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Manager Political Beliefs and Gender Inequality

Research recently appearing in *Administrative Science Quarterly* shows that political party tendencies of law firm partners influences the tendency to hire female candidates, to select female members to be participants on active client teams, and to promote female associates. Further, these political effects are stronger among male partners than among female partners. For example, in law offices with a higher percentages of partners donating to democratic candidates 48% of new hires are women; whereas in law offices that have a higher percentages of partners donating to republican candidates, about 44% of new hires are women.

Key Takeaways:

- More liberal law partners (based on political donation rates) select a higher percentage of female associates.
- Associates with more liberal supervising partners have greater gender parity in promotion rates.
- Political ideology of male law partners appears to be more influential in affecting gender hiring and promotion differences than it does for female partners.

Using data based on law firms from 2007 – 2012, researchers found that in law firms where partners donate more to democratic candidates they were more likely to hire female subordinates. The researchers also found that in law firms where partners donate more to democratic candidates, females were more likely to be selected for work teams that focus on clients' corporate transactions and deals.

The research team also found that in firms, where partners donate more to democratic candidates, female associates were more likely to be promoted to partner than in firms where partners donated more to republican candidates. However, gender inequality completely disappears when 100% of donations go to democratic candidates, and in general the gender effects are weaker for female supervisors.

Their analysis statistically controlled for time trends, and other aspects of the environment, the firm, and the partner that may be correlated with increased gender equality and political issues. The authors suggest that future research is needed to learn about the precise attitudes of individual partners, because while the proxy of donations is likely to be related to the degree of liberalism or conservatism, the donation proxy may not capture all of the nuances.

Source: Carnahan, S. & Greenwood, B.N. (2018). Managers' political beliefs and gender inequality among subordinates: Does his ideology matter more than hers. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol 63(2): 287-322.



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
Darla Moore School of Business

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