

**Pay Equity at the Crossroads:
Intersectionality and Support for Fair Pay Policies**

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Abstract: Gender-based pay discrimination emerged as an important issue during President Obama's 2012 re-election campaign and again in his inaugural address. Little research has evaluated public support for pay equity or explored the complex racial, class, and gender dynamics underlying it. In this paper, we present the results of two experiments embedded in the pre- and post-election waves of the 2012 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey. The first frames pay inequity in terms of race and ethnicity to determine the extent to which support for pay equity legislation varies based on characteristics of the women who would purportedly benefit most from government action. The second experiment addresses the intersection between gender and class by framing pay equity in terms of occupational characteristics, varying the occupational sector (female dominated, male dominated) and prestige (high, low) of the group of women most likely to benefit most from fair pay policies. The results of these two studies highlight the complexity underlying opinion in this area and the utility of an intersectional approach to the study of Americans' political thinking about government action on behalf of women.

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Introduction

The relative stability of the wage gap between men and women belies significant advances in women's educational, occupational, and political attainment following the passage of major civil rights legislation in the 1960s and 1970s. While policies like the Equal Pay Act and Title VII reduced the disparity in earnings between men and women by about 19 percent since 1975, the wage gap has remained fairly stable—fluctuating slightly between 76 and 78 percent since 2002 (IWPR 2012). This decade-long plateau points to the persistence of social-structural factors and processes that contribute to economic inequality for women and is often cited as a justification for further legislative efforts to regulate pay disparity. Recent efforts to extend broader protections against pay discrimination have proven polarizing and highly partisan. For instance, when the Paycheck Fairness Act came to a vote in the Senate in 2012, it was defeated 52-47, with all Republican Senators (including all five female Republicans) opposing the bill. Is the electorate similarly polarized over this issue? To what extent does the framing of pay discrimination shape public support for government efforts to better ensure pay equity for women?

The little public opinion data available on this topic suggests that members of the public widely recognize that wage disparity is a problem but are divided as to whether further legislative action is necessary. For example, sixty-nine percent of respondents polled by Harris in 2010 agreed with the statement: “Women often do not receive the same pay as men for doing exactly the same job.” A mere twenty-two percent of respondents disagreed. Support for fair pay policy is generally high when described in general terms, e.g. as “a new law that would provide

women more tools to get fair pay in the workplace” (NWLC 2010). But when told this kind of policy would “make it easier for women to sue for wage discrimination,” partisan differences emerged. Framed this way, Democrats viewed it as promoting fairness, while Republicans expressed concerns about too many unjustified lawsuits (Shepard 2012).

In this paper, we explore public support for government efforts to promote pay equity. We employ intersectionality as a theoretical framework for understanding how attitudes not only towards gender, but also race and class, jointly shape opinion in this area. This intersectional perspective motivates two experiments that were administered in the 2012 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey (CCES). The first experiment frames pay inequity in terms of race and ethnicity to determine the extent to which support for pay equity legislation varies based on the salient characteristics of beneficiaries. It allows us to better understand how intersecting patterns of gender and racial discrimination influence public opinion. The second experiment examines the ways in which occupational sector (female dominated, male dominated) and prestige (high, low) shape support for pay equity legislation, again by varying the work-related characteristics of the women likely to benefit most from such government action. It facilitates a better understanding of the ways gendered work roles and class influence opinion toward fair pay policies. The results of these two studies highlight the complexity underlying public opinion in this area and the utility of an intersectional approach to the study of Americans’ political thinking about government action on behalf of women.

Intersectionality and Fair Pay

While elite polarization on gender issues have undoubtedly shaped public support for fair pay policies, wage discrimination is a complex issue, contingent not only on partisanship but also public attitudes towards gender, class, and race. This complexity is often unrecognized, given

that the problem is framed as a singular wage gap—e.g. 77.5 cents on the dollar. This figure masks considerable heterogeneity among women. However, the frame surrounding pay equity for women is expanding to recognize the distinct experiences of multiple groups of women. President Obama’s comments just prior to the 2012 Senate vote on the Paycheck Fairness Act reflect this change:

“Women still earn just 77 cents for every dollar a man earns. It's worse for African American women and Latinas. Over the course of her career a woman with a college degree is going to earn hundreds of thousands of dollars less than a man who is doing the same work. So at a time when we're in a make-or-break moment for the middle class, Congress has to step up and do its job.”¹

The multitude of group-based cues present in this kind of comment offers clear acknowledgment of social stratification among women and likely serves (at least) two functions. First, messages like this may bolster average support among different subgroups of women, each of which respond to their own group cue. A simple essentialist approach to identity politics would simply suggest that all women will support fair pay policies more so than all men, given their obvious personal stake in the policy and the tangible benefits it would provide women as a group. Because intersectionality gives us a framework for thinking about heterogeneity among women, we have a more nuanced set of expectations regarding public opinion in this area and its determinants. To the extent that diverse groups of women recognize that they face similar structural disadvantages—an associational fate linkage is formed which contributes to mobilization and can build a solid coalition of support among women—linking advantaged and disadvantaged subgroups of women and boosting support among women overall (Garcia Bedolla 2007; Strolovitch 2007; Wadsworth 2011; Weldon 2006; Young 2005).

Second, these messages can change perceptions of the problem by acknowledging and particularly *quantifying* stratification among groups of women. Decomposed by race and

¹ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary (2012). Remarks by the President on Equal Pay for Equal Work

ethnicity, the gap for African American women is estimated to be between about 62-66 cents on the dollar and between about 52-55 cents on the dollar for Latinas – compared to white men.² Presentation of a single wage gap thus mischaracterizes the magnitude of the wage differential and also the origins of the problem—casting it as a function of gender discrimination only and ignoring the joint influence of racial discrimination. It defines the problem in a way that is less essentialist—a criticism commonly waged against public discussion of women’s issues, which tends to render women of color invisible and instead focuses on the needs and experiences of middle class white women (Hancock 2007). This “diversity among women” frame reflects a more intersectional—and ultimately more accurate—presentation of the problem.

However, this kind of frame also renders opinion in this area more complex. Research that investigates the intersection of race and gender in other policy areas—notably affirmative action—is instructive for thinking about framing fair pay. When affirmative action programs are framed in terms of their benefits for women, they tend to generate about 10-20% more support than analogous programs for blacks (Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Strolovitch 1998; Sidanius et al. 2000). Research suggests (but does not empirically test) that white Americans tend to interpret “programs for women” to mean “programs for white women.” Although nothing in the “programs for women” frame precludes benefits for women of color, the absence of racial cues in the question means gender but not racial considerations are salient. Thus, a problem with research in this area is its tendency to ask about either “women” or “minorities” in separate questions or “women and minorities” in a single question, making comparative analysis *among different groups of women* untenable (Simien 2007; Strolovitch 1998). In Experiment 1, gender

² Estimates vary because the gap is calculated in a variety of different ways – based on annual earnings versus weekly earnings, women over 15 versus women over 18, excluding or including self-employed workers, using wage and salary workers only versus a more inclusive group of women. For more information, see the Institute for Women’s Policy Research report on “The Gender Wage Gap” (IWPR 2012).

and racial cues are manipulated in the framing of the question, which facilitates this kind of comparative analysis. Thus, we are able to observe how gender and racial attitudes intersect to contribute to attitudes regarding economic outcomes for different groups of women.

An intersectional perspective on inequality motivates our focus on public attitudes towards different groups of women. Because the issue of fair pay is salient and increasingly framed in terms of diversity among women, it is a useful test case for understanding intersecting patterns of discrimination. Intersectional research can be defined by its focus on “simultaneous and interacting effects” of different categories such as race, class, or gender (Simien and Hancock 2011: 185). This idea is somewhat reflected in terms like “double jeopardy” (King 1988: 47), “triple oppression,” and “discrimination-within-discrimination” (Kirkness 1987-1988: 413), which are used to suggest that certain marginalized groups (e.g. women) face additional discrimination based on other essential characteristics (e.g. race or ethnicity). The intersectional perspective moves away from additive conceptualizations of discrimination suggested by terms like double jeopardy, and argues that a complex identity like “poor black woman” is irreducible to the essentialized categories based on class, race, and gender (Crenshaw 1991; 1993; Hancock 2007). These marginalized subgroups live at the crossroads of multiple forms of disadvantage—and experience multiple “disempowering dynamics” contributing to a unique social experience (Strolovitch 2007; Hancock 2007).

Essentially, an intersectional perspective is useful because it draws attention to inequalities *within* marginalized groups and thus reveals unevenness in social, economic, and political gains over time. The “diversity among women” frame recognizes stratification among subgroups of women in the labor market. Underlying this economic stratification is

heterogeneity in public perceptions of various subgroups of women. Simien (2007) illustrates this point with respect to common social constructions of poor black women:

“An intersectional approach expects that such identity categories are race, class, and gender fuse to create distinct opportunities, and so focusing on their intersection provides an avenue for investigating complex inequality in the US. Such public identities as the ‘welfare queen’ and ‘crack-mother’ are modern examples of intersecting identities categories, as they both function as constructs that attend to the ways in which race, class and gender interact to provide an ideological justification for specific policy measures that produce undemocratic outcomes in the US” (Simien 2007: 269).

These two social constructions – the crack mother and the welfare queen – point to the widespread perceptions of the moral failings of poor black women (see also Foster 2008). Such characterizations of black women cast them as responsible for their own economic problems and largely underlie white opposition race-targeted social welfare programs (McConaughy and White 2013). These ideas about intersecting attitudes towards race, gender, and class motivated Experiment 1. When a more intersectional frame is employed and various subgroups of women are salient, the intergroup processes governing opinion are more complicated. The extent to which support for fair pay differs when we vary characteristics of program beneficiaries provides important insight into public perceptions of various subgroups of working women—namely variation in perceived deservingness.

Attributions for Group-Based Economic Inequality

Partisan conflict over gender equality has structured the political debate over many other women’s rights policies such as abortion, family medical leave and the Equal Rights Amendment (Adams 1997; Evans and Nelson 1989; Luker 1984; Mansbridge 1986; Mathews and De Hart 1990). We expect that the same is true for fair pay policies and that divergent attributions for gender-based economic inequality in particular underlie party differences. Individuals who identify with the Democratic Party tend to attribute categorical inequalities in society to socio-structural factors such as racism, sexism, and homophobia, which serve to limit opportunities for

marginalized groups. Conversely, individuals who identify as Republican or conservative are more likely to attribute inequality to individual choices or failings (Iyengar 2004; Hopkin 2009; Skitka and Tetlock 1993).

The extant literature is rife with examples of how individualistic attributions for racial and class inequalities are correlated with opposition to specific progressive social programs. For example, individuals who perceive the poor to be personally responsible for their own economic status – due to self-indulgence, moral weakness, or limited intelligence – are more likely to view them as undeserving of government assistance and hence are less likely to support welfare such as food stamps, cash benefits, subsidized housing, and Medicaid (Applebaum 2001; Skitka and Tetlock 1993). This relationship is not entirely straightforward, however. In their analysis of racial attitudes Feldman and Huddy (2005) demonstrate that individuals who exhibit high levels of racial resentment, or the general sentiment that blacks are demanding of—but are undeserving of—special government treatment are more likely to oppose college scholarships that are perceived to benefit poor blacks. Interestingly, the effects are evident primarily among liberals rather than conservatives, because opposition to such programs tends to be uniformly low among conservatives regardless of their racial attitudes (see also Henry and Sears 2002; Kinder and Sears 1996; Kinder and Sears 1981; McConahay and Hough 1976).

While most of the aforementioned work focuses the politics operating at the intersection of race and class, we expect that a similar process structures support for policies that benefit women, such as policies to eliminate pay discrimination. Public discourse provides evidence that attributions for the gender wage gap fall along party lines. Democrats tend to argue that wage gap is largely rooted in socio-structural factors such as discrimination in the work place, gendered social expectations, or gender socialization processes. Alternatively, Republicans

argue that the wage gap is largely due to individual decisions such as women self-selecting into lower status jobs, or choosing to take time off to start a family and care for children.³ Comments by AEI Resident Scholar Christina Hoff Sommers exemplify this position. In a 2010 editorial in the *New York Times*, Sommers, citing a 2009 Consol report, argued:

[Women] tend to value family-friendly workplace policies more than men, and will often accept lower salaries in exchange for more benefits. In fact, there were so many differences in pay-related choices that the researchers were unable to specify a residual effect due to discrimination. ... the raw wage gap should not be used as the basis to justify corrective action. Indeed, there may be nothing to correct. The differences in raw wages may be almost entirely the result of the individual choices being made by both male and female workers”.

In these comments, Hoffman explicitly rejects the discrimination attribution in favor of an explanation based on personal choices and argues that government intervention on these grounds is unwarranted. The key point here comes at the outset of Sommers’ comments: that women tend to prioritize their maternal roles and willingly bear the economic consequences of those choices.

The idea that women self-select into careers that offer flexibility rather than status does not directly parallel the individualistic attributions for racial inequality captured in racial resentment. Racial resentment reflects a kind of group-based failure to conform to social expectations about work and self-sufficiency. Alternatively, when women choose to balance career and family by aiming low in the workplace, they are conforming to social expectations about traditional gender roles. Thus racial resentment involves a norm violation, while the individualistic attribution for women’s choices does not. In spite of this, individualistic attributions likely undercut support for fair pay policies – a possibility we explore in Experiment

1. Specifically, we hypothesize:

³ It is worth noting that these individual attributions have connotations linked to class and heteronormative conceptualizations of family structures. The ability for women to take time out of the workforce and care for their families – to choose kids over careers, is untenable for working class women and reflects a class-based privilege.

H₁: When the wage gap is framed in terms of race or ethnicity support for fair pay policies will decrease among white Americans, with the effect being greater for men than for women.

H₂: The effects of racial or ethnic framing will be moderated by gender, partisanship, and attributions for group-based inequality such that perceptions of systemic race and gender discrimination will increase support for government action and individual attributions linked to work ethic and work choices will depress support.

However, attributions based on women's choices raise additional questions about the ways in which the public views working women based on their occupational characteristics. Are some kinds of working women viewed as more deserving of equal pay than others? Specifically, are women in stereotypically female employment sectors – characterized as female dominated or low status – seen as more deserving of government efforts to regulate pay disparities than women in stereotypically male fields – who may be perceived as violating gender norms? To answer these questions, and better understand individualistic attributions for gender based inequality – we conducted a second experiment in which we manipulated the occupational characteristics of women who would benefit from fair pay policies, varying the occupational sector (female dominated, male dominated) and prestige (high, low) of affected women. These manipulated factors reflect the nature of occupational segregation in the American labor force - factors which contribute to economic stratification. When women self-select into stereotypically female fields there are economic consequences that are reflected in both sector and status. Thus, the frames in Experiment 2 highlight different groups of women—focusing on the intersection of gender with class rather than race with ethnicity. In exploring these relationships, we hypothesize:

H₃: Policy support will be greater when framed as benefitting women in stereotypically female fields. The effects of framing will be moderated by partisanship and gender, such that Republicans and men will express more

opposition to fair pay when exposed to the primes about women with stereotypically male professional characteristics.

Data and Method

To test these hypotheses, we utilize two embedded survey experiments we fielded as part of the 2012 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey (CCES), as well as survey questions from the common content.⁴ Experiment 1 was administered in the pre-election wave, which was fielded in October of 2012. Experiment 2 was administered in the post-election wave, fielded in November of 2012. One thousand respondents participated in Wave 1 and 847 were re-interviewed in Wave 2. Given the racial component of Experiment 1, we restricted our analysis only to white respondents. This reduced our sample sizes to 739 in Wave 1 and 664 in Wave 2 (89.9% of the sample was retained across waves). A subset of the Wave 1 respondents (n=184) received a “single mother” frame and are excluded from this analysis, which focuses instead on the race conditions. Respondent gender was well-balanced across survey administrations—51.0% of Wave 1 participants and 51.4% of Wave 2 participants were female.

Experiment 1 – Intersection of Race and Gender

Treatment. The purpose of the first experiment is to manipulate the salience of different groups of women who would benefit from government efforts to promote wage equality and to highlight the differences between their experiences with wage discrimination. The use of race and gender cues in the experiment allows us to assess the extent to which race and gender attitudes impact attitudes on support for government intervention to address wage inequality. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of three conditions of an equal pay question. The question stem and response options were consistent across each condition. The experimental

⁴ The 2012 CCES was administered by YouGov/Polimetrix in the months of October and November. The sample is drawn from the opt-in panel and adjusted to population characteristics using a two-stage sample matching technique (Vavreck and Rivers 2008).

conditions contained an additional statement about either Black or Hispanic women that provided information about variation in the wage gap across groups. In this respect, we manipulate both the presence of the group cue and highlight the magnitude *and* reality of the problem. This approach directly mirrors political discourse on this topic, as reflected in President Obama’s comments on the Paycheck Fairness Act above. The precise question wordings in each condition are as follows:

Pay equity means getting equal pay for equal work. In the U.S., women make an average of 78 cents for every dollar that men earn.

Control	No second sentence.
Black Women	But the wage gap is even larger for Black women who make only 62 cents for every dollar earned by men.
Hispanic Women	But the wage gap is even larger for Hispanic women who make only 52 cents for every dollar earned by men.

Some people feel the government should make sure women receive pay equity. Others feel that this is not the federal government’s business. Place your view somewhere between the two alternatives.

It is not the government’s business. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 | The government should make sure that women receive pay equality.

Key Measures. Because we are interested in the relative contribution of attitudes for the wage gap towards race and gender, we employ a measure of racial resentment. Racial resentment is commonly understood to reflect both anti-black sentiment and adherence to individualist values (Kinder and Sanders 1981; 1996). It focuses on competing attributions for persistent race-based inequality. Americans with low levels of racial resentment tend to attribute inequality to widespread discrimination. Americans with high levels of racial resentment attribute inequality to more individualistic causes, such as an unwillingness to work hard and follow the path of other minority groups who moved beyond initial economic disadvantages without government intervention. While the typical racial resentment scale contains four items, the CCES common content contained only two of the four: 1) Irish, Italian, Jewish and many

other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors, and 2) Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class (reversed). Agreement with these statements was measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” The items were rescaled to range from zero to one and combined to form a reliable scale ($\alpha=.76$).⁵

Modern sexism, like modern or symbolic racism, is not readily captured by the endorsement of explicitly sexist statements in surveys. Drawing a parallel with modern racism, we consider the extent to which Americans make attributions for gender-based economic inequality based on perceptions of widespread discrimination on one hand, and individual choices related to career and family on the other. Prior to exposure to one of the experimental pay equity questions (placed to ensure exogeneity), respondents were asked 4 questions about attributions for gender-based inequality:

On average, women have lower incomes than men. How much of the economic difference between women and men:

1. Can be explained by discrimination in the work place?
2. Occurs because many women put their career on hold to stay home with the kids?
3. Occurs because society treats women less fairly than men?
4. Occurs because women tend to pursue occupations that offer lower pay and less prestige?

Responses were captured on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from “a great deal” to “not at all.” The first and third items were rescaled to range from zero to one and combined to form a measure of discrimination attributions ($\alpha=.83$). The remaining two items were modestly correlated but not sufficiently related to create a scale of

⁵ There is some debate about the properties of this measure. Carmines, Sniderman, and Easter (2011) argue that racial resentment is flawed because it conflates racial policy attitudes with pure group-based attitudes (also Schuman 2000). Huddy and Feldman (2005; 2009) contend that the measure operates differently for liberals and conservatives. Despite these problems, racial resentment is useful for our purposes because it offers a measure of racial attitudes that contains no gender content, allowing for a relatively clean comparison of the relative influence of attitudes towards race and gender.

individualistic attributions. These two items are used separately as independent variables in the analysis reported here.

Because random assignment to experimental conditions created essentially equivalent groups, socio-demographic control variables are excluded from the model.⁶ Respondent gender (captured by a dummy variable) and partisanship (a nominal measure indicating whether a respondent identifies as a Democrat, Independent, or Republican) are employed to test the conditional effects of the experimental treatment. A common measure of “linked fate” is also employed to control for the possibility that gender identity conditions reactions to the experiment. The item asks “How much are you personally affected by what happens to all *women as a group* in the United States?” Responses were captured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from “a great deal” to “not at all.”

Results

Racial Attitudes

Table 1 illustrates important party and gender-based differences in support for government intervention to regulate wage discrimination. The top panel reflects a great deal of party polarization on this issue, but no significant treatment effects, with differences between Democrats and Republicans averaging 2.05 points on a six-point scale across all conditions [$t_{459}=13.74, p<.001$]. This level of polarization among the public is unsurprising given the strong evidence of elite polarization on the issue, discussed above.

* Table 1 About Here *

Additionally, intra-party differences based on gender are evident. Observed differences for men and women from both parties are largest (and statistically significant) in the control

⁶ Inclusion of controls for income, marital, and parental status did not appreciably change the results. Also, recall that our respondents are limited to white men and women.

condition: no mention of race/ethnicity. Further, support is highest for women in the control condition but lowest for men, which lends support for H_1 . This suggests that women tend to recognize their own self-interest in the control condition; yet, they are less responsive to the variation in need referred to in the experimental conditions. Support actually decreases slightly (though not significantly in most cases⁷) as the magnitude of the gap increases across treatment conditions, suggesting racial attitudes may play a role in support for pay equity in the experimental conditions. Alternatively, support among men is slightly greater in the experimental conditions relative to the control, though treatment effects only attain statistical significance for Republican men—for whom the Hispanic women cue slightly boosted support [$F(1,56)=2.27, p=.07$]. These group differences are modest but lend evidence to support H_1 .

Given the salience of racial/ethnic cues in the experimental conditions, we anticipated that impact of the treatment conditions will be conditioned an individual's level of racial resentment. As such, we estimated a series of OLS regression models in which the experimental conditions were interacted with racial resentment.⁸ Given that pay equity is a highly partisan issue (as observed in Table 1) and there is debate as to whether racial resentment operates differently for Americans on the right and on the left (Huddy and Feldman 2005), we estimated models partitioning the sample by party.⁹ The results are presented in Table 2.

* Table 2 About Here *

To help facilitate the interpretation of the impact of the experiment on attitudes toward pay equity conditioned on one's level of racial resentment, we offer a graphical presentation of these relationships in Figure 1. We plot the expected values of attitudes toward pay equity for both parties. Democrats are represented by the plots with the circle symbol and Republicans are

⁷ The difference between the control and Hispanic women condition is marginally significant in a 1-tailed test.

⁸ We also estimated treatment effects using ordered logit models. The pattern of results does not change.

⁹ Given that each cell is modestly populated, we partitioned the sample by party but not gender.

represented by the plots with the triangle symbol. The corresponding bands represent the 90% confidence interval around the point estimates (p-value<.05 using one-tailed t-test). There are three different sets of estimates: (1) the marginal effect of the treatments when racial resentment is minimal; (2) the marginal effect of treatments when racial resentment is maximal; and (3) the marginal effect of racial resentment for the treatment and control groups.

We begin with the results when racial resentment is minimal. The plots indicate for Democrats and Republicans in no instance does the marginal effect of the treatment frame—when compared to the control group or the other treatment—influence attitudes toward pay equity. There are a few instances where the effects approach statistical significance; however, none of the effects reach the standard employed herein. Substantively, this suggests among those least racially resentful, attitudes toward pay equity do not vary as a function of exposure to racial/ethnic cues. This result also lends support for H₂.

Next we turn to the results when racial resentment is maximal. The plots indicate the racial and ethnic cues influence Democrats' attitudes, but have no impact on Republicans' attitudes. Among Democrats, exposure to the “Hispanic Women” and the “Black Women” treatments serve to decrease support for pay equity when compared to the control group. Indeed, the expected value in support is .27 lower (p-value=.05 using two-tailed t-test) among those exposed to the “Hispanic Women” frame when compared to those exposed to the control frame. For Democrats exposed to the “Black Women” frame, the expected value in support is .19 lower (p-value=.06 using one-tailed t-test) than compared to those exposed to the control frame. These results are suggestive of partisan asymmetry among those exhibiting maximal racial resentment, lending support for H₂.

Finally, we turn to the bottom panel of Figure 1, which presents the marginal effect of racial resentment across the three frames. These plots clearly demonstrate the impact of resentment on Democrats' pay equity attitudes conditioned on the race/ethnicity frame. Among Democrats treated with the "Black Women" frame, as racial resentment increases from 0 to 1, support for pay equity significantly decreases—decreasing from .68 to .32 ($\Delta=.36$) as resentment increases from 0 to 1. Likewise, for Democrats treated with the "Hispanic Women" frame, as resentment increase from the minimum to maximum value, support for pay equity decreases from .68 to .24 ($\Delta=.44$). Though the level of statistical significance is marginal, there is evidence that the "Black Women" frame influenced Republican attitudes regarding pay equity. The expected level of support is .33 lower ($p=.07$ using a one-tailed t-test) for Republicans treated with the "Black Women" frame when compared to Republicans in the control condition.

Taken as a whole, these findings provide evidence of the intersectional nature of attitudes toward fair pay policy. Although women and women's issues often tend to be discussed as though women are a relatively homogeneous group, the results suggest Americans recognize heterogeneity among women – with some subgroups being more sympathetic or deserving of efforts to reduce wage disparity. Racial and ethnic cues embedded in the policy frames impact support for pay equity for women, and these effects depend on levels of racial resentment, which lends support for hypothesis H₂.

Gender Attitudes

Next we consider the impact of gender-based attributions—the extent to which widespread discrimination and women's choices (i.e. putting career on hold for kids and pursuing careers that offer lower pay)—on attitudes toward pay inequity. First, we discuss basic descriptive statistics for these attributions, which are presented in Table 3. Partisans differ greatly in their

perceptions of gender-based discrimination, but hold very similar positions on the more individualistic attributions linked to women's career choices. Democrats are much more likely to attribute the pay gap to discrimination. The mean score for Democrats on the zero-one discrimination scale is .72, compared to only .49 for Republicans ($t_{460}=9.39$, $p<.001$)—consistent with the expectations laid out in H₂. Looking at gender differences within the parties, it's clear that both male and female Democrats largely attribute the pay gap to discrimination. Alternatively, there is a significant difference in perceptions that discrimination causes the pay gap among Republican men and women ($M_{\text{Women}}=.58$, $M_{\text{Men}}=.39$, $t_{246}=-5.36$, $p<.001$).

* Table 3 About Here *

While attributions of discrimination differ widely by party, virtually no differences are observed on endorsement of individualistic attributions. This is interesting given that these rationales feature so prominently in the arguments of conservative pundits like Hoff Sommers, discussed above. It is also unexpected that few gender differences are apparent among Democrats, given the significant gender difference in support for government intervention to regulate pay equity in the control condition—where there are no racial cues and the effect of gender attitudes should be largest.

We return to the OLS regression models presented in Table 2 to further investigate the relative impact of individualistic and social attributions on support for government intervention on pay inequality. Again, to help facilitate the interpretation of the results, we offer a visual presentation of the results in Figure 2. The first two sets of plots reflect the marginal effect of gender conditioned on one's perception of the role of discrimination in the work place. The third set of plots (Δ Discrimination) reflects the marginal effect of the discrimination attribution for male and female respondents. These results indicate that the marginal effect of gender does not

vary among Democrats or Republicans for those with minimum perceived discrimination in the workplace. However, female Republicans that proffer maximal levels of perceived discrimination in the workplace are more likely to support government intervention compared to their male counterparts. Indeed, the expected value of support is .32 higher (p-value=.05 using two-tailed t-test) among women that exhibit maximal levels of perceived discrimination when compared to men that exhibit maximal levels of perceived discrimination. Finally, the marginal effects of the discrimination attribution indicate a uniform significant effect for male and female respondents. Substantively, the results suggest that as perceived discrimination in the workplace increases, support for government intervention in pay equity increases, lending support for H₂.

* Figure 2 Here *

Next, we turn to the impact of individualistic attributions, beginning with the “choose kids” attribution. The first two sets of plots reflect the marginal effect of gender conditioned on one’s endorsement of this attribution. The third set of plots (Δ Choose Kids) reflect the marginal effects of the individualistic attributions for male and female respondents. Although a few estimates are on the cusp of significance—Republicans in maximal “choose kids” category and the marginal effect of “choose kids” among Democratic females—none of the estimates reach the standard level of significant use herein. This suggests there is no variation in support for government intervention on pay inequity as a function of perceptions of women’s career choices related to family.

Finally, we turn to the impact of “choose low status” attribution. The first two sets of plots reflect the marginal effect of gender conditioned on one’s endorsement of the “choose low status” attribution. The third set of plots (Δ Choose Low Status) reflects the marginal effect of the individualistic attribution for male and female respondents. Again, we see no gender

differences across the parties for those exhibiting the minimal level of attributing inequality to low status career choices. Yet there is partisan asymmetry among those who strongly endorse this idea. There is no gender difference in support for government intervention among Republicans, but there is a significant gender difference in support among Democrats. Female Democrats that perceive the wage gap is due to women choosing a lower status career are more likely to support government intervention on the wage equity issue than compared to their male counterparts. Finally, the marginal effects of attributing pay inequality to women choosing a lower status career is significant only among male Democrats. As “choose low status” increases from the minimum to maximum value, support for government intervention decreases.

The distinction between social and individual explanations for gender inequality is striking. While perceptions of gender-based discrimination vary widely by party, their effect on support for fair pay policy is fairly uniform. Alternatively, though individualistic explanations for the wage gap are fairly common in the public discourse on this issue, their influence on fair pay attitudes is quite small here. While we expected the more individualistic attributions for inequality to resonate more with Republicans, this was not the case. Rather, we only observed an effect among male Democrats – who are less supportive of fair pay policies when they feel that women intentionally choose lose status careers.

Experiment 2

The modest relationships between individual attributions for gender inequality—linked to women’s career and family choices—are somewhat surprising given the prominence of these ideas in the debate over women’s roles and family values. It seems plausible that the reason the individual attributions about women’s choices do not matter much is because the questions used in Experiment 1 were posed in terms of race. As a result, the questions likely primed group-

based considerations—like systemic gender and racial discrimination—rather than individual choices. This may have caused respondents to think about pay equity as a civil rights issue in the experimental conditions. In spite of this, we did observe a relationship between the idea that women choose low status jobs and support for pay equity among Democrats. This raises questions about the ways in which the public views working women based on their occupational characteristics. Are some kinds of working women viewed as more deserving of equal pay than others? Specifically, are women in stereotypically female employment sectors—characterized as female dominated or low status – seen as more deserving of government efforts to regulate pay disparities? To answer these questions, we conducted a second experiment focused on the status of women’s occupations and the implications of ideas about sector, status, and ultimately class on support for equal pay.

Treatment. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of the following conditions:

Pay equity means getting equal pay for equal work. In the U.S., women make an average of 78 cents for every dollar that men earn.

Control	No second sentence.
High Status	This pay difference exists even for women in prestigious jobs.
Low Status	This pay difference exists even for women in low level jobs.
Female Sector	This pay difference exists even in female-dominated professions like teaching.
Male Sector	This pay difference exists even in male-dominated jobs like construction.

Some people feel the government should make sure women receive pay equity. Others feel that this is not the federal government’s business. Place your view somewhere between the two alternatives:

It is not the government’s business. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 | The government should make sure that women receive pay equality.

Looking at mean differences in support for equal pay, one can again see that this is a highly partisan issue. The gap between the parties is largest in the low status condition. Here Democrats report the highest level of support for pay equity while Republicans report the lowest [$M_{Dem}=5.18$, $M_{Rep}=2.43$, $t_{73}=8.15$, $p<.001$]. The gap between parties is smallest in the female sector condition, where support among Republicans is particularly high relative to the other

experimental conditions [$M_{Dem}=5.15$, $M_{Rep}=3.22$, $t_{77}=5.50$, $p<.001$]. The difference between the female sector and control condition ($M_{Rep}=2.64$) is statistically significant for Republicans [$t_{90}=-1.52$, $p=.07$]. The effect is driven largely by male Republicans, who are most supportive of pay equity in this condition ($M_{Rep}=3.41$) compared to control ($M_{Rep}=2.19$) [$t_{28}=-2.00$, $p=.03$]. This result suggests Republican men view women in traditionally female careers most favorably, consistent with our expectations about the partisan application of gender stereotypes H_3 .

* Table 4 About Here *

Looking at the gender breakdown among Democrats in the low status condition, one can see a rather substantial difference in support among men and women [$M_{Women}=5.67$, $M_{Men}=4.15$, $t_{14}=-3.13$ $p<.01$]. For female Democrats, support in this condition is significantly higher than in the control [$M_{Women}=5.05$ $t_{27}=-1.88$, $p=.04$] and the highest relative to all conditions. For male Democrats, support is much lower in this condition than in the other experimental conditions, but the difference does not attain conventional levels of statistical significance. This result suggests that male and female Democrats view women in low status jobs quite differently, with women viewing other women in low status professions as more sympathetic or deserving.

A gender difference is also evident among Republicans in the male sector condition, with female Republicans reporting significantly higher levels of support here than male Republicans [$M_{Women}=3.12$, $M_{Men}=2.19$, $t_{44}=-1.81$ $p=.04$]. Interestingly, the means for men and women are virtually identical in the control condition suggesting that this is the group of working women that comes to mind for Republicans when discussing pay equity. Low levels of support among men in particular might stem from gender stereotypes – these are women in nontraditional fields—or from perceptions of competition. This finding is consistent with H_3 .

These results suggest the parties see this issue in very different ways. For Democrats, the pay gap is linked largely to discrimination and also class considerations, while for Republicans the issue is a matter of status and potentially competition for Republican men.

Discussion

Taken together, the results of these two experiments illustrate the ways in which an intersectional approach to public opinion research can provide insight into support for policy with racial, gender, and class-based implications. Our experimental approach proved useful in illustrating how frames affect the relative salience of different subgroups of women and ultimately shape support for this women's issues. Variation in support across conditions reveals something important about the perceived deservingness of various groups of women as well as the way attitudes and stereotypes about race, gender, and class intersect to determine policy support. Because little work on public opinion employs this kind of intersectional and experimental approach, the project offers new insights into the how intersectional issue frames condition policy support.

Experiment 1 demonstrated, as anticipated, partisans in the electorate are highly polarized on this issue – mirroring recent elite polarization on the Paycheck Fairness Act. Attributions for inequality proved to partially underlie these partisan differences. Among participants attributing inequality to race and gender discrimination, support for fair pay policies were high and relatively impervious to framing effects. On balance, Democrats and Republicans were quite different in their levels of perceived race and gender discrimination. Democrats more strongly endorsed a discrimination-based explanation for inequality. The picture emerging for individualistic attributions was somewhat more complex. Democrats and Republicans were equally likely to endorse these kinds of explanations for the wage gap, but they were largely not

linked to fair pay attitudes in a meaningful way. An exception was observed only for male Democrats – for whom the idea that women choose low status careers intentionally reduced support for fair pay policies. Experiment 2 similarly demonstrates the effects of framing on policy support, highlighting that men on both sides of the aisle display more support for fair pay policies when they are framed in terms of women in traditionally female sector positions.

This research has important policy implications. In both Experiments 1 and 2, we demonstrate that policy support is highly contingent on the characteristics of its beneficiaries. In doing so, we highlight the way in which proponents of fair pay policies such as congressional Democrats, President Obama, and the American Association of University Women can galvanize support for their policy positions. Specifically, we demonstrate, that respondents who attribute the wage gap to individual decisions are less likely to support fair pay policies. Politicians can drum up support for fair pay by illustrating the extent to which the gap exists across groups of women, and hence affects all women regardless of their individual decisions. While an intersectional frame will depress support among some (e.g. Americans high in racial resentment), an emphasis on discrimination rather than individual choices should translate to higher levels of support for government action overall. Beyond this, our research indicates that advocates can potentially boost support among Independents and Republicans by shifting the debate from individual choices towards jobs in the female sector. Indeed, we find that Republicans confronted with the information that the wage gap exists even between men and women in traditional female job sectors are more likely to support fair pay policies.

We expect this approach would prove useful in understanding opinion towards other policy areas that employ intersectional frames to characterize beneficiaries. For example, the Violence Against Women Act fits this framework. The debate over reauthorization in 2013 relayed the

advances made by the previous incarnations of the act, but also areas of persistent deficiency, namely failure to adequately protect women on college campuses, undocumented immigrants, LGBT, and Native American women. While support among Democrats was high, this “diversity among women” frame mobilized significant bases of opposition among Republicans. Intersectional frames present a more nuanced and less essentialized perspective on women’s policy issues, highlighting the different experience of various subgroups of women who have historically gone unnoticed and underserved by social welfare programs. But, they also introduce greater complexity into public attitudes towards social programs. Approaching public opinion from the analytic framework of intersectionality should afford greater insight into policy debates and provide policy makers with tools that more effectively mobilize key bases of support.

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Table 1. Mean Support for Equal Pay by Experimental Condition, Party, and Gender

	All Democrats	All Republicans	Difference
Women	4.78	2.71	2.05***
Black Women	4.77	2.57	2.19***
Hispanic Women	4.55	2.85	1.70***
	Democratic Women	Democratic Men	Difference
Women	5.17	4.00	1.17***
Black Women	4.94	4.57	.37
Hispanic Women	4.75	4.26	.49
	Republican Women	Republican Men	Difference
Women	3.09	2.20	0.89*
Black Women	2.93	2.25	0.68*
Hispanic Women	2.81	2.88	0.07

Entries are for white respondents only. Significance tests are 1-tailed t-tests. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

Table 2. Treatment Effects are Contingent on Racial Resentment

	Democrats	Republicans
Black Women	.10 (.07)	.13 (.25)
Hispanic Women	.10 (.07)	.18 (.31)
Racial Resentment	-.07 (.14)	-.11(.19)
Black*Resentment	-.29 (.16)*	-.22 (.29)
Hispanic*Resentment	-.37 (.18)*	-.19 (.36)
Female	.08 (.14)	.05 (.19)
Discrimination	.42 (.14)***	.29 (.15)*
Choose Kids	-.02 (.14)	.10 (.14)
Choose Status	-.22 (.14)*	.05 (.12)
Female*Discrim.	-.06 (.17)	.27 (.19)+
Female*Kids	-.13 (.19)	-.27 (.21)
Female*Status	.27 (.17)+	-.02 (.17)
Linked Fate	-.00 (.03)	.02 (.03)
Constant	.58 (.14)***	.14 (.24)
N	145	164
R2	.39	.21

Entries are OLS regression coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses.
 Significance tests are 1-tailed. +p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 3. Attributions for Gender-Based Economic Inequality

	All Democrats	All Republicans	Difference
Discrimination	.72	.49	.23***
Choose Kids	.57	.60	-.03
Choose Low Status	.42	.49	-.07**
	Democratic Women	Democratic Men	Difference
Discrimination	.74	.70	.04*
Choose Kids	.58	.56	.02
Choose Low Status	.42	.43	-.01
	Republican Women	Republican Men	Difference
Discrimination	.58	.39	.19***
Choose Kids	.60	.60	.00
Choose Low Status	.47	.51	-.04

Entries are for white respondents only. Significance tests are 1-tailed t-tests. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

Table 4. Mean Policy Support by Party and Gender

	Democrats	Republicans	Difference
Control	4.91	2.64	2.27***
High Status	4.88	2.59	2.29***
Low Status	5.18	2.43	2.75***
Female Sector	5.15	3.22	1.92***
Male Sector	5.16	2.70	2.46***
	Female Democrats	Male Democrats	Difference
Control	5.05	4.69	0.36
High Status	5.11	4.63	0.49
Low Status	5.67	4.15	1.51**
Female Sector	5.13	5.18	-0.05
Male Sector	5.23	5.09	0.14
	Female Republicans	Male Republicans	Difference
Control	3.19	2.24	0.95*
High Status	2.85	2.32	0.53
Low Status	2.63	2.13	0.50
Female Sector	3.11	3.41	-0.30
Male Sector	3.12	2.19	0.93*

Entries are for white respondents only. Significance tests are 1-tailed t-tests. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Figure 1: Conditional Effects Treatment and Racial Resentment on Support for Equal Pay

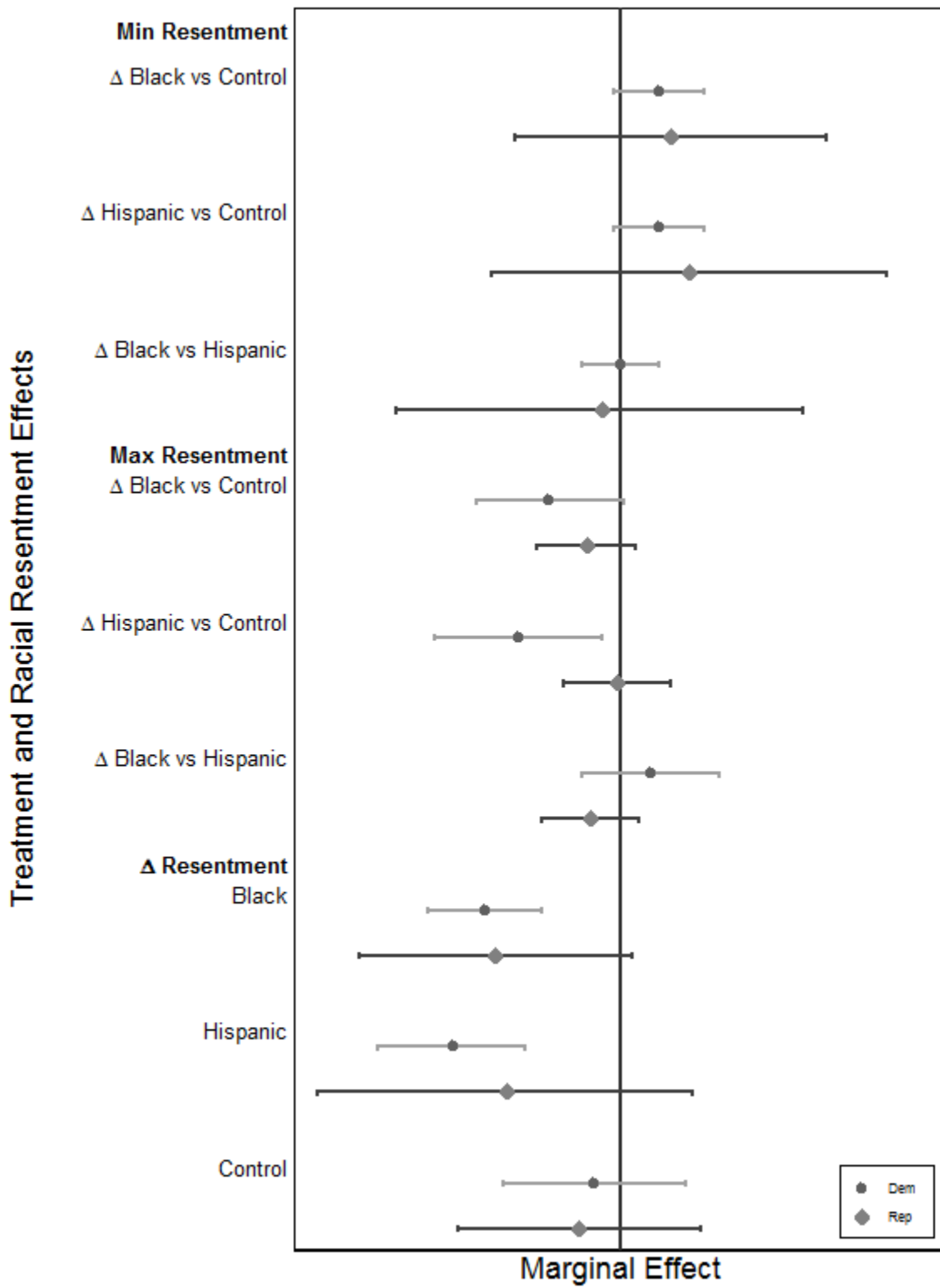


Figure 2: Gender-Based Attribution Effects on Support for Equal Pay

