behaviors. We continue to see a gender gap because voting in national elections and other levels in office like in the US House, Senate, and gubernatorial races. Since and after 1982, more women than men vote for

Democrats for the US House of Representatives. A poll taken by Edison Media Research and Mitofsky show that fifty-six percent of women compared to fifty-two percent of men voted for a Democrat in congress in 2008, leaving a four percent gender gap. In the US Senate, gender gaps for 2008 ranged from four to nineteen for women voting for a Democrat candidate than a man. In seven of the eleven gubernatorial races, gender gaps of four to eleven percentage points came about. This goes to show how women continue to support the Democratic Party because they are pushing for more equal rights, and social programs that women want. More women are seeking to get educated which also contributes to the continuing of the gender gap. Women, becoming more independent from men have changed the gender gap and a lot of women did not follow men that switched from being Democrat to Republican. The results became clear after the 1980s women started to be more active in politics which lead to the increase of the gender gap. Another reason the gender gap persists is because of approval ratings towards politicians. Women and men have had different performance evaluations on Congressmen, political parties, presidents, and other political figures. These differences also lead women in particular to vote more for the Democrats especially after the eight years George W. Bush served as president. In 2007, George Bush's popularity was low and twenty-nine percent of women, compared with thirty-five percent of men said that Bush was doing a good job as president. We see a six percentage point gender gap in his evaluation showing that women tend to not like war, and tend to vote for the Democrats and support their policies. To prove that women tend to vote more in favor of the Democrats, Barack Obama in the approval rating of 2008 received seventy-one percent of women's votes compared to sixty-

four percent of the men's votes resulting in a seven percentage point gender gap. Obama's speeches on ending the war in Iraq and later on the Fair Pay Restoration Act contributed to the continuing of the gender gap.

The origins of the gender gap began with the suffrage movement that led to the nineteenth amendment giving women the right to vote. The Suffrage movement also added arguments that women were different from men and would use their votes to make a difference in the world by promoting peace. They argued that women are different because of their experiences as mothers and caregivers, and that they would use those special abilities to promote peace, reform government for the better, remove liquor, and do justice. From 1920 to 1980 women were dependent on men but women being able to vote in 1920 allowed them to slowly exercise their values and issues on the ballot. After 1980, women increasingly became more independent which really explains the true start of the gender gap. Factors that lead women to be more independent was higher divorce rates, longer life spans, women being head of the household, women gaining more professional and managerial jobs. The feminist movement also led to the origins of the gender gap.

There are four explanations of the gender gap that are issues regarding women's roles as compassionate mothers and caregivers, the influence of the feminist movement, economic issues, and the role of government.

As compassionate mothers and caregivers, women are still the majority of health-care workers, teacher, child-care providers, and social workers. This shows that women care more about the concerns and the security of others

and they want to translate that into Democratic votes in the polls to promote their values. Women are more unwilling than men to use military force as a solution to foreign policy. An example of women opposing war in a Rasmussen Report in June 2008 found that twenty-six percent of women, compared to forty-five percent of men held that troops need to stay in Iraq to finish the mission. There was a nineteen percent gender gap which is huge, indicating that women are more compassionate.

The feminist movement is another explanation for the gender gap. After 1980, women's organizations like NOW, pushing the Equal Rights Amendment and putting the gender gap out in the public for all to see. The feminist movement has changed the ways women look at themselves after the 1980s by giving women more political knowledge and maturity, self-confidence, and differences between other men and women that do not identify themselves as a feminist.

Another explanation of the gender gap is on economic factors. It is a fact that more women than men live under the poverty line, and women earn less than men at the workforce. This is a major factor on the gender gap because it increases women dependencies towards the government and leads them to vote for a Democrat. Women are also more likely than men to lose their jobs when government programs are cut because they are providers of social welfare services. The cuts that Republicans do to reduce the size of the government has a negative affect towards women because they end up losing their job but it leads them to vote for a Democrat and thus adding to the gender gap.

The last explanation of the gender gap is on the role of government. It is similar to what I explained the economic factors that women faced but with some differences. Men more than women rather have private-sector solutions to the problems in society by allowing a pure free market and more of a government hands off policy. Women see it differently, they want to reform or fix the government and they are worried that the government might cut off way too many programs that help the needy. Women also believe that government needs to play a role in pushing moral values and society concerns like violence, drugs.

In conclusion, the gender gap has played a huge role in elections, it has persisted, and its origin and explanations are well known to the public. We can see how women have developed and grown after they obtained the right to vote and how today progress for women is widely known in the U. S. The more women get involved in politics and vote for Democrats, the gender gap will continue its course.

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