

Author(s): Klein, Ethel
Title: Monitoring Group Interests
Date: October 1983
Dataset(s): 1983 Pilot Study

Abstract

Klein addresses the role played by "group interests" in shaping the political evaluations and behaviors of members of gender- and age-based groups. Klein finds evidence that group interests play a large role in determining the political stances of women. Assessments of how women as a group are performing economically influence evaluations of Reagan among women, but not men. Women also give greater weight to assessments of women's group economic performance than they do to assessments of individual or national economic performance. In addition, Klein finds that beliefs concerning the government's proper role in promoting sex equality shapes the candidate selection decisions of women only. Klein also undertakes an analysis of the effect of group identification in the elderly. She finds that group interests do not influence evaluations of Reagan or choices among potential candidates. Klein speculates that group interests play a less significant role in determining the political behavior of the elderly because issues relevant to that group -- such as Social Security reform -- received less media attention than women's issues at the time of the Pilot Study. Klein argues that an electoral monitoring effort would allow researchers to evaluate potential links between group interests and political information, such as the media effect hypothesis proposed in her report.