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The Gender Influence on Individual Attitude for Reagan in 1980 Election

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Abstract

With development of women's social status, as more women were working and living by their own, their sense of political motivation is gradually independent from men. In 1980 election, the candidate Reagan's political proposition had been commonly viewed as alienated women. Consequently, gender seems to be a significant factor that affect people's feeling towards Reagan. From the survey data in 1980 NES Panel Study, I built a multiple variables linear regression with gender as dummy variable to analyze the difference in men's and women' attitude to Reagan. Interestingly, gender do not solely affect people feeling for Reagan, but after I restrict single gender in other variable, it reflects a gender gap of feeling to Reagan. Reagan's political truly affect the vulnerable group, especially for female African American. The Race combine with gender, which emphasize the social vulnerable group, tends to have worse feeling for Reagan during the election.

The presidential election of 1980, is one of the most consequential election in United states history. Reagan wins the election with one-sided dominance and beat Carter for almost 10 percent more votes. However, it is widely presumed that Reagan's political proposition only cater to men but alienate women. To deeply delve this hypothesis, I want to analyze the how gender affect voter's attitudes for Reagan. According to Gerald C. Wright, relationships among the variables in political analyses are often conditional. I decided to use dummy variable to represent gender and try to discover the insight behind gender related to voters' feeling for Regan.

In order to demonstrate the voter's feeling for Reagan, I conduct multiple variable linear regression with dummy variable to analyze the conditional relationship between gender gap between race in Reagan's feeling thermometer. I used the 1980 national election panel study (NES) as my dataset. Since feelings for candidates has been divided into 4 waves, which represent people's feeling in January, July, September, and November respectively. I only consider the third wave, which demonstrate voter's attitude towards Reagan in September. The unit of my analysis in each individual that participate the 1980 national election panel study and reflect their feeling in the survey without missing any information.

Individual's feeling for the candidates in a subjective measurement that can be depends on tremendous factors. In order to ensure the comprehensiveness of my regression model, I used the multiple variable linear regression model with 10 independent variables and add the intercept dummy variables related to gender and slope dummy variables between gender and race. The intercept dummy variables with gender can provide an insight of difference between men's and women's feeling about Reagan. I introduce slope dummy variable based on gender and race,

which indicates the different conditions in gender that affects individual's feeling toward Reagan.

For my intercept dummy variable in the Reagan's felling linear regression, I choose gender as my investigation perspective since, as we discussed above, Reagan's policy proposition is presumed no favor by women. To see the initial feeling difference between men and women, the intercept dummy variables for gender were introduced to represent a conditional variable that changes the constant term. In my linear regression model, intercept dummy variable represents the initial difference between men and women's feeling towards Reagan. As shown in table 1, the intercept dummy variable for men and women have value for 61.505 and 64.6813 respectively. To see whether there is a feeling gap between men and women toward Reagan, I did a F-test to my intercept dummy variable. From the coefficient- covariance matrix, as seen in table 2, we compute the F test statistics with p value equals to 0.7625435. As a result, we conclude that there is no difference in the men's and women's feeling toward Reagan when all other constant are controlled, since we are about 80% confident that there is no difference between men and women's feeling toward Reagan.

(Insert table 1 and table 2 here.)

According to our test statistic, we acknowledge that gender gap is not very clear in the 1980 election if there is no other factor affect voter's feeling for Reagan. Without other condition, gender do not solely affect people's feeling toward Regan. Based on the same living environment, men and women is not easily to have a different political attitude toward the election candidate. People from same background are tends to have same attitude to the

particular thing and gender might not be the determinant factor for voter's feeling for Reagan. In order to see the real impact of gender in people's feeling to the candidate in 1980 election, we constrained same gender in other factor, which makes a slope dummy variable, to see whether gender gap truly existed in people's feeling for Reagan.

In my slope dummy variable in the linear regression, I relate the gender with race in order to see how gender gap of people's feeling towards Reagan behave between Caucasian and African American. From table 1, we could see that my slope dummy variables all have a negative value. The negative slope indicate that African American people are less favor Reagan than Caucasian people, since in 1980 election, there are very few African American who support for Republican party. Interestingly, according to table 1, the slope dummy variable for men has the value of -6.046 and the dummy variable for women has the value of -14.1459. As we can see, the relative difference between two value is large enough to allow us to test the difference between the two dummy variables. I did the same F test to the slope dummy variable as the intercept the variable. According to the variance for the men and women slope variable and covariance between them. We compute the p-value for our F-test equal to 0.153266. Compare to the intercept dummy variable, we only have 15 percent confidence that there is no difference between the two dummy variables. It is highly possible that female African American prone to have bad feeling toward Reagan than male African American.

To explain the statistic value, we should take deeply look at the Reagan's political proposition which have been widely thought as alienated women. Even though, as we discussed above, the proposition may not cause an overall clear gap depends only on gender, when it comes to a particular social group, the difference between men and women will amplify. During the election, Reagan underscore his opposition to the Equal Right Amendment and abortion.

Women during the time of 1980, are the social group that tends to more likely to be poor and more likely to require the government aids. Female African American, a typical example in this social group, would be more sensitive to the political policy that benefit their livelihoods. Comparing with men, African American women demand more help from government and would have worse feeling towards the candidate who might deteriorate their social benefit. Reagan's effort to trim back the welfare state, would have more impact on women than men especially in African American. As a result, the larger absolute value for women only slope dummy variable in race are supposed to have a larger value than men only slope dummy variable in race. Additionally, Reagan also increase the government defense spending and use of military force. The aggressive policy in military expansion is not favor for the female voters. Women prone to be indifferent to the military development than men. The increment in military expense is not an attractive political policy for women voter. On the other hand, those policies are more attractive for men and might increase men feeling for Reagan. Thus, the relative small slope for only men dummy variable, result from the attractiveness of military expansion policy, indicate that the feeling for Reagan dramatic turn between male Caucasian and male African American. African American women compare with Caucasian women, are more likely in a bad life situation. Their major concern is their well-being but not the military development. So it is understandable that they may have worse feeling for Reagan.

In conclusion, gender is a very important factor that affect people's feeling toward Reagan in 1980 election. Even though it does not solely affect people's attitude, but if it combines with other factor, it would have significant impact. Different gender in different race is typical example that illustrate the point. The special social condition would enable the voter be

more sensitive to the candidate's proposition during the election and their feelings to the

candidate might have dramatic trends because of their circumstances.

Works Cited

Wright, Gerald C.. "Linear Models for Evaluating Conditional Relationships". American Journal

of Political Science 20.2 (1976): 349–373. Web...

Table 1: Feelings for Reagan with gender dummy variable

Variables	Estimates	Standardized Estimates	t-ratio	Prob value
Male	61.5050	5.2085	11.809	<2e-16
Female	64.6813	5.6450	11.458	<2e-16
Male-race	-6.9046	3.9685	-1.740	0.0823
Female-race	-14.1459	4.3791	-3.230	0.0013
AGE	0.1260	0.0556	2.265	0.0238

$R^2 = 0.8384$, Adj. $R^2 = 0.8372$, N = 695, $df = 690$

Table 2: Coefficient-covariance matrix with feelings for Reagan with gender dummy variable

	Male	Female	Male-race	Female-race	Age
Male	27.1280306	6.5173542	-17.78307999	-0.58457081	-0.133041301
Female	6.5173542	31.8656102	-0.330085244	-21.52508903	-0.151431223
Male-race	-17.7830800	-0.3300852	15.748687468	0.02960683	0.006738159
Female-race	-0.5845708	-21.5250890	0.029606830	19.17681448	0.013582548
Age	-0.1330413	-0.1514312	0.006738159	0.01358255	0.003091225