

# Gender Roles and the Gender Expectations Gap

Discussant comments

March 8, 2021

# Outline

- No summary—the paper is super clear.
- Tiny comments on the current paper, which is really polished and convincing.
- Extensions, both thinking back historically and on current policy debates.

## One tiny suggestion

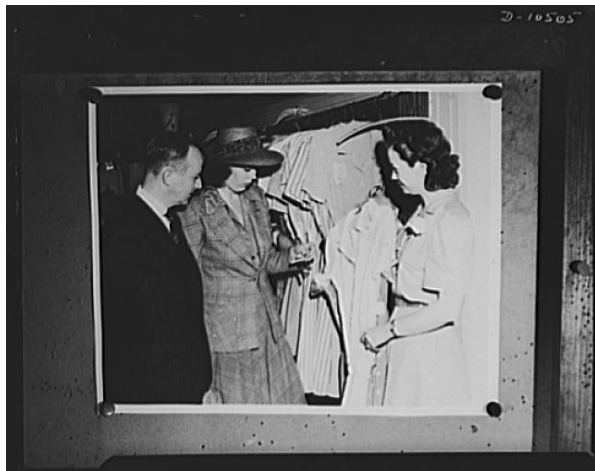
- The within-household specifications are nice, but single people are also useful in testing the hypothesis.
- Single men presumably do their own shopping, whereas you might worry about weird selection in households where married men do most of the shopping.
  - Maybe those are super gender-egalitarian households or all the wives are economists or something we can just never observe.
- In the NY Fed data you look at young folks (many of who could be single), and find smaller effects as we would predict if the men shop more, but would be nice to see more results with single folks (who are all likely shoppers).

## Women as shoppers



During World War II, thousands of women worked/volunteered for the Office of Price Administration to enforce war-time price controls.

## Women as OPA investigators



Volunteer woman investigator for the Office of Price Administration (OPA) enforcement agency in Philadelphia, 1942 or 1943.

# Great historical price expectations data

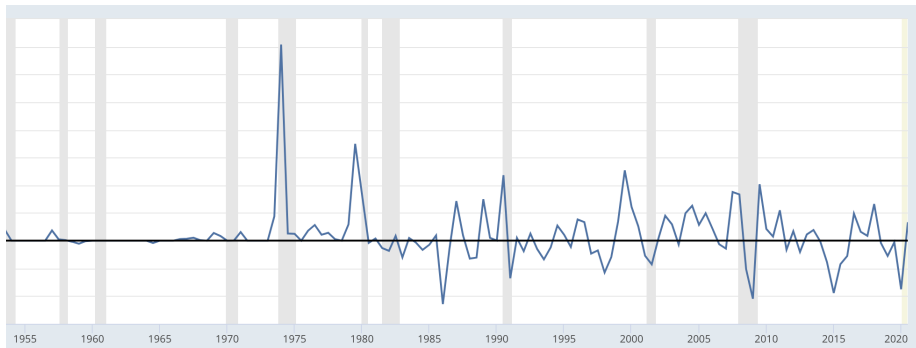
- Most of us have grown up in the Great Moderation / Secular Stagnation period of perpetually low inflation, but inflation was previously a major topic of discussion.
- Gallup (compiled by iPoll at Cornell) asks about it *all the time*: “Do you think that, in general, prices will be higher, lower or about the same six months from now.”
  - First time I see it is 1937.
- I just looked at a random survey from 1950 and, yes, women predict greater price growth!

Do you think that prices, in general, will be higher, lower, or about the same 6 months from now	female		Total
	Male	Female	
Higher	100 14.66	97 14.26	197 14.46
Lower	234 34.31	189 27.79	423 31.06
Same	348 51.03	394 57.94	742 54.48
Total	682 100.00	680 100.00	1,362 100.00

## Historical data allows demanding tests of mechanism

- The authors argue that the difference between men and women is their observed price data (women from groceries, which tend to be volatile).
- The authors show that a key anchor for men is gas prices.
  - Would seem likely even more so in historical period, as men more likely to commute to work and drive more generally.
- Using the Gallup data, they could test whether periods of volatility in oil/gas prices lead men to (temporarily) have higher inflation expectations than women.

# Oil-price volatility (1955-today)



*Source: FRED.*

*Notes:* The figure plots the percent change over six months.



# Implications for policy preferences

- If women expect higher prices, are they more concerned about policies that might trigger inflation (recent comments by Janet Yellen v. Larry Summers suggests not).
  - Traditionally, political and economic conservatives are more concerned about inflation, but modern women in the US and other rich democracies tend to be more liberal than men (not true historically).
  - Women could both expect higher inflation, but (a) not think it's a bad thing or (b) not connect higher prices to interventionist policies.

# Stimulus today very popular, especially with women

**Table POL2\_9:** *How important of a priority should each of the following be for Congress?*  
*Stimulating the economy to recover from the coronavirus pandemic*

Demographic	A top priority	An important, but lower priority	Not too important a priority	Should not be done	Don't know / No opinion	Total N
Registered Voters	66% (1336)	19% (374)	5% (101)	3% (62)	7% (140)	2013
Gender: Male	64% (600)	22% (208)	5% (48)	4% (36)	5% (50)	942
Gender: Female	69% (736)	16% (167)	5% (53)	2% (25)	8% (90)	1071

Source: Morning Consult / Politico poll, February 19-22, 2021, published cross-tabs.

## Gender differences in unemployment/inflation trade-off

- In 1985, 1990 and 1996 the General Social Survey asked:  
“If the government had to choose between keeping down inflation or keeping down unemployment to which do you think it should give highest priority?”

	Men	Women
Keep down inflation	53.8	45.9
Keep down unemployment	46.14	54.1

- Does experience with child-care make women also more sensitive to costs of unemployment?

# Connecting beliefs with policy preferences

- In some previous work we found that respondents reacted with greater concern about inequality when shown information about the income distribution, but didn't connect it to support for redistributive policy.
  - Similarly, the group most aware or even over-aware of inflation seems the group less supportive of combatting it.
- A survey experiment that asked about COVID stimulus and varied whether inflation noted as a concern would be very interesting to examine by gender.