Oral Defense Announcement
University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

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Gender and the Authoritarian Dynamic:
An Analysis of Social Identity in the Partisanship of White Americans

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Place: Remote

Abstract
This dissertation examines the influence of authoritarianism and gender on the political behavior of white Americans. Authoritarianism and gender are two prominent variables in the formation of political preferences. Authoritarianism is regarded as a dynamic psychological disposition toward order and structure in social relations. Meanwhile, gender reflects external cultural markers attached to sex to indicate appropriate social behavior. Environmental factors like resource disparities and social conventions contribute to the production of gender. Both gender and authoritarianism have become increasingly contentious subjects in the context of contemporary partisanship. Scholars believe that each variable uniquely contributes to polarization, and have studied the effect of each variable separately on partisanship. This dissertation fills a gap in the literature by examining the interactive effect of gender and authoritarianism on political behavior through the lens of social identity theory. In recent years, scholars have increasingly understood partisanship through the psychology of social identity. This shift in emphasis away from purely rationalist assumptions of political behavior reflects the contemporary need to explain the personal dimension of politics. Gender and authoritarianism both impact identity. Given the expansive scope of party affiliation to affect political stances in the context of polarization, it is hypothesized that gender and authoritarianism interact to influence political behavior as the norm. This dissertation relies on Miller and Shank’s casual process model to develop hypotheses (1996). The casual process model predicts that internal psychological factors weigh heavier on political preferences than external environmental factors. One posits that gender influences political beliefs more forcefully in the absence of authoritarianism influences. The rate of change in preferences due to the effect of authoritarianism will not be the same for men and women as conventional gender norms socializes men to prefer more authoritarian social arrangements. Regression models test for this proposed relation across three relevant domains: cultural issues, economic issues, and partisan affective evaluations. The results offer partial support for the thesis. The interactive relation manifests as expect in cultural preferences related to social arrangements, but partisanship outweighs the influence of individual gender and authoritarian preferences elsewhere.

Defense of Dissertation Committee
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