

The First Daughter Effect:

The Impact of Fathering First Daughters on Men's Preferences on Gender Equality Issues

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For over half a century, scholars have investigated the impact of familial relationships on the political attitudes and behaviors of individuals. As a result, an extensive literature on the politics of the family suggests that familial relationships play a central role in individuals' political socialization – shaping political predispositions (Dinas 2014; Jennings and Niemi 1968, 1974; Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers 2009), influencing political participation (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Jennings and Stoker 1995; Johnson and Dawes 2016; Plutzer 2002), and affecting attitudes about candidates and policies (Elder and Greene 2012; Greenlee 2014; Jennings and Stoker 2005; Urbatsch 2014). The family, once considered a private, apolitical domain, is increasingly a site of interest for political scientists (Strach 2006, 2016).

This development stems in part from the recognition – made explicit in second-wave feminist activism – that “the personal is political” (Siegel 2007). Although familial identities have long organized basic access to a number of social policy provisions in the United States (Mink 1996; Skocpol 1992), since the 1980s these identities have been granted increasing attention by political candidates, elected officials, and policymakers (Greenlee 2014). Today, the family and familial roles are not only central to modern American political culture (Elder and Greene 2012; Greenlee 2014); they are pivotal in political campaigns and the organization of public policy (Self 2012; Strach 2007).

The most well developed area of research examining the political implications of the family focuses on the influence of parents over the political views and behaviors of their children (Jennings and Niemi 1968; Johnson and Dawes 2016; Niemi and Jennings 1991; Verba, Schlozman, and Burns 2005). This work not only investigates the nature of parental transmission of political views, it also suggests the conditions under which parents may have a lasting impact on the political orientations of their offspring (Beck and Jennings 1991; Jennings, Stoker, and

Bowers 2009). Familial political socialization is not limited simply from parent to child. One group of scholars has examined the manner in which children can influence the political attitudes of their parents (McDevitt and Chaffee 2002; Wong and Tseng 2008). Other scholars have explored how marital partners exhibit influence on partisan preferences (Jennings and Stoker 2001; Alas S. Zuckerman, Dasovic, and Fitzgerald 2007), with the bulk of this research focusing on political participation, and the ways in which marriage, divorce, and widowhood propel or dampen voter turnout (Hobbs, Christakis, and Fowler 2014; Jennings and Stoker 1995; Wolfinger and Wolfinger 2008). Some scholars have even shown that siblings can play a role in shaping politically consequential attitudes (Healy and Malhotra 2013; Urbatsch 2014).

More recently, scholars have investigated how having children shapes the political views of parents with some scholarship focusing specifically on the impact of motherhood on women's political views (Greenlee 2014). This research offers insights into how being a parent shapes political stances on a variety of political issues, but many of the dynamics of these complex relationships have remained unexplored or unresolved. One such case is the scholarly debate around the provocative claim that, among men, the experience of fathering daughters has important consequences for their political views. Some studies find that fathering daughters leads men to adopt more conservative views (Conley and Rauscher 2013; Prokos, Baird, and Keene 2010); others indicate that it has the effect of making men more liberal (Shafer and Malhotra 2011; Sharrow 2016; Warner and Steel 1999); and still others suggest it has no impact at all (Jarallah, Perales, and Baxter 2016). These divergent findings – which likely stem from differences in research design, survey data, and most importantly the political attitude or behavior under study – have created considerable confusion about whether and how fatherhood of daughters affects men in politically relevant ways.

Thus, in this paper, we revisit this important matter, focusing on a very specific research question: Does the experience of fathering daughters affect men's opinions toward *sex equity policies*?¹ We focus deliberately on attitudes toward sex equity policies on the grounds that the experience of fathering a daughter is most likely to have an effect on opinions that are specifically related to policies affecting the opportunities afforded women and girls (Washington 2008).

In answering this question, we examine two specific, theoretically-motivated propositions: first, that having a daughter, regardless of the birth order of the daughter in question, leads men to see the benefits of public policies that aim to reduce gender inequality for their daughter(s), and thus become more likely to support these policies (what we call the *fatherhood "linked fate" hypothesis*); and second, that having a daughter as a man's first child is a critical event in the political socialization of men, such that this experience of "first daughterhood" will lead to higher levels of support for sex equity policies in comparison to men who enter into fatherhood by having a son (what we call the *first daughterhood hypothesis*).

In testing these two hypotheses, we use original representative survey data from a module on the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) specifically designed to investigate the impact of fathering daughters on men's support for policy proposals to address sex discrimination and advance gender equity. Unlike previous empirical explorations of the

¹ Throughout this paper, we will use the terms "sex equity policy" and "gender equity policy" interchangeably when referring to policy areas aimed at creating more equitable conditions for American women at work and at school. Despite a significant literature in feminist studies that explores the important analytic differences between categories of "sex" and "gender," we invoke these terms as they are used colloquially in public discourse (see Dietz 2003 for broad overview). Scholars have noted the limitations of policy language embedded in sex non-discrimination policy which problematically invokes and therefore essentializes ideas about binary sex difference in policy design (Sharrow 2017). Nevertheless, "sex equity policies" which invoke the legal category of sex (but not the legal category of gender) are also frequently referred to as "gender equity policies" in both idiomatic and scholarly conversations.

bearing of daughters on men's political opinions, these data allow us to: 1) control for a wide array of demographic characteristics, political predispositions, and political attitudes associated with opinions about gender equity policies, and 2) to parse out the effects of having a daughter as a first child from the effects of having a daughter in general.

The results of our analyses suggest that the experience of having a daughter as a *first child* – but *not the effect of having a daughter in general* – significantly increases fathers' support for policies designed to increase gender equity. We use a range of techniques to increase confidence in this inference. In addition to traditional OLS regression modeling, we employ entropy balancing techniques (Hainmueller 2012) to ensure balance on all covariates across “treatment” (fathers who had a daughter as their first child) and “control” (fathers who had a son as their first child), and thereby rule out the possibility that our findings are an artifact of imbalances in our data. We also conduct a series of “placebo” tests, showing that the experience of having a daughter as a first child does *not* affect fathers' attitudes in three policy areas - gun regulation, environmental policy, and immigration control - that are orthogonal to women's place in society, per se, and thus should not be directly affected by the first daughterhood effect. Overall, our results are consistent with the view that the first daughterhood effect significantly influences men's attitudes toward policies pertaining directly to women's opportunities in society, but does not similarly affect policy attitudes more generally.

What follows is a discussion of the specific scholarly controversy over whether and how fathering daughters affects men's political attitudes. We then delineate two theoretical propositions that suggest how and why daughters should matter to their fathers' attitudes on gender equity policies. Next, we turn to our own research design, highlighting how our approach overcomes limitations in existing work. We present the main results of our analysis and the

findings of our “placebo” tests. Our conclusion discusses the implications of our findings for both the controversy over the political impact of fatherhood of daughters and for our understanding of the politics of the family.

The Fathers-of-Daughters Controversy

Much of the scholarship on the political consequences of parenting children has focused on mothers (Eagly et al. 2004; Elder and Greene 2012; Greenlee 2014; Howell and Day 2000). Recently, however, there has been a growth of interest in the effect of fatherhood of daughters on men’s political predispositions, beliefs about gender equity, and attitudes toward policy issues. Several early studies, using second-hand, cross-sectional data sources, provided evidence that fatherhood of daughters led men to more strongly identify with the Republican Party and to adopt more *conservative* positions on gender-related issues, including abortion, teen sex, and affirmative action (Conley and Rauscher 2013; Prokos, Baird, and Keene 2010). But other scholars, using different sources of data and contrasting methods, concluded that fathers with daughters exhibit more *liberal* attitudes on a range of gender issues, and support left-wing political parties (Oswald and Powdthavee 2010; Shafer and Malhotra 2011; Warner 1991; Warner and Steel 1999; Washington 2008). Adding further confusion to the controversy, Jarallah, Perales, and Baxter (2016), using longitudinal data from the Income and Labor Dynamics in Australia Survey, concluded that fatherhood of daughters (as opposed to sons) had no significant impact on men’s gender-role attitudes.

The inconsistency of results across studies is troubling. From the perspective of political science, however, an equally serious concern is that the attitudes examined in previous studies are far afield from some of the most comprehensive *policy interventions* aimed at altering the lives of American girls and women. Since the late 1960s and 1970s, feminist movement politics

have become increasingly institutionalized in public policy (Gelb and Palley 1979; Goss 2012). From Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, to pay equity policy and other workplace sex non-discrimination provisions, public policy has played a central role in creating new expectations about the rights of women and girls (Kelly and Dobbin 1999; McCann 1994; Rose 2016; Turk 2016). However, despite ample evidence that public opinion on sex equity issues has co-evolved in light of these policy changes (see Burns and Gallagher 2010 for a recent review of the literature), we still know very little about whether the experience of having daughters shapes men's sex equity policy preferences.

With these considerations in mind, we develop two novel hypotheses for studying this relationship based on the literature on “policy feedback” and the literature on parenthood as a “critical event.”

Fatherhood “Linked Fate” Hypothesis

First, we hypothesize that fathering a daughter will contribute to support for policies that ensure more equitable treatment of girls and women. The relationship between parental identity and public policy is a persistent, if under-appreciated, factor in scholarly literatures on policy feedback (Campbell 2012; Mettler and Soss 2004). Parental status is often central to public policy provisions – single mothers, for example, have always been principal stakeholders in welfare policy (Gordon 1995; Skocpol 1992; Soss 1999) – and scholars have recently turned to theorize how parenthood and opinions toward public policy are interrelated. This new focus draws upon an enduring insight from E.E. Schattschneider who suggested long ago that, “new policies create a new politics” (1935; as characterized in Soss and Schram 2007, 111). We hypothesize that this applies specifically in the lives of fathers, thereby engaging and specifying the literature relating parental status to policy opinions.

Why might the experience of having a *daughter* matter? Public policies aimed at promoting equitable treatment for women and girls have altered both the culture of gender equity and the actual treatment received by women and girls at school, in sports, and at work (Brake 2010; Hanson, Guilfooy, and Pillai 2009; McDonagh and Pappano 2007; Turk 2016). Although much of what we know about the impacts of these policy-induced shifts pertains to women (e.g., Clarke and Ayres 2014; Sharrow 2017; Stevenson 2010), research has started to delineate the spillover effects of sex equity policies in the lives of men. For example, one study of political engagement around sex equity policy in education found that fathers became activists advocating on behalf of their daughters in support of Title IX (Sharrow 2016). Additional “feedback” studies suggest that policy opinion and activism may be inflected through parental identity in other policy arenas as well. For example, parental status is associated with the relationship between policy opinions and political behavior within other education policy domains (Lavery 2017; Rhodes 2015).

The experience of fathering a daughter is therefore implicated, perhaps in unexpected ways, in gendered policy spheres. Although how fathers parent daughters has received less attention than the father-son dyad, a number of studies highlight a consequential change to American fathering brought about by girls’ increased athletic opportunity under Title IX – men are more apt to father their daughters “through” sports (Graham, Dixon, and Hazen-Swann 2016; Kay 2009; Messner 2009). Sex equity policy required growth in opportunities for girls and women and provided men with new and profound ways to feel involved and invested in equitable opportunities for their daughters.² This, we suggest, may provide for fathers of

² Although the question may be reasonably posed whether relationships with other girls and women in men’s lives (such as sisters, mothers, or female partners), the literature suggests no

daughters a sense of gendered “linked fate” – through which men come to identify with the fate of women and girls generally through the experience of fathering and parenting female children – and may therefore lead fathers of daughters to be more supportive of equity imperatives (Dawson 1994).³ In line with more qualitative findings (Sharrow 2016), we therefore hypothesize:

H1, fatherhood “linked fate” hypothesis: Men who father daughters, regardless of the birth order of their daughters, will express higher levels of support for sex equity policies compared to men who father sons.

First Daughterhood Hypothesis

Relatedly, we hypothesize that entering into fatherhood with a female child, which we call a “first daughterhood,” should contribute to greater support for policies that seek to reduce gender inequality. Why might *first* daughters matter? In the political socialization literature, there is evidence that political experiences, contexts, or messages that occur early in one’s life can have an important and persistent impact on political preferences. Scholars have typically focused on the malleability of youth in understanding why these experiences are consequential to political attitudes (Schuman and Scott 1989; Sears 1981; Sears and Levy 2003). Dinas (2013) makes one such an argument in examining why the “impressionable years” – typically the ages of 18-25 – are particularly consequential to the political evaluations of individuals. In an effort to understand precisely why early adulthood appears to be important for individual political development, Dinas asserts that it is “the weight” individuals attach to the political events and information that they receive during this period because they are newly engaged in the political

direct directional hypothesis. Nevertheless, we explore the potential impact of these other gendered relationships in our analyses.

³ This hypothesis extends the robust literature on how public policy shapes political identity and activism among beneficiary constituencies (c.f., Campbell 2003; Mettler 2005; Soss 2000).

sphere (Dinas 2013, 868). Having just entered the political arena, young people are more sensitive to information they receive.

While Dinas (2013) focuses on the role of age and impact that political events have during early adulthood, the dynamic he explores offers a window into thinking about why first daughters, rather than daughters born after a male child, might be especially consequential to men's attitudes on sex equity policies. It may be that the initial entry into fatherhood with a daughter marks a pivotal moment when men may awaken to the ways in which gender inequality persists in society, or may be newly receptive to political messages that identify gender inequality. Like young adults who enter into the political sphere with weak political preferences and who are then exposed to strong information flows, new fathers of daughters may also encounter new information or bring a new perspective to bear on their evaluations of previously held positions (Sears and Funk 1999; Sears and Levy 2003).⁴ This increased sensitivity may move these men toward more gender egalitarian policy positions. However, for men whose entry into fatherhood (with a son) did not orient them toward gender inequality in the same way, subsequent daughters may not have the same impact on their policy preferences (see Cronqvist et al. 2016; Dahl, Dezső, and Ross 2012 for similar argument concerning the behavior of CEOs).

⁴ Scholars have asserted that the transition into fatherhood is a "critical juncture in men's development" (Rob Palkovitz and Palm 2009, 7) because of its complex and multifaceted effects (LaRossa and LaRossa 1981; Nystrom and Ohrling 2004; Robin Palkovitz and Sussman 1988). Not only do men adopt a new social role, but they also experience new responsibilities, strain, and emotional attachments (Nystrom and Ohrling 2004). Scholars have also noted that as a child grows, fathers experience additional transitions in relation to their fathering role, as the concerns and demands on a father shift with the development of a child (Rob Palkovitz and Palm 2009). While this literature does not speak to a father's political concerns or development of political self, we posit here that the "critical juncture" of becoming a father, and the subsequent new experiences that a father has with a first daughter, may be politically consequential.

Thus, this reading of the political socialization literature suggests that first daughters should lead to more liberal stances on sex equity policies.⁵ We therefore hypothesize:

H2, *first daughterhood hypothesis*: Men whose first child is a daughter will express higher levels of support for sex equity policies as compared to men whose first child is a son.

Data and Methods

In evaluating these hypotheses, we make use of original, cross-sectional survey data that allows us to more thoroughly investigate the repercussions of having a daughter on the gender-linked policy preferences of fathers, while considering the implications of family structure that may shape the impact of fatherhood in important ways. These new data can help to better adjudicate the controversy over the political consequences of fathering daughters, and move the literature closer to uncovering the true impact of daughters on fathers' policy preferences.

The data in this study come from questions we designed that were placed on a module of the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES). The CCES is an online survey of over 64,600 American adults conducted via YouGov on behalf of over 50 colleges and universities. This long-standing, collaborative study has been demonstrated to produce estimates similar to telephone and mail surveys (Ansolabehere and Schaffner 2014).⁶ The CCES gathers a

⁵ Shafer and Malhotra (2011) find that first daughters reduce fathers' support for traditional gender roles, though they take this analytical approach because methodologically, the sex of a first-born child best approximates the conditions of a natural experiment. Yet, research on birth order suggests this mode of analysis may capture a meaningful difference in the parenting experience of the first child. For example, Price (2008) finds that first born children get more time with their parents than later born children. These effects are larger when the first child is a boy, and further magnified if the second child is a girl because men generally spend more time with sons than daughters (Price 2008, 242). Thus, while Shafer and Malhotra's intention is to more cleanly delineate the random assignment of sex to a child from the reproductive choices of parents who may wish to have both girls and boys, their operationalization of "daughter" may be capturing the unique nature of the relationship between a father and his first born daughter.

⁶ See <http://cces.gov.harvard.edu/> for full survey description and data archive. At this time, only a preliminary release of the 2016 CCES Common Content Dataset and questionnaires are

representative sample of respondents of “opt-in” volunteers from the YouGov database using data culled from the U.S. Census Bureau, voter registration databases, the Pew U.S Religious Landscape Survey, and the Current Population Survey. The 2016 CCES was in the field during September and October 2016 (pre-election), and in November 2016 (post-election).

The total number of respondents available to researchers in our module was 1,500; however, as described in detail below, the total number of fathers of children (the subject of our study, and the operational definition of which is described below) was significantly smaller.⁷ Our questions were designed to provide maximum insight on fathers’ attitudes toward policies pertaining to gender equity and opportunities for women as well as the family structures (in particular the gender and birth order of children) of fathers in our study.

Our primary dependent variable is constructed from respondent answers to three questions querying fathers’ attitudes about three policies relating to sex equity: policies “requiring schools, colleges, and universities to provide equal athletic opportunities to girls and boys” (Title IX); policies “that would address the gender gap in income in the United States” (Gender Income Gap); and policies to support “better enforcement [of laws] that outlaw sexual harassment in the workplace” (Sexual Harassment Enforcement). Support for each of these policies was measured on a 5-point scale, from “Strongly oppose” to “Strongly support.” We rescaled each of these measures to a 0-1 scale. Given the high alpha scores between these items (among fathers, $\alpha=.84$, $\text{mean}=.67$, $\text{St.Dev}=.26$), we created a Gender Equality Policy Scale from these three measures that serves as our primary dependent variable.

available online. Data from specialized modules, including the data on which our findings described herein are based, are not yet publically available.

⁷ Since becoming a father entails a variety of selection processes, we did not compare fathers and non-fathers in order to avoid inappropriate comparisons.

We asked respondents several questions about family structure to obtain a clear sense of respondents' parental roles and the gender of their children. In this study, "parents" are individuals who self-identified as male or female on the CCES Common Content (the portion of the survey asked of all 64,600 respondents) and indicated that they had children (this question was posed only to respondents in our module and we directed respondents to count all children, whether alive or deceased, from all marriages/relationships, and regardless of age).⁸ Of our 1,500 respondents, 931 identified themselves as parents of children, and 521 did not.⁹ We then identified as "fathers" all individuals who self-identified as male and indicated that they were parents of children (n=399).

All men who indicated that they were parents of at least one child were directed to a series of questions about each of their children. For each child (up to five), fathers were asked to identify the child's year of birth, gender, relationship ("biological mother or father," "adoptive mother or father," "stepmother or stepfather," "foster mother or foster father," "partner of child's parent or guardian," "grandmother or grandfather," or "other"), and living arrangements ("child lives with me full time," "child lives with me half of the time," "child lives with me less than half of the time," or "child does not live with me"). With this information in hand, we were able to determine the age and gender of each of respondents' children¹⁰. In the analysis of fathers that follows, we focus on (1) whether fathers had daughters and (2) whether fathers had daughters as

⁸ One hundred percent of respondents identified as either male or female. Two percent of respondents also identified as "transgender" on a question specifically querying identification with transgender identity, and an additional 1.4 percent also responded as "prefer not to say" on this question.

⁹ Forty-eight respondents did not provide a response to the question querying the number of their children.

¹⁰ We limit our analysis to respondents who indicated that they had five or less children which decreased our sample of fathers to 382.

their first child. 263 of our 382 fathers (69 percent) were fathers of daughters and 170 of 382 fathers (45 percent) of daughters had a daughter as a first child.

Because we are suggesting the inclusion of new variables pertaining to fatherhood of daughters in analyses of gender policy attitudes, we have the responsibility to subject our claims to a difficult test. For this reason, we also controlled for a wide array of factors that may also influence fathers' attitudes about policies relating to gender equity. In the analyses that follow, we controlled for respondent's: gender, race, age, educational attainment, marital status, income, party identification, ideology, and whether the respondent had a sister (in light of the findings regarding siblings in Healy and Malhotra 2013). Given the potential influence of female marital partner on the gender equity policy preferences of men, we restricted our analysis to heterosexual men who identify themselves as fathers of at least one child. We also control for a respondent's more general support for gender equity by including a four-item, "Gender Equality Scale" index ($\alpha=.31$) that taps their support for gender equality (Shafer and Malhotra 2011).¹¹ Finally, we include a four item hostile sexism scale that measures a respondent's level of prejudice directed at women ($\alpha=.86$) (Glick and Fiske 1996; Schaffner, MacWilliams, and Nteta 2017).¹²

¹¹ This composite measure is based on respondents' levels of agreement with four statements: (A) "A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works," (B) "If his wife works full-time, a husband should share equally in household chores, such as cooking, cleaning, and washing" (reverse coded), (C) "A husband should earn a larger salary than his wife," and (D) "The way society is set up, men have more opportunities than women" (reverse coded). The order in which respondents were presented with these statements was randomized. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement to the statements on a 5-point scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." These measures were also used by Cassese and Holman (2017).

¹² This composite measure is based on respondents' levels of agreement with four statements (as developed by Glick and Fiske 1996 in their Ambivalent Sexism Inventory): (A) "Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for "equality," (B) "Women are too easily offended," (C) "Women seek to gain power by getting control over men", and (D) "When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against."

Results

Do fathers with daughters, as compared to fathers without daughters, differ in their political attitudes on policy proposals to promote gender equity? Model 1 in Table 1 presents an ordinary least square (OLS) regression model that explores the impact of fatherhood of daughters in predicting support for our index of gender equality policies that includes a number of demographic and political controls alongside our measure of fatherhood of daughters. As seen in Table 1, a number of factors help to account for fathers' opinions on supporting our index of gender-based policy issues. Most notably, fathers who: (1) identify as Republicans, and (2) have the strongest conservative ideological attachments are both significantly more likely to oppose policies that seek to level the socioeconomic playing field for women in the United States. By far, views on gender equality are the strongest predictor of fathers' support for gender-based policy solutions. Here, movement from the least supportive position on the Gender Equality Scale to the most supportive position, predicts a sixty-five-point increase in support for policies that uniquely benefit women in the U.S.

What role, if any, does the experience of having a daughter play in predicting support for gender equality policies? As depicted in Table 1, the gender policy preferences of fathers with daughters do not significantly differ from the policy preferences of fathers without daughters. Thus, simply having a daughter, or daughters, does *not* seem to affect fathers' attitudes on gender equity policies.

Insert Table 1 Here

The results from model 1 in Table 1 provide no support for the *fatherhood "linked fate" hypothesis* as the experience of having a daughter has no significant impact on men's gender

policy preferences. However, in Model 2 of Table 1 we examine whether fathers who had a daughter as a first child differ from those who had a son as a first child (our *first daughterhood hypothesis*). Once again, we find that partisanship and ideology both predict opposition to the gender policies under examination and support for the Gender Equality Scale remains the strongest predictor of opinions on these policies. However, we also find that having a daughter as a first child emerges as significant predictor ($p=.035$) of support for egalitarian gender policies. Indeed, moving (analytically) from having a son as a first child to having a daughter as a father's first child leads to a ten-point increase in support for the gender equity policies under analysis.

Entropy Balancing

While we are confident in the results presented above, we recognize the desire to further establish the empirical veracity of the first daughter effect. We therefore replicate our analysis using data that was preprocessed using entropy balancing (Hainmueller 2012). For fathers of children, the unit weights were calibrated to ensure balance on all of the covariates. Specifically, in line with Hainmueller and Xu (2013), we imposed balance on the first, second, and third moments of non-dichotomous covariates as well as on first order interactions (we excluded squared or cubed terms for binary variables because adjusting for the first moment is sufficient to adjust for higher moments, and excluded nonsensical interactions). We estimate the same regression model as shown in the previous section, but using the entropy balancing weights rather than the CCES survey weights, in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 Here

As Table 2 shows, the estimate of the effect of having a daughter as a first child in the regression model with the processed data is quite similar to that in the survey regression model using the unprocessed data. The model suggests that having a daughter as a first child increases

heterosexual fathers' support on the Gender Equality Scale by .07 (or 7 percent) on the 0-1 scale; this effect is statistically significant at the .01 level.

Placebo Tests

We have found that the experience of having a daughter as a first child is a critical event that fundamentally transforms fathers' views of gender matters, making them more favorably disposed toward policies designed to increase gender equity in society. An important secondary implication of our argument is that the experience of having a daughter as a first child should *not* affect fathers' attitudes toward policies that are orthogonal to women's place in society. Indeed, if we found that having a daughter as a first child did affect attitudes in unrelated issue areas, it would provide circumstantial evidence that our main results were spurious, attributable to some underlying imbalance between our "treatment" and "control" groups rather than to the experience of first becoming a parent to a female child.

Thus, in this section we conduct a series of placebo tests, investigating the effect of having a daughter as a first child on fathers' attitudes on a range of policies – gun regulation, environmental protection, and immigration – that are not directly related to gender equality, *per se*. Our hypothesis is that having a daughter as a first child should *not* affect fathers' support for any of these policies. For these supplementary analyses, we selected relevant batteries of questions from the 2016 CCES Common Content. We coded responses to each question in each policy area 0-1, with 0 indicating a conservative position and 1 suggesting a liberal response. We modeled responses using the same independent variables used to model support for policies to promote gender equity. In addition to modeling responses for each question individually using

logistic regression, we scaled the items for each policy area and modeled values on these scales using OLS regression.¹³ These results are shown in Tables 3, 4, and 5.

Insert Table 3 Here

Insert Table 4 Here

Insert Table 5 Here

Although the details of each model in each issue area vary, the crucial points are that – across all of the models – the coefficient estimates for the indicator for having a daughter for a first child have inconsistent signs (despite the fact that all dependent variables are coded in the same ideological direction) and are hardly ever statistically significant. These generally null findings are consistent with our expectation that having a daughter as a first child should *not* affect fathers' attitudes in issue areas not directly related to women's and girls' place in society, and thus reinforce our primary argument about the localized effect of having a daughter as a first child on fathers' attitudes about gender equality.

Discussion

Scholars have long been aware that family relationships and dynamics affect individuals' political attitudes and behavior, but they have only recently begun to investigate whether and how the sex of children influences fathers' orientations toward political matters. Unfortunately, this literature has reached contradictory findings concerning the influence of daughters on men's political attitudes and has largely ignored the question how the experience of having daughters affects fathers' support for *public policies* designed to promote gender equality.

¹³ Because these issue items did not always scale reliably, we modeled items individually. However, we also modeled the scaled items in order to create clearer parallels with the models in our main analysis.

In this paper, we investigate whether fathers with daughters express stronger support for gender equity policies. We theorize that the experience of having daughters may increase fathers' support for policies that promote gender equality through two distinct mechanisms: *fatherhood linked fate*, in which men come to identify with the fate of women and girls generally through the experience of fathering female children and thereby adopt more supportive attitudes; and *first daughterhood*, in which the experience of having a daughter as a first child acts as a critical realigning event that reshapes fathers' attitudes on gender matters.

Using an original and representative survey of American fathers, we find that while the experience of having a daughter per se has little effect on men's sex equity policy preferences, men with a first daughter when compared to men with a first son are more likely to express support for these policies. These results comport with recent work concerning the impact of first daughters on the behavior of male CEOs (Cronqvist et al. 2016; Dahl, Dezsó, and Ross 2012), the more general scholarship that finds that daughters have a liberalizing effect on men's political attitudes (Shafer and Malhotra 2011; Sharrow 2016; Warner and Steel 1999), and our hypothesis that a first daughter represents a critical socializing (and seemingly politicizing) event in the lives of men. Our results suggest that gender and gendered relationships may matter in a way that is not yet fully appreciated or understood when examining the advancement of policies that promote gender equality. Significant scholarship has rightly focused on the impact that women, many of whom ascribe to the label of being a "feminist," have had in re-ordering public sentiment around sex equity concerns (Goss and Heaney 2010; McCammon et al. 2017; McCann 1994; Turk 2016; Waylen et al. 2013). Our work suggests that feminist activism and equity policies may have found unlikely allies within the family, in light of institutionalized policy.

What then explains the *first* daughter effect? It is possible that a more complicated form of political socialization *and* policy socialization co-occur for men fathering daughters as their first-born child. These fathers not only enter into a new and important role with a daughter, but also experience all the subsequent transitions within fatherhood first with their daughter. Thus, at every stage of their daughter's development, these fathers may feel newly attuned not only to gender inequality in the world, but also to the existing means of policy aimed at addressing inequality and discrimination. Policies aimed at athletic or pay inequities, as well as the enforcement of sexual harassment prohibitions, may begin to feel more personal to men who father daughters and these results provide initial evidence of more widespread "feedback effects" of policy in men's lives *as* fathers of daughters. The feedback literature has been more attentive to feedback effects on *direct* beneficiary populations (Campbell 2003; Mettler 2005; Sharrow 2017; Soss 1999), leaving open the question of how feedback effects may operate for policy populations who are only *indirectly* implicated in policy implementation (Sharrow 2016). Given the nature of our findings, additional research that more thoroughly theorizes these relationships among fathers, daughters, and public policy – relying on diverse, probative research methods -- is necessary.

At a minimum, our empirical analyses indicate that familial relationships may be more important to shifting understandings of liberal feminist policy than scholars have yet acknowledged. Rather than suggesting that studies of feminist politics no longer require attention to the impact of feminist activists on the political sphere, our results point to the positive spillover and/or feedback effects of feminist aims into the lives of men. In this sense, our results also point to a potentially dramatic, if currently understated impact of feminist activism: by altering the political realm to be more attentive to women's rights, feminists have created the

conditions under which men may see their daughters – and their daughters as potential policy beneficiaries – in a new light as well. This, in turn, may alter men’s opinions towards public policy aimed at pursuing sex equity, and the objectives of sex equality more generally.

In this paper we find renewed support, perhaps in an unexpected way, for the claim that the personal is political. Our data, crafted for the specific task of adjudicating contradictory findings in the literature, suggest that familial relationships are an important domain of analysis for understanding the shifting gender relationships at stake in contemporary gender politics. The increased support among men with first-born daughters for policies that support gender equality reinforces the notion that the family is central to political life, political attitudes, and public policy.

Table 1 – OLS Model of Support for Index of Gender-based Policy Positions Among All Fathers, 2016 CCES, with Survey Weights

	Model 1	Model 2
	Gender-based Policy Index	Gender-based Policy Index
White	-.03 (.04)	-.03 (.04)
Age (1=Oldest)	-.08 (.11)	-.08 (.11)
Education	-.08 (.06)	-.09 (.05)
Income	-.11 (.09)	-.14 (.09)
PartyID (1=Republican)	-.18*** (.05)	-.19*** (.05)
Ideology (1=Conservative)	-.25** (.09)	-.26** (.09)
Gender Equality Scale (1= Support for Gender Equality)	.65*** (.11)	.70*** (.11)
Hostile Sexism Scale (1= Opposition to Hostile Sexism)	.04 (.07)	.02 (.07)
Married	.02 (.04)	.02 (.04)
Sister	-.06 (.03)	-.05 (.03)
Father of Daughter	.02 (.03)	-.05 (.04)
Father of First Daughter	N/A	.10** (.03)
Constant	.71*** (.14)	.68*** (.14)
R-Square	.43	.45
N	258	258

Note: These are weighted unstandardized coefficients.

Standard errors are in parentheses.

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Table 2 - OLS Model of Support for Index of Gender-based Policy Positions Among All Fathers, 2016 CCES, with Entropy Balancing Weights

	Gender-based Policy Index
White	-0.00876 (0.0311)
Age (1=Oldest)	-0.100 (0.0917)
Education	-0.111** (0.0513)
Income	-0.134* (0.0737)
Party ID (1=Republican)	-0.201*** (0.0443)
Ideology (1=Conservative)	-0.232*** (0.0687)
Gender Equality Scale (1=Support for Gender Equality)	0.774*** (0.101)
Hostile Sexism Scale (1=Opposition to Hostile Sexism)	0.0508 (0.0574)
Married	0.0197 (0.0320)
Sister	-0.0690** (0.0282)
Father of Daughter	-0.00114 (0.0364)
Father of First Daughter	0.0732*** (0.0280)
Constant	0.630*** (0.119)
R-Square	.50
N	258

Note: These are weighted unstandardized coefficients.

Standard errors are in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 3 – Placebo Test, Gun Regulation, 2016 CCES

	Back ground Checks	Publication of Owners' Identities	Ban Assault Rifles	Concealed Carry Permits	Gun Attitudes Index
White	-0.811 (0.697)	-0.832** (0.379)	-1.039** (0.491)	-0.811* (0.481)	-0.150*** (0.0524)
Age (1=Oldest)	0.553 (1.869)	1.947 (1.246)	3.401** (1.538)	2.758** (1.344)	0.345** (0.148)
Education	2.043** (0.909)	-0.936 (0.647)	1.124 (0.755)	1.548** (0.741)	0.127* (0.0762)
Income	-1.183 (1.468)	-0.152 (0.927)	-0.273 (1.059)	0.0438 (1.142)	-0.0353 (0.112)
Party ID (1=Republican)	-1.147 (0.782)	-1.700*** (0.562)	-1.408** (0.706)	-1.206** (0.573)	-0.224*** (0.0684)
Ideology (1=Conservative)	-2.276 (1.936)	1.211 (0.980)	-1.680* (0.984)	-1.745* (0.964)	-0.168 (0.117)
Gender Equality Scale (1=Support for Gender Equality)	4.860* (2.723)	1.614 (1.309)	4.449*** (1.564)	1.039 (1.434)	0.397** (0.170)
Hostile Sexism Scale (1=Opposition to Hostile Sexism)	0.756 (0.976)	0.882 (0.791)	1.008 (0.767)	1.420* (0.739)	0.157* (0.0814)
Married	0.175 (0.605)	-0.709* (0.409)	-0.407 (0.453)	-0.293 (0.474)	-0.0635 (0.0486)
Sister	0.337 (0.497)	0.476 (0.394)	0.299 (0.365)	0.897** (0.377)	0.0732* (0.0430)
Father of Daughter	0.713 (0.617)	-0.869 (0.547)	-0.531 (0.601)	0.264 (0.499)	-0.0303 (0.0520)
Father of First Daughter	-0.812 (0.616)	0.868* (0.477)	0.712 (0.578)	-0.0944 (0.481)	0.0358 (0.0528)
Constant	0.705 (3.509)	-0.821 (1.484)	-1.931 (1.785)	-0.625 (1.609)	0.447** (0.202)
R-Square	NA	NA	NA	NA	.35
N	271	271	269	269	271

Note: These are weighted unstandardized coefficients. All dependent variables coded so that 0=conservative position and 1=liberal position.

Standard errors are in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 4 – Placebo Test, Environmental Policy, 2016 CCES

	EPA Regulate CO2	Raise Fuel Efficiency Standards	Require Use of Renewable Fuels	Strengthen Enforcement of Clean Air/Clean Water	Environmental Attitudes Index
White	-0.277 (0.648)	-0.552 (0.472)	0.538 (0.520)	-0.604 (0.504)	-0.0201 (0.0637)
Age (1=Oldest)	-0.484 (1.651)	-1.751 (1.340)	-0.913 (1.546)	-2.897** (1.434)	-0.261 (0.189)
Education	-0.0494 (0.796)	-0.154 (0.725)	-0.461 (0.788)	0.171 (0.772)	-0.0229 (0.0965)
Income	0.341 (1.240)	-0.537 (0.994)	0.140 (1.139)	-0.00687 (1.203)	0.0406 (0.151)
Party ID (1=Republican)	-2.625*** (0.717)	-1.647*** (0.569)	-1.237** (0.601)	-1.697*** (0.649)	-0.335*** (0.0813)
Ideology (1=Conservative)	-2.193* (1.227)	-2.790*** (1.041)	-2.417** (1.150)	-2.279* (1.274)	-0.396*** (0.137)
Gender Equality Scale (1=Support for Gender Equality)	4.471** (1.805)	2.243 (1.555)	5.054*** (1.618)	2.881* (1.716)	0.555*** (0.190)
Hostile Sexism Scale (1=Opposition to Hostile Sexism)	1.253 (0.870)	0.712 (0.808)	1.668** (0.800)	2.392*** (0.766)	0.238** (0.102)
Married	-1.079** (0.529)	-0.105 (0.450)	-0.375 (0.492)	-0.767 (0.491)	-0.0914 (0.0643)
Sister	0.467 (0.396)	0.604 (0.402)	0.358 (0.363)	0.159 (0.416)	0.0454 (0.0542)
Father of Daughter	-0.532 (0.723)	0.521 (0.477)	-0.749 (0.595)	-0.181 (0.542)	-0.0263 (0.0697)
Father of First Daughter	0.296 (0.713)	-0.405 (0.460)	0.746 (0.527)	-0.151 (0.532)	0.0107 (0.0656)
Constant	1.814 (2.760)	3.341** (1.679)	0.431 (2.265)	4.147* (2.121)	0.917*** (0.223)
R-Square	NA	NA	NA	NA	.42
N	271	271	271	271	271

Note: These are weighted unstandardized coefficients. All dependent variables coded so that 0=conservative position and 1=liberal position.

Standard errors are in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 5 – Placebo Test, Immigration Policy, 2016 CCES

	Grant Legal Status to Job Holders	Increase Border Patrols	Grant Legal Status to Young People	Identify and Deport Undocument-ed	Immigration Attitudes Index
White	0.127 (0.517)	0.0151 (0.480)	-0.636 (0.426)	-0.283 (0.456)	-0.0425 (0.0625)
Age (1=Oldest)	-0.349 (1.251)	-0.702 (1.375)	1.594 (1.318)	-0.481 (1.257)	-0.0194 (0.145)
Education	1.318* (0.708)	0.982 (0.677)	1.013 (0.703)	1.111 (0.679)	0.203** (0.0809)
Income	-0.924 (1.044)	-1.541 (1.079)	0.0195 (1.086)	0.768 (1.085)	-0.0706 (0.128)
Party ID (1=Republican)	-1.815*** (0.611)	-2.030*** (0.559)	-0.345 (0.609)	-2.273*** (0.587)	-0.321*** (0.0610)
Ideology (1=Conservative)	-0.00770 (0.858)	0.150 (0.948)	-2.626*** (0.987)	-0.277 (0.993)	-0.132 (0.118)
Gender Equality Scale (1=Support for Gender Equality)	5.161*** (1.495)	1.204 (1.485)	1.644 (1.308)	2.806** (1.390)	0.478*** (0.165)
Hostile Sexism Scale (1=Opposition to Hostile Sexism)	1.332* (0.771)	1.302 (0.809)	2.019*** (0.729)	1.286* (0.757)	0.278*** (0.0798)
Married	-0.745* (0.433)	-0.0626 (0.418)	0.0678 (0.462)	-0.386 (0.460)	-0.0549 (0.0537)
Sister	-0.0409 (0.372)	-0.156 (0.363)	-0.0977 (0.361)	0.455 (0.365)	-0.00399 (0.0432)
Father of daughter	-0.432 (0.472)	-0.137 (0.476)	-0.869 (0.549)	0.863* (0.475)	-0.0290 (0.0539)
Father of First Daughter	0.626 (0.482)	0.572 (0.474)	0.207 (0.510)	-0.880* (0.494)	0.0244 (0.0493)
Constant	-1.296 (1.459)	0.620 (1.732)	0.763 (1.552)	-0.240 (1.522)	0.540*** (0.184)
R-Square	NA	NA	NA	NA	.41
N	271	271	271	271	271

Note: These are weighted unstandardized coefficients. All dependent variables coded so that 0=conservative position and 1=liberal position.

Standard errors are in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

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