DOI: 10.1111/pops.13063

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Political Psychology

Engendering equality: Unraveling the influence of family cues on young men's attitudes toward women's rights

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Funding information
NSF Time-Sharing Experiments in the Social Sciences

Abstract

What explains the gender gap in support for the protection and advancement of women's rights? We argue that because boys receive less and more delayed information outside the home about gender inequality than girls, the cues boys receive inside the home play an outsized role in their adult attitudes about women's rights. Using a large national survey, we demonstrate that men's attitudes toward women's rights are, in fact, more heavily influenced by the perceived attitudinal norms within their family than are women's. Through a follow-up survey experiment with a national sample of U.S. teenagers, we explore this further and illustrate that one-time statements from a single family member shift support for women's rights among young men, but not young women. Importantly, statements from other authority figures do not impact attitudes. Our findings highlight the gendered manner in which familial socialization shapes the gendered attitudes that frame women's lives.

KEYWORDS

attitude development, gender, gender attitudes, political socialization

GENDER AND ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Gender-based discrimination impacts all aspects of women's lives. For example, it would take 42 extra days of work for women to earn what men earn doing the same job in a year, and twice as many women as men have experienced gender discrimination in the workplace (Barroso & Brown, 2021). Women are severely underrepresented in positions of power, including in politics, business, and STEM fields (Brown, 2017; Dolar, 2021). Additionally, women are

significantly more likely than men to experience sexual assault, sexual violence, or intimate partner violence (Centers for Disease Control, 2022; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000).

Despite these and other forms of gender inequity, consistent opposition to policies promoting equitable opportunities for women and men remains.[1] Nearly one in four Americans do not favor the Equal Rights Amendment, a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution guaranteeing equal legal rights for all citizens regardless of sex (Minkin, 2020). More than one in five Americans do not think it is very important for women to have equal rights with men (Horowitz & Igielnik, 2020). And, as awareness of sexual harassment against women increases, so, too, does the fear of sanctions for reporting it: 75% of Americans believe that there are significant personal and professional costs for women who report being sexually assaulted (NPR and Ipsos, 2018).

Many efforts to reduce these disparities have focused on the socialization of women, from encouraging women to "lean in" professionally (Sandberg & Scovell, 2013), to highlighting the importance of women role models and mentors (Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006; Latu et al., 2013; Oxley et al., 2020), to promoting strategies women can take to mitigate the risks of sexual assault (McMillan & White, 2023), and uncovering the sources of women's opposition to policies that advance their rights (Barnes & Cassese, 2017; Schreiber, 2008). However, men are still more likely than women to hold attitudes in opposition to women's rights – particularly when the related issues are not heavily partisan (ANES, 2022; Graf, 2018; Gramlich, 2017; Horowitz et al., 2018; Oliphant, 2017).

We consider the distinct ways that familial cues regarding women's rights may interact with gendered patterns of political socialization. Political scientists have long highlighted the importance of family socialization to the development of political attitudes, including views on gender-related political topics (Alford et al., 2005; Converse, 1964; Jennings et al., 2009; Jennings & Niemi, 1974; Morgan & Waite, 1987; Sutfin et al., 2008). Importantly, conceptions of politics develop early (Oxley et al., 2020) and in gendered contexts (Bos et al., 2021; Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006). Specifically, young men tend to receive less and more delayed information than young women about women's experiences and gender inequity (Aronowitz et al., 2012; Davis & Robinson, 1991; Raine et al., 2010; Vargas et al., 2017). These lower levels of awareness not only mean that young men are less likely to have the familiarity with gender inequity that typically leads to support for policies to address it, but also may make young men's attitudes toward women's rights more easily influenced and more malleable than those of young women (Converse, 1964; Zaller, 1992). While family socialization is one of the most impactful forces in the attitudinal formation of all adults, we argue that young men's lower levels of exposure to information and perspectives about women's experiences mean that family socialization around political issues pertaining to women's rights should have a greater impact on young men than young women. Whereas girls' views on women's rights likely crystallize sooner than boys', due to the many gender-related cues they receive in and outside the home, boys likely receive fewer gender-related cues overall. The comparatively greater amount of gender-related cues for girls should *lessen* the relative weight of a single family cue for girls, while *increasing* the relative weight of a single family cue for boys.

Across a large national survey, we find that people consistently reported that their family's views greatly influenced their own attitudes toward women's rights. Importantly, family views

[1]Consistent with Huddy et al., we use gender to refer to "the psychological and sociological factors linked to being male or female in a given context. Our use of gender to refer to men and women should not be seen as an attempt to essentialize women" (2008, 32). Instead, we seek to better understand the mechanisms "through which gender formation operate[s]" in American politics (Burns, 2005, 140). This means that we discuss specific attitudes pertaining to women's rights that may not impact all women or all women equally, but are still elements of gender-based inequality. While the first study included a measure of gender that asked if someone identified as male, female, nonbinary, or if they would like to self-describe their gender, the second study was run via the NORC Amerispeak panel, and so uses their pre-study demographic question-wording, which coded respondents as either Male, Female, or Unknown.

were a more powerful predictor of men's attitudes toward women's rights than they were for women. In fact, the effect size of familial attitudes among men was comparable to hostile sexism and greater than party identification. These findings relied on respondent recall of family cues, and the observational nature of the data does not allow us to determine the causal direction of the relationship. Thus, we sought to (1) obtain more causal evidence of the relationship and (2) home in on individuals still in the process of developing their own ideas about policies advancing women's rights: adolescents.

Through an online survey experiment involving a national, probability-based sample of 800 teenage girls and boys, we demonstrate that reflecting on a family member's hypothetical stance on the #MeToo movement has a much more powerful effect on adolescent males' attitudes toward women's rights than it does for adolescent females. Importantly, we offer additional evidence differentiating the effects of family members from that of other authority figures, pointing to the importance of the strength of personal ties over formal authority as elements of attitudinal influence on adolescent males' views toward women's rights. Our findings lend new insight into the uniquely powerful role that familial socialization plays in men's support for women's rights.

THE ORIGINS OF ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Men and women hold relatively similar views on heavily partisan issues pertaining to women's rights (Huddy et al., 2008; Sapiro, 2003). However, attitudes about less partisan issues associated with women's rights evince a noteworthy gender split (Davis & Robinson, 1991). Compared to women, men are less likely to: say the country hasn't gone far enough when it comes to giving women equal rights with men (Gramlich, 2017); believe there should be more women in political office (ANES, 2022; Horowitz et al., 2018); think companies should be required to provide paid parental leave (ANES, 2022); believe that reports of sexual misconduct reflect widespread social problems (Oliphant, 2017); think that men getting away with sexual harassment or assault and women not being believed when they say they have experienced sexual harassment and assault are major problems in the workplace (Graf, 2018).

Understanding the source of these attitudinal differences has important implications for policy and legislative debates, as well as other contexts in which consequential decisions are made that affect women's lived experiences. For example, men participating on juries tend to perceive less sex-based discrimination toward women (e.g., Inman, 2001; Inman & Baron, 1996); are more likely to accept rape myths (Aronowitz et al., 2012; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994); and are less likely to render verdicts in favor of a victim of sexual harassment (Kovera et al., 1999; Wayne et al., 2001).

So, what are the sources of men's attitudes toward women's rights? Political scientists have long argued that political attitudes are heavily influenced by one's parents (Alford et al., 2005; Converse, 1964; Jennings et al., 2009; Jennings & Niemi, 1974). Attitudes toward women's rights are no exception. After all, parental gender ideologies are positively associated with child gender ideologies (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004; Filler & Jennings, 2015; Sutfin et al., 2008). Social psychologists further demonstrate that people tune their beliefs based on the attitudes of close others, and that self-regulation in response to others is part of child development (Hardin & Higgins, 1996). In turn, familial cues are important for political attitudes due to their familiarity and the potential costs of attitudinal deviation (Moy & Scheufele, 2000; Noelle-Neumann, 1974).

Family is not the only institution that influences the development of political views or the only space that fosters norms against attitudinal deviation. Religious communities can also shape people's views on women's rights, particularly if people fear significant social costs for

holding attitudes that deviate from those of their religious institutions (Castle & Stepp, 2021; Layman, 1997). People also often attempt to match their attributes to the perceived interests of desirable spouses (Alford et al., 2011; Stoker & Jennings, 1995). People are similarly influenced by spousal opinion and behavior, such that perceptions of the gender ideology of potential spouses may also shape individuals' expressed views.

That said, family members remain a "primary socializing agent" impacting these institutional contexts (Flor & Knapp, 2001, 627). Children's religious beliefs and practices often follow those of their parents (Bader & Desmond, 2006; Flor & Knapp, 2001). When it comes to marriage, parents influence spouse selection both directly (e.g., through conveying their preferences [Apostolou, 2007]) and indirectly (e.g., people seeking partners that resemble their parents [Wilson & Barrett, 1987]). We therefore expect that the influence of family socialization on attitudes toward women's rights will hold even when controlling for factors known to influence views on women's rights.

> **H1.** Perceptions that one's family would view individuals who support women's rights favorably/unfavorably (Family Cues) is a significant predictor of positive/negative attitudes toward women's rights (Pro-Women Attitudes), even when controlling for other factors known to influence policy support.

But why do differences emerge between men's and women's attitudes toward women's rights? Existing scholarship generally conceptualizes family socialization as operating similarly regardless of child gender, focusing either on attitude absorption (Campbell et al., 1980), symbolic predispositions (Sears & Huddy, 1990), or internalization (Jennings & Niemi, 1974). Where gender is addressed, findings seem to suggest that boys and girls should be socialized into complementary roles, ending up ideologically aligned. For example, scholars have highlighted that fathers tend to have the greatest influence on their sons' political attitudes and mothers on their daughters' (Filler & Jennings, 2015; Gidengil et al., 2010). Further, parents in most households are politically aligned (Burns et al., 2001), suggesting once again that boys and girls should end up developing similar attitudes. Even work emphasizing the differential political socialization of young men and women (Bos et al., 2021; Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006; Fox & Lawless, 2014; Verba et al., 1997) speaks to women's political underrepresentation, but cannot explain why men are ultimately less supportive of policies intended to advance women's rights.

FEWER CUES AND THE LATER CRYSTALLIZATION OF ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN'S RIGHTS, AMONG BOYS

Missing from the literature on family socialization and political attitude formation is consideration of the different *relative* impact of family socialization on young men and women regarding attitudes toward women's rights. Young men and women may well be exposed to similar family cues regarding attitudes toward women's rights, but with different frequencies (Epstein & Ward, 2008; Lefkowitz & Espinosa-Hernandez, 2007; Omar et al., 2003). We argue that the impact of those familial cues differs dramatically depending on how soon gender attitudes crystallize and how many gender-related signals children receive outside the home.

One of the most foundational and consistent public opinion findings is that those who receive more information and/or think more about a given issue tend to have more stable attitudes on the matter, relative to those who receive less information and/or give it less thought (Converse, 1964; Zaller, 1992). A single additional cue or message will do far more to influence the attitudes of someone just learning about an issue, relative to someone who has a high level of existing knowledge about it. This pattern, we argue, plays an important role in gender differences in attitudes toward women's rights and the malleability of those attitudes. Girls

receive a plethora of signals about gender inequality from socialization sources in and outside the home much earlier and more frequently than do boys, causing their perceptions of gender roles, gender differences, and gender stereotypes to develop earlier (Bem, 1981; Poulin-Dubois et al., 2002; Signorella et al., 1993; Yee & Brown, 1994; Zosuls et al., 2009). Across a range of institutional contexts, people discuss sex-based discrimination and disparities more with women than men. Girls report having earlier, more frequent, and higher quality communications about rape, sexual safety, and health with their parents than do boys (Epstein & Ward, 2008; Lefkowitz & Espinosa-Hernandez, 2007; Omar et al., 2003). Boys, by contrast, receive fewer and more delayed signals. For example, medical providers are half as likely to discuss sexual health with young men as young women (Alexander et al., 2014). The lack of quality information provided to boys on matters of sexual health, reproduction, and family planning fuels stigma and a general lack of knowledge among men about the risks and challenges women face in the reproductive and family planning processes (Alexander et al., 2014; Allen et al., 2010; Ballard & Morris, 1998; Epstein & Ward, 2008).

Boys become men who are less exposed to, less aware of, and less engaged with information about women's experiences and gender inequality in American society. Men know less than women about gendered socioeconomic disparities (Davis & Robinson, 1991), basic family planning and sexual health (Marcell et al., 2012; Merkh et al., 2009; Ritter et al., 2015), and what constitutes sexual assault and rape (Aronowitz et al., 2012). Men are also significantly less likely to be informed about political issues often diminished as "women's issues," like abortion, sexual harassment, and gender equality (Hansen, 1997; Paolino, 1995), and are less able to identify women political figures (Burns et al., 2001; Dolan, 2011; Verba et al., 1997). Simply put, young men are raised in contexts in which they are less likely to be exposed to and informed about matters of unique importance to women, only to be given disproportionate power over those matters (via political representation and economic status) later in life.

Given the frequency of signals that young women receive from external sources, cues coming from inside the family may ultimately be *less* influential in the development of women's attitudes, relative to men, decreasing the likelihood that any one additional signal from the family will sway girls' attitudes toward women's rights. Young men's comparatively limited engagement with gender disparities, and the sparsity of the signals that boys receive outside the home about women's experiences and gender inequality, likely increases the relative weight of the family cues about women's rights that boys receive during adolescence. This is consistent with evidence that young men's gender-role attitudes are more strongly related to their parents' views than those of young women (Snyder et al., 1997). Young men are therefore more likely to conform to family norms when developing their own ideas about women's rights, compared to girls, who are developing their attitudes in response to many sources—on top of the home environment.

> **H2.** Family cues will have a stronger impact on young men's attitudes toward women's rights, compared to young women's attitudes toward women's rights.

STUDY ONE: THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS ON ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN'S RIGHTS

To start, we explored the relationship between family socialization and attitudes toward women's rights, and whether that relationship varies among men and women. We fielded a study via Dynata in June and July of 2021 with 1500 respondents, of whom 641 identified as male and 844 identified as female.[2] We assessed respondents' views on what we labeled *Pro-Women Attitudes*

[2]Sample demographics can be found in Appendix S2.

using a battery of nine questions that included: sexism, sexual harassment and assault; abortion; domestic violence; equal pay; tampons in school and workplace bathrooms; birth control; and the equal hiring of women (see full question wording in Appendix A1).[3] For ease of interpretation, the index was rescaled from zero to one, with higher values on the scale indicating greater support for *Pro-Women Attitudes*, and lower values indicating greater opposition.

To measure the influence of family cues on attitudes toward women's rights, we constructed the *Family Cues* variable. Respondents were asked to reflect on how their family would feel if they held specific stances associated with women's rights, namely: supporting equal pay for women; being pro-life; supporting the #MeToo movement; giving accused young men the benefit of the doubt, voting for Trump in 2016; and voting for Clinton in 2016.[4,5] It is important to note that we went beyond simply asking people what the views of family members were, as has been done in past work, and instead asked about the relational implications of holding certain views. Instead of studying this intergenerational transfer as a simple predisposition toward the familiar, we consider the strength of the cue by exploring the perceived magnitude of costs or sanctions associated with deviating from parental norms on gendered attitudes. Focusing on how cues from family members impact attitude expression further complements the methodological strengths of surveys and survey experiments. Again, for ease of interpretation, the index of *Family Cues* was rescaled from zero to one, with higher values on the *Family Cues* scale indicating a higher perceived likelihood of being viewed favorably by one's family for supporting positions associated with women's rights.

We further controlled for a wide range of psychological factors previously linked with attitudes toward *Pro-Women Attitudes*, including benevolent sexism, hostile sexism, internalized discrimination, and belief in a just world (Barreto & Doyle, 2023; Chapleau et al., 2007; Glick & Fiske, 1996; Jost & Burgess, 2000). We accounted for demographic factors like age, education, income, partisan identity, religiosity, employment, and marital status, which have also been shown to correlate with support for women's rights (Davis & Greenstein, 2009; Mason & Yu-Hsia, 1988). Finally, to isolate the impact of the family, we ran models that controlled for two additional sources of socialization, religious community and the marriage market. To do this, we created two scales similar to our *Family Cues* scale, but with a focus on religious communities and perceptions of the marriage market as sources of socialization.

STUDY ONE: FINDINGS ABOUT FAMILY SOCIALIZATION AND ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN'S RIGHTS

We first looked at the relationship between *Family Cues* and *Pro-Women Attitudes* among the full sample of men and women. An OLS regression analysis demonstrates a strong and significant association between *Family Cues* and *Pro-Women Attitudes*, indicating that perceived

[3]The nine items tested had a Cronbach's alpha of .695. The removal of any one question did not meaningfully increase the Cronbach's alpha and so all scale items were used. Results testing the effect of *Family Cues* on each outcome variable separately can be found in Tables A5 and A6 of Appendix S3.

[4]The six-item *Family Cues* values had a Cronbach's alpha of .5. The removal of any one question did not meaningfully increase the Cronbach's alpha and so all scale items were used. Results testing the effect separately of each IV on *Pro-Women Attitudes* are in Table A7 of Appendix S3.

[5]While support for candidates for elected office is typically not a clear factor in attitudes toward women's rights, support for Clinton and Trump in the 2016 election stood out as an exception for several reasons. First, Hillary Clinton was not only the first woman to be a presidential nominee for a major U.S. political party, but clearly and assertively identified as a feminist (Gajanan, 2015). Her primary opponent in the race, President Donald Trump, was not only accused (and later convicted) of sexism and sexual assault, but he was on-the-record proudly asserting his history of sexual assault and harassment (Nelson, 2016). Support for Trump in 2016 was also strongly associated with hostile sexism (Valentino et al., 2018), and hegemonic masculinity (Vescio & Schermerhorn, 2021).

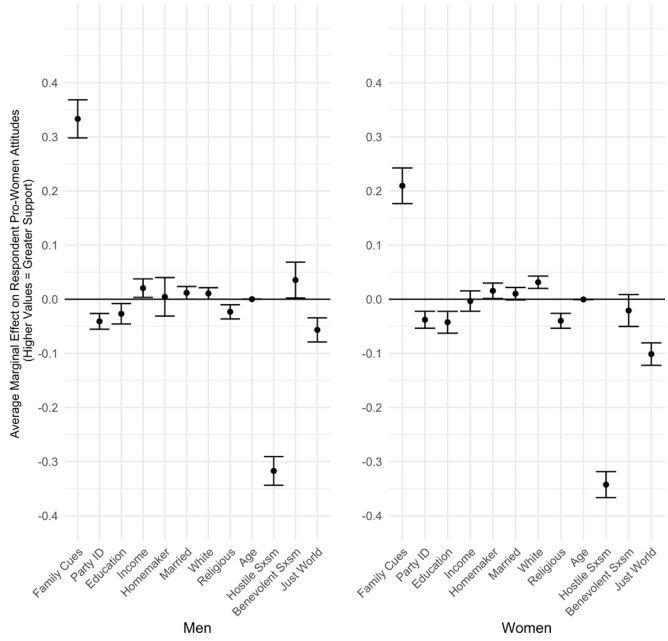

FIGURE 1 Support for pro-women attitudes, among women and men. Results indicate average marginal effect of OLS regression of Family Cues (and other variables) on support for Pro-Women Attitudes among men and women. See Tables A3 and A4 in Appendix S3 for full results (Because we are comparing differences across either men/women or teenage boys/girls, all figures use 83.4% confidence intervals, which is the standard confidence level used to display results with a 5% Type 1 error rate when graphically comparing two sample means. See Goldstein and Healy (1995) and Maghsoodloo and Huang (2010)).

family cues on gendered political issues play an important role in adult attitudes toward women's rights. In the full sample, the marginal effect of *Family Cues* is .265, after controlling for demographic and psychological factors.[6] This means that moving from perceiving one's family as being strongly opposed to *Pro-Women Attitudes* to perceiving one's family as being strongly supportive of *Pro-Women Attitudes* is associated with a 26.5 percentage point increase in one's own support for Pro-Women Attitudes.[7]

Breaking the results out by gender provides compelling evidence of a gendered effect of family cues. The left panel of Figure 1 shows how moving from 0 to 1 in *Family Cues* (or a substantive shift from perceiving one's family as strongly opposed to *Pro-Women Attitudes* to strongly supportive of them) results in a 33.3 percentage point increase in support for *Pro-Women Attitudes* among men. Among men, *Family Cues* has as strong of an association with support for women's rights as hostile sexism, and a stronger impact than party identification. The impact of the *Family Cues* variable remains positive and robust to multiple model specifications among women as well, but the magnitude of the effect is smaller ($b = .21$). Furthermore, the interaction of respondent gender with *Family Cues* reveals a statistically significant difference between men and women in the association between *Family Cues* and attitudes toward *Pro-Women Attitudes*.[8]

Study One demonstrated a robust relationship between family socialization and support for *Pro-Women Attitudes* as well as the particular strength of this association among men.

[6]See Table A1 in Appendix S3 for the table version of these results.

[7]When we run our analyses separately among White and Black Americans, the effect of *Family Cues*, as well as the interaction between *Family Cues* and respondent's gender, remains positive and statistically significant for both White and Black Americans.

[8]See Table A2 in Appendix S3.

However, these findings relied on respondent recall of *Family Cues*, which could arguably be affected by respondents' current views. Thus, to better understand the impact of *Family Cues* during some of the most formative stages of political identity development, we sought to explore the relationship between *Family Cues* and attitudes toward *Pro-Women Attitudes* among adolescents. We also aimed to clarify whether the influence of family socialization was rooted in authority itself or more a result of perspective-sharing in the context of close relationships.

STUDY TWO: AN EXPERIMENT ON TEENAGERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN'S RIGHTS

In the second study, we directly test our hypothesis that a single family cue about issues relating to women's rights will have more weight among young men than young women. We argue that this gendered difference in response to family cues is due to the earlier crystallization of girls' attitudes and the multitude of gender-related signals they receive, which decreases the relative weight of any one additional signal among young women relative to young men. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a survey experiment between November 2020 and February 2021 on a national probability sample of 800 American teenagers through the NORC Amerispeak Panel, aged 13–17, to assess: (1) whether messaging from a family member that places normative value on holding either liberal and conservative views on political issues associated with women's rights is sufficient to shape teenagers' expressed attitudes; (2) whether family members had a unique effect relative to other authority figures in teenagers' lives; and (3) whether these relationships were stronger among young men than young women.[9]

The experiment employed a 2 ×2 factorial design, plus a control group. The first factor we manipulated was whether respondents were asked to think of a close family member (*Family*) or their school superintendent (*Superintendent*). The goal was to manipulate levels of personal closeness across figures that hold authority in one's life. Building on Study One, we wanted to look at the impact of family socialization, above and beyond other sources of socialization. Further, previous research highlights the influence of both families and schools in adolescent political development (Jennings & Niemi, 1974), making the comparison more apt for this sample. Critically, because respondents were allowed to select the family member to whom they felt the closest, our manipulation enabled us to distinguish relationships based on social and/or emotional connection (*Family*) from relationships based on traditional conceptions of authority (*Superintendent*).[10,11]

The second factor we manipulated was the family member's or superintendent's position on a salient women's rights issue: either being supportive of women speaking out about sexism (*Pro-Speaking Out*) or supportive of protecting men from claims of sexism (*Protecting Men*). We used a technique commonly deployed by political, social, and cognitive psychologists to induce a psychological state or experience. In these experiments, respondents are asked to reflect upon

[9]Sample demographic information can be found in Appendix S2.

[10]Some readers might question the selection of a superintendent, as opposed to a teacher, as the authority figure. Because teachers are more familiar, we were concerned that the nature of the relationship could make it too similar to the type of relationship captured with the *Family* treatment. By asking respondents to think about their school superintendent, we could maximize similarity in levels of authority across respondents, while varying personal closeness. Results are robust to looking only among the subsample of respondents who stated they were familiar with their school superintendent (Table A18 of Appendix S3).

[11]A manipulation check asked whether the respondent's family member/superintendent was more concerned about the importance of young women speaking out about sexism or young men being accused of sexism. Across all conditions, treatment assignment correlated with respondent perceptions of Family/Superintendent attitudes, highlighting the believability of treatments (see Table A19 in Appendix S4). Qualitative analysis of open-ended responses to the treatments also demonstrated consistency between treatment assignment and respondent's written responses.

an experience or scenario and then write down the thoughts that come to mind when doing so. For example, in the first treatment, respondents in the *Family/Pro-Speaking Out* condition were asked to think of a close family member and write three sentences that the family member might say about the importance of women speaking out about sexism.[12] In the *Family/Protecting Men* condition, respondents were asked to think of a close family member and write three sentences they might say about the importance of not accusing young men of sexism too quickly. In the *Superintendent* conditions, respondents saw the same treatment but reflected on what their school superintendent might say. In the control condition, respondents were asked to think about a close family member and write three sentences they might say about the importance of eating a healthy breakfast—a relatively non-political, non-gendered topic.

We focused on speaking out about sexism because of the relative novelty of the issue in high-profile political debates and competing narratives about sexual harassment and assault. Some emphasize the prevalence of sexual harassment and assault and the rarity of false accusations (Lisak et al., 2010), highlighting the importance of speaking out about sexism. Other salient views emphasized concerns about protecting boys and men from accusations, potentially decreasing support for speaking out about sexism (Wax-Thibodeaux, 2018).

While these induction techniques have generally proven effective at invoking the state of interest (c.f. Mutz, 2002; Rusting & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1998; Searles & Mattes, 2015), the strength of our treatment could be constrained by its focus on things that a family member *might* say as opposed to something they *did* say. Not only does our manipulation check provide evidence that the induction was effective, but thinking about such hypothetical statements in the context of a survey is likely not as impactful as hearing these statements in real life, meaning that the observed effects are likely conservative estimates of real-life encounters.

After respondents were exposed to a treatment or control, they were asked about a range of gender-related attitudes (pre-tested on a convenience sample of 12-year-olds to ensure policies and attitudes were familiar to individuals in the youngest strata of the age range). These included holding men accountable for misconduct, equal pay, fair hiring practices, free tampons in schools and workplaces, concern about sexism, and hostile sexism. The dependent variable was a combined six-item index (*Pro-Women Attitudes*). The Cronbach's alpha for these seven items was .73. All items were rescaled 0–1, with higher values associated with holding views more supportive of *Pro-Women Attitudes*. Other items included as covariates in the models were similarly scaled and include measures of income, religiosity, urbanicity, and parent vote choice in 2020.

STUDY TWO: FINDINGS ABOUT THE EFFECT OF FAMILY SOCIALIZATION ON TEENAGE BOYS AND GIRLS

We began by evaluating the impact of reflecting on *Pro-Speaking Out* or *Protecting Men* messages from a close family member on respondents' own attitudes toward women's rights. We ran an OLS regression looking at the relationship between assignment to the *Pro-Speaking Out* or *Protecting Men* treatment and support for *Pro-Women Attitudes*, with and without covariates. When the combined sample of teenagers merely *imagined* a family member saying that it is important for women to speak out against sexual harassment (*Pro-Speaking Out/Family*), they were significantly more likely to support *Pro-Women Attitudes* then when imagining a family member saying it is important to protect men from false claims (*Protecting Men/Family*).[13] These findings were robust to a variety of model specifications, including

[12]Respondents selected the family member that they are closest to (prior to treatment) from a list of potential parent/guardian figures.

[13]See Table A8 in Appendix S3.

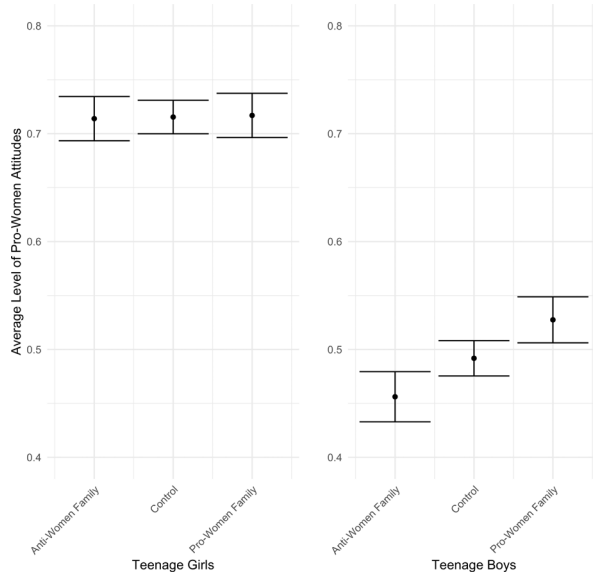

FIGURE 2 Effect of family conditions on support for pro-women attitudes, by gender. Results show average marginal effect of OLS regression of the "Pro-Women/ Family" treatment conditions on support for Pro-Women Attitudes, among teenage boys and teenage girls. See Tables A10 and A12 in Appendix S3 for a table version of results.

models with all of the aforementioned covariates. Importantly, this effect was unique to the *Family* treatment. Thinking about one's school superintendent communicating a *Pro-Speaking Out* perspective or a *Protecting Men* perspective had no effect on respondent support for *Pro-Women Attitudes*. This highlights the importance of personal connection to influencing youth attitudes on #MeToo, over more traditional conceptions of authority.

Parsing the results by gender clarifies that the effect is occurring almost exclusively among teenage boys (Figure 2), who increase their support for these policies by nearly 7.3 percentage points when moving from the *Protecting Men/Family* to the *Pro-Speaking Out/Family* conditions. While teenage girls are, on average, 17.4 percentage points more likely to support these policies than teenage boys, there is virtually no difference in levels of support for *Pro-Women Attitudes* among girls across any of the treatments (Figure 2).[14]

In short, young men's opinions were powerfully influenced by whether they imagined a family member saying that it is important for women to speak out against sexual harassment (*Pro-Speaking Out/Family*), or that it is important to protect men from false claims (*Protecting Men/Family*). This is consistent with our theory that because girls are bombarded with a multitude of gender-related signals and girls' gender consciousness crystallizes sooner, any one signal that young women receive during adolescence may be less impactful (Filler & Jennings, 2015; Rinehart, 2013). Young men, meanwhile, receive fewer and more delayed signals (Filler & Jennings, 2015), increasing the relative influence of a single family cue on their attitudes toward women's rights.

We next looked at each of the dependent variables separately to determine if certain policy attitudes were driving results. Table 1 shows the effect of being in the *Pro-Speaking Out/Family* condition, relative to the *Protecting Men/Family* condition, on each of our six dependent

[14]To address the possibility that our results are due to acquiescence bias and are not specific to attitudes related to women's rights, we asked respondents an additional policy question unrelated to women's rights – about levels of immigration. There is no relationship between the treatment and attitudes toward immigration (see Table A16, Appendix S3).

TABLE 1 Support for pro-women attitudes by treatment condition—among boys.

	Dependent variable					
	Boys	**Equal pay**	**Hiring women**	**Tampons**	**Sexism**	**Hostile sexism**
Treatment	.123* (.049)	−.017 (.058)	−.004 (.046)	.098* (.047)	.140** (.052)	.091 (.053)
Family Income	.117 (.077)	−.091 (.091)	−.179* (.073)	−.146* (.073)	−.070 (.080)	−.068 (.083)
Religious Attendance	−.012 (.058)	−.049 (.069)	−.030 (.055)	−.065 (.055)	.010 (.061)	.072 (.063)
City	.070 (.050)	−.024 (.059)	−.094* (.047)	−.004 (.047)	−.007 (.052)	−.079 (.053)
Parent's Vote	−.011 (.040)	.130** (.048)	.110** (.038)	.084* (.039)	.108* (.043)	.091* (.044)
Observations	231	232	232	230	230	229
R^2	.053	.043	.078	.057	.052	.041
Adjusted R^2	.032	.021	.057	.035	.031	.020
Residual Std. Error	.313 ($df = 225$)	.374 ($df = 226$)	.298 ($df = 226$)	.297 ($df = 224$)	.328 ($df = 224$)	.336 ($df = 223$)

Note: Cell values are coefficients from an OLS regression looking at the effect of the Pro-Women/Family treatment on each of the six items in the Pro-Women Attitudes index, among teenage boys. Tables A14 and A15 in Appendix S3 contain similar tables among the full-sample and among teenage girls.

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

variables. Looking only at boys, results are driven by three questions: belief that men shouldn't suffer in their careers for things done when they were young (*Boys*); belief that there is too much concern about sexism (*Sexism*); and belief that tampons should be free and accessible in schools and workplaces (*Tampons*). Highlighting the effectiveness of this particularly conservative treatment (a one-time reflection on familial attitudes), the *Boys* and *Sexism* items are arguably the most relevant to our treatment conditions.

Finally, given the literature about same-sex parent–child dyads (Filler & Jennings, 2015; Gidengil et al., 2010; O'Bryan et al., 2004; Oxley, 2017), we explored whether the different results by gender were because young men and women thought of different family members at the start of treatment. We do find that girls more consistently selected their mothers, and boys were more evenly split between selecting their mothers and fathers.[15] Still, there was not a statistically significant relationship between treatment assignment and support for women's rights among female respondents, regardless of the gender of the family member selected.[16]

Results among boys, though, are driven almost exclusively by boys who selected their mother or another female family member. Boys who selected their mother as the family member for the treatment were nearly 11 percentage points higher in support for *Pro-Women Attitudes* when assigned to the *Pro-Women* condition, compared to the *Anti-Women* condition (Figure A1 in Appendix S3). One reading of these results again places the responsibility for improving gender equality with women themselves, urging mothers to educate their sons. At the same time, it is possible that fathers engage so little with their sons when it comes to women's experiences and policies promoting women's rights that boys could only effectively imagine their mothers offering an opinion on such topics. Were fathers to "lean in" to conversations about gender inequality with their sons, they could help raise a generation of boys to not only understand the deep inequities shaping our current political and economic landscape but to advocate for a more equal world as adults.

[15]See Table A17 in Appendix S3.

[16]In fact, girls who selected their fathers and were assigned to the Pro-Women treatment were marginally *less* likely to express support for women's rights ($p < .1$).

DISCUSSION

Our studies present new insights into the influence of family cues on men's attitudes toward protecting and advancing women's rights. In Study One, we provide evidence that men (and women) who believe their families would view them favorably for supporting a *Pro-Women Policy* are more likely to support that policy. Regardless of other influences previously shown to play an important role in gender-related policy views, *Family Cues* are one of the strongest factors associated with *Pro-Women Attitudes*. Study One also reveals that *Family Cues* are more influential for men than women, on par with hostile sexism and stronger than party identification, when it comes to predicting gender-related policy attitudes.

Study Two offers evidence of the role that a single additional message from a family member can play in this gender gap: Just thinking of a message from a close family member can shift young boys' attitudes about women's rights, but not the attitudes of young girls. High levels of support for *Pro-Women Attitudes* among teenage girls in the control group indicate the possibility of previously crystallized attitudes and/or a ceiling effect. Given that young women tend to be exposed to more information about gender inequity at a younger age, their expressed attitudes on gender-related issues may develop sooner and be less susceptible to additional messages, including those that cue familial norms and sanctions. We hope that future work will assess the impact of family cues on gender-related attitudes among younger cohorts of participants stratified by age to determine whether the malleability of these attitudes in response to family cues decreases as children age.[17] Given evidence that young women experience sexual harassment more frequently than young men, future research would also benefit from exploring how direct experiences with sexual harassment affect attitudes toward policies relating to gendered inequality (Murnen & Smolak, 2000).

Young men, on the other hand, receive fewer cues about women's experiences and related issues. Young men are thus less likely to be familiar with the information about women's experiences and gender inequity that typically leads to support for policies protecting and/or advancing women's rights. While this might make the baseline level of support for these policies lower among young men, the fact that young men receive fewer cues about women's experiences than young women makes them more open to the influence of family views and increases the relative weight of reflecting on a single, additional cue. These results underscore the importance of speaking to young men—and particularly family speaking to young men—about women's experiences and perspectives as well as the policies that shape women's lives and opportunities. Having a daughter is enough to increase men's support for policies designed to increase gender equality (Sharrow et al., 2018); having a *conversation* is enough to make boys more supportive of women's rights.

In a stage of life when familial influence on political views may be particularly strong (Niemi & Sobieszek, 1977), merely reflecting on a family member supporting or challenging the importance of a woman speaking out about sexual harassment or assault has a strong impact on teenage boys' support for policies promoting women's rights. Importantly, the results highlight that family socialization impacts sons and daughters differently when it comes to gender-related attitudes. Also notable, this effect seems rooted in the power of perspective-sharing in close relationships. Authority alone, as embodied by the school superintendent condition, is insufficient to motivate attitude change around women's rights. Future research should consider the role of other long-term close relationships, such as teachers, as sources of attitudinal influence.

In sum, this project contributes to the family socialization and political science literatures by examining the relative weight of family cues for sons and daughters and offering new

[17]The size of the sample in Study Two precludes stratifying by age to explore whether younger participants possess more malleable attitudes.

insights into the factors shaping the development of men's attitudes toward women's rights. It also presents the development of attitudes about women's rights as an important case for understanding gendered variability in the effectiveness of family transmissions. Through our exploration of the unique role played by familial cues in shifting men's support for policies designed to increase gender equality, we shed light on critical questions around why it remains so difficult to make meaningful progress on relevant legislation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the attendees at the Interdisciplinary Workshop on Politics and Policy at the Center for Political Studies in the University of Michigan, the 2023 American Political Science Association, the 2022 International Communication Association, the 2021 Midwest Political Science Association, and Time-Sharing Experiments in the Social Sciences for your feedback and support of this project.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

How to cite this article: Morell, S., Hahn, L., & Ostfeld, M. (2024). Engendering equality: Unraveling the influence of family cues on young men's attitudes toward women's rights. *Political Psychology*, *00*, 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.13063