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## **Gender Equality and Carbon Emissions: A Quantitative Cross-National Investigation**

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# **Gender Equality and Carbon Emissions: A Quantitative Cross-National Investigation**

## **2016 RCEU Proposal**

### **Faculty/Research Mentor:**

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### **Project Summary:**

One of the most consistent findings in research on environmental attitudes is that women tend to be more concerned about environmental problems such as pollution and climate change than men (Bord and O'Connor 1997; McCright 2010). Along these lines, it has been hypothesized that as women gain greater power in society they are able to exert more influence on environmental policy decision-making and thus promote environmental protection. Another line of thought argues that social inequality and injustice is intertwined with human domination of the environment through a common "logic of exploitation," and thus societies in which women are more subjugated are also characterized by high levels of environmental exploitation (McKinney and Fulkerson 2015). Recently, scholars have begun to empirically explore the possibility that achieving greater gender equality may be beneficial for the environment. Studies show that countries with more women in parliament tend to ratify more environmental treaties and designate a greater share of their land as protected areas (Nugent and Shandra 2009). Additionally, researchers have found that net of other relevant factors, countries with greater gender equality have lower levels of carbon dioxide emissions (Ergas and York 2012).

This project will investigate the connection between gender equality and carbon emissions in a more detailed and sophisticated manner than previous research by employing multiple measures of women's status and gender equality as well as multiple measures of emissions. Prior research suggests that the environmental consequences of women's political status may differ from that of women's social status, indicating the need to examine gender equality as a multidimensional concept. As well, research has shown that how carbon emissions are measured has important implications. In particular, the use of territorial (i.e., production-based) emissions versus consumption-based (i.e., trade-adjusted) emissions can lead to differing conclusions since the latter excludes emissions embodied in exports and includes those embodied in imports and thus better reflects responsibility of emissions based on consumption demands. Data for these measures will be collected from multiple sources, including the World Economic Forum's global gender gap reports, the World Bank's World Development Indicators Database, and the Global

Carbon Project's emissions database. These data will be analyzed with bivariate correlation and multiple regression techniques using a statistical software program such as Stata or SPSS. By refining our understanding of the links between gender equality and societal impacts on the environment, this project will contribute to ongoing scholarly discussions of the interconnections between women's rights, climate justice, and sustainability.

**Student Prerequisites:**

SOC 303 or comparable statistics training; SOC 301 or comparable research methods course

**Student Duties:**

This project will be an opportunity for the student to gain practical experience in conducting social scientific research. The student will take the lead in reading and reviewing the relevant research literature in order to develop specific hypotheses for the study. Under my guidance the student will identify relevant variables to include in the study and will collect the data from various sources, as well as clean and prepare these data for the analysis. I will train the student to use statistical software and under my supervision they will conduct the statistical analyses (e.g., descriptive statistics, bivariate correlations, multiple regression, etc.). The student will be responsible for writing up the results of the study, which will be revised through a collaborative process with the end goal of producing a research paper of sufficient quality to present at the Mid-South Sociological Association annual meeting and to potentially submit for publication in a peer-reviewed sociology or interdisciplinary journal.

**Mentor Supervision and Interaction:**

I will meet with the student in my office at least once per week to provide training and guidance and discuss details of the project. At our first meeting, the student and I will together develop a timeline for project completion and set intermediate goals. Over the next few meetings we will discuss the basics of sociological research (e.g., research design, measurement and conceptualization, research design, etc.) and the logic of quantitative cross-national methodology as the student becomes familiar with the relevant literature. Then, our meetings will focus on guiding the student through the research process as they progress through each stage of research and writing. My goal is to provide the student with an opportunity to gain practical, in-depth research experience that will help them to prepare for graduate school or their career as well as deepen their knowledge of and interest in environmental social science. In order for the student to fully experience the challenges and rewards of conducting original research, I will create a supportive environment for them to take initiative, make key decisions, and feel invested in this project.