

# Public Attitudes toward Women as Public Leaders

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### **Abstract:**

There is a tremendous gap in representation between men and women in elected and appointed positions. The purpose of our paper is to analyze how the public perceives women's roles in government. We ask how do attitudes toward women impact the adoption of women's interest legislation? This research seeks to enhance our understanding of the public's role in the lack of women in state level positions by asking questions concerning gender roles in society/government, gender roles in decision-making and how involved government should be in ensuring female representation on local boards/commissions and city councils. There is currently very little research concerning attitudes toward women serving in appointed advisory and decision-making boards; the bulk of the research focuses on women and representation. To study these relationships we conducted a survey of voters' attitudes toward women in government in Pennsylvania and Iowa. We find significant differences in support for gender equality in governing and positive attributes in the qualifications and abilities of females in decision-making among male and female respondents. We also find that respondents in Iowa, which has adopted women's interest legislation, are more supportive of women's ability to govern but less supported of a need for government intervention to ensure women are represented compared to respondents in Pennsylvania, which has no women's interest legislation.

## *Introduction*

The underrepresentation of women in elected and other political decision-making positions in the U.S. has been widely studied by political scientists, psychologists and economists. A renewed interest in the impact of gender on elections was brought about by the Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin campaigns in 2008. However, in 2010, according to the Center for American Women and Politics, “The number of women in Congress has dropped to 16 percent, and the number of women in state legislatures declined by nearly 80 seats, the sharpest drop since CAWP began tracking numbers nearly four decades ago” (2011). It is widely accepted that public opinion on gender stereotypes concerning policy positioning and leadership traits impacts the ability of women to successfully seek public office (Dolan 2010), but there is little research on how attitudes toward women impact perceptions of a woman’s ability to serve in a decision-making or advisory board.

Gender stereotypes are also pervasive in the appointment process for decision-making boards. Attitudes about how men and women intrinsically differ on policy positions and leadership roles often relegate female appointees to community service oriented boards, while men serve on business-minded, economic resource allocation boards. As a result of gender based selection criteria, women also tend to be underrepresented in state and community level decision-making and advisory boards. While much attention has been paid to how gender dynamics impact decision-making on appointed boards (Hannagan and Larimer 2011; Kathlene 1994; Kennedy 2003), little attention has been focused on how public perceptions of gender stereotypes drive gender biased appointment schemes.

Currently, some states have introduced women’s interest legislation mandating gender balance for appointed positions at the state-level and, in one case, within municipalities to remedy the problem of female underrepresentation. In this paper, we ask: How does the adoption of women’s interest legislation affect attitudes toward women severing in government or making decisions about public affairs? We also speculate on how public opinion on gendered leadership traits and government’s role in ensuring gender equality impacts the decision to adopt mandates for gender balance. To answer our question, we surveyed residents in two states with very different approaches to ensure gender equity. Surveys were sent to

randomly selected voters in Iowa, a state that has adopted legislation mandating gender balance at the state and municipal level, and Pennsylvania, a state that has not adopted such gender mandates. The purpose of selecting these two states was to test if there are meaningful differences in the opinion and political culture of state residents that can be attributed to the presence of such legislation.

This study seeks to extend our understanding of the relationship between public opinion and the adoption of legislation to promote increased women's representation in the states in two key ways. First, we compare public opinion concerning women in government in states with similarly professionalized state legislatures and similarly poor records on women's representation in federal and statewide elected positions. This allows us to examine attitudes toward the role government should play in promoting gender equality in settings where competition and outcomes are similarly structured. Second, we examine gender stereotypes about leadership in settings that have and have not adopted gender balance legislation, allowing us to account for how the adoption of such legislation might impact political culture. This research also expands our understanding of how gender stereotypes impact women's representation in decision-making positions beyond elected office.

Our study proceeds as follows. First, we discuss existing literature on how gender stereotypes impact female representation in elected and appointed political positions. Second, we discuss our comparative survey and our theoretical framework. Third, we present preliminary findings from survey respondents in Iowa and Pennsylvania. Finally, we conclude by discussing the implications for gender representation and the adoption of women's interest legislation in a given state based on our findings.

### *Gender Stereotypes and Women's Representation*

The lack of women's representation in elected positions is often considered a paradox, given that research has shown that female candidates possess the skills and resources needed to win campaigns. Female candidates are as qualified as their male counterparts (Fulton et al. 2006; Lawless and Fox 2005) and generally have the ability to fundraise in the same capacity (Burrell 2008). Research has also shown that female candidates are often more dependent than male candidates on general and partisan recruitment

efforts when deciding to run for office (Burrell 2008; Sanbonmatsu 2006; Sanbonmatsu et al. 2009; (Moncrief, Squire, and Jewell 2001), that there are fewer females willing to run for public office than there are males (Lawless and Fox 2005), and that institutions play a role in women's success at the ballot box (Lawless and Pearson 2008). Overall, the scholarly record has consistently shown that women do not suffer from simple gender bias at the polls because male and female candidates tend to win elections at similar rates (eg. Darcy and Schramm 1977; Burrell 1994; Darcy, Welch and Clark 1994; Seltzer, Newman, and Leighton 1997; Dolan 2004).

This does not however mean that gender stereotypes do not have important effects on individual attitudes toward governing and how qualified females are to serve in decision-making positions. Gender stereotypes may ultimately impact an individual's evaluations of candidates and their desire to see gender equality in decision-making. Welch and Sigelman (1982) contend that, "public attitudes not only determine how many female candidates win a general election, but also directly and indirectly how many are considered and nominated for office" (p. 312). Gender stereotypes have been known to directly impact voting behavior by allowing voters to attribute certain leadership traits, that are both negative and positive, to candidates based on their gender (Sanbonmatsu 2002; Dolan 2004; Lawless 2004; Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2009). In general, experiments and surveys have demonstrated that the public tends to attribute compassion, family values and liberalism to female candidates (Burrell 1994); and strength and intelligence to male candidates (Lawless 2004).

Gender stereotypes have also been known to impact the public's perception about the policy strengths of a candidate. A great deal of scholarship has been devoted to the impact of gender differences on decision-making (e.g., Shapiro and Mahajan 1986; Welch and Hibbing 1992; Brown et al. 1993; Burrell 1994; Bratton and Haynie 1999; Howell and Day 2000;). In general, women are seen as being better suited to make decisions on issues related to education, social welfare and families; whereas men are better suited to make decisions on crime, defense and foreign affairs (Alexander and Anderson 1993; Burrell 1994; Koch 1999; Dolan 2010). Scholars have also pointed to patterns of gender difference in decision-making among elected officials that may serve as the basis for such stereotypes. Smith (1984)

found that women more routinely opposed the use of violence as a policy option than men, and Shapiro and Mahajan (1986) found that women had greater levels of support for social welfare spending than their male counterparts. Overall, voters make decisions in elections based on these actual or perceived differences between males and females when it comes to particular areas of decision-making (Dolan 2010).

Gender is also thought to impact the decision-making process. Scholars contend that male and female officials have uniquely different behavioral patterns when approaching group decision-making (Kathlene 1994; Kennedy 2003; Hannagan and Larimer 2010). Research finds that female leadership styles are more democratic, cooperative and more likely to produce outcomes close to the median group preference. Male leadership styles, by contrast, favor a more autocratic approach, seeking competitive individual gains from group decision-making (Eagly and Johnson 1990; Rosenthal 2000; Hannagan and Larimer 2010). Stereotypes concerning position taking and decision-making style also impact the types of governing boards men and women are appointed to serve on. Traditionally male dominated boards are generally related to economic policy, while traditionally female dominated boards are generally related to recreational policy. The end result of gender stereotypes concerning leadership style and issue competency is gender imbalance across appointed decision-making and advisory boards at the state and municipal levels.<sup>1</sup>

While gender politics scholars have focused on improving women's representation in elected positions (Sanbonmatsu, Carroll, Walsh 2009), some state legislatures have undertaken efforts to enact women's interest legislation to promote increased female representation on appointed boards. Such laws require that an equal number of men and women serve on decision-making and advisory boards that are appointed by state and/or municipal officials. The adoption of women's interest legislation requiring gender balance in appointments is not only an important step in advancing women's voices in resource allocation decisions, but prior research has shown that women who begin their political careers in appointed positions win future elected position at the same rate as men (Darcy, Welch and Clark 1994;

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<sup>1</sup> For evidence of this imbalance in Iowa, see Hannagan and Larimer (2011).

Gertzog 1995). Currently, it is unclear whether the existence of various institutional efforts to encourage increased women's representation is driven by a governmental recognition that gender balance is important to public decision-making, or public opinion based on positive and negative gender stereotypes.

Previous studies on gender stereotypes have identified important links between public opinion and the underrepresentation of women at all levels of government. The public opinion and gender literature finds that there are important perceived differences between males and females that may impact individual level vote decisions. In general, men and women are perceived as having different approaches to leadership style and are also perceived to vary on issue competency. However, these studies tend to focus on how perceived gender differences impact elected politics and fail to address how such stereotypes impact appointed decision-making positions. The adoption of women's interest legislation requiring gender balance would suggest that gender is an important component to governing or advisory board decision-making. There is currently very little research concerning attitudes toward women serving in appointed advisory and decision-making boards; this study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing how the adoption of gender balance legislation (or lack thereof) affects public opinion on gender roles in government. To study this relationship we conducted a survey of voters' attitudes toward women in government in Pennsylvania and Iowa.

#### *Background: Iowa and Pennsylvania*

Iowa and Pennsylvania provide an ideal comparative setting for assessing how public opinion may impact decision-making in governing advisory boards. Iowa and Pennsylvania share the fact that they have large and highly professionalized state legislatures. The literature on women's representation has shown us that professionalized legislatures generally yield fewer female representatives, as men tend to be attracted to state legislative jobs that are full time and high paying, making the field more competitive (Squire 1992; Arceneaux 2001; Hill 1981; Hogan 2001). According to the Center for American Women and Politics, Iowa ranks 32<sup>nd</sup> in the nation in women's representation at the state level, with 21.3% of the Iowa state legislature being female. Pennsylvania ranks 42<sup>nd</sup>, with 17.4% of the

Pennsylvania state legislature being female (CAWP 2011). Both states also share the history of having never elected a female governor. Over the last three respective gubernatorial elections neither state had a female candidate in the primary or general election. The two states are also similarly poor in women's representation at the national level; currently, in Iowa no women serve in Congress (and never have), and only one woman in Pennsylvania serves in Congress.

Iowa and Pennsylvania are similar in their poor representation of women at the national and state level, but they differ in their recognition and willingness to address gaps in women's representation within the state. In 1986, Iowa enacted legislation requiring, "all appointive boards, commissions, committees and councils of the state...shall be gender balanced"(Iowa Code §69.16A). More recently, Iowa became the first state to apply this at the local level by passing HF243 on May 26, 2009, which requires localities must make a "good faith effort" to achieve gender balance by the effective policy implementation date of January 1, 2012. The state of Pennsylvania, by contrast, has taken a more cultural approach to promoting women's participation in state and local politics. In 1974, the Governor created the Pennsylvania Commission for Women, whose goal is "to identify and advance the diverse needs and interests of Pennsylvania women and girls"; the centerpiece of this program is the Pennsylvania Conference for Women aimed at teaching leadership and providing networking opportunities for Pennsylvania women. There is no statewide effort to promote gender balance in appointed positions nor are municipalities required to seek gender balance in local appointed boards. At the state and municipal level, gender diversity in appointed positions is encouraged, but not required.

Thus, the two states present interesting cases for comparison given their similarities in poor women's representation and their diverse approaches to promote the increased inclusion of women in state politics. Iowa has focused on tangible results by requiring gender balance in appointments, while Pennsylvania has focused more on cultural shifts and the symbolic inclusion of women in state politics. These differences in policy or lack of policy reflect key attitudinal differences concerning gender and decision-making; political, work and family cultures; partisan leadership and mobilization efforts; and institutional biases and decision-making held by state residents and elected officials. Our study seeks to

understand how public opinion is impacted by the two states' approaches to women's representation. We are interested in assessing how differences in public attitudes toward gender roles in government and the proper role of government in ensuring gender equality in representation are affected by patterns of adopting women's interest legislation within the state.

### *Theory and Hypotheses*

Taking our cue from Dolan (2010), we theorize that the adoption of women's interest legislation will be determined by public attitudes toward women in politics. These attitudes will be based on gender stereotypes concerning male and female approaches to leadership style, strength and weaknesses attributed to male and female decision makers and gender driven position taking. In general, more positive public evaluations of female competency and qualifications in leadership and issue position taking will lead to an increased public desire to see more women appointed to public decision-making boards. More negative public evaluations of females' ability and qualifications to lead and reach satisfactory decisions on important policy matters will contribute to a public interest in maintaining the status quo of a male dominated decision-making process on appointed boards. Public attitudes will also impact how much government will intervene in ensuring gender equality in decision-making based on the public's belief that government should play a role in requiring some sense of gender balance in governing. These assertions about the importance of public opinion concerning gender stereotypes lead us to make the following three hypotheses concerning women's representation in state appointed positions.

*Hypothesis 1: Women will be more likely than men to favor gender equality in appointed, elected, and policy-making government positions; as well as, governmental intervention to ensure gender equality.*

Women will be more likely to subscribe to positive stereotypes concerning their ability to lead and reach decisions in public settings, while men are more likely to subscribe to negative stereotypes concerning the inability of women to be strong leaders and reach good decisions on difficult public policy

issues. Men may also be more likely to embrace the status quo in political appointments, which is largely based on traditional gender roles, where males dominate resource allocation policy and women are involved in more community service efforts. Given that women will be more supportive of increased female representation, they are also more likely to support government intervention to achieve this goal.

*Hypothesis 2: Residents of Iowa will have more positive evaluations of the qualifications and importance of women serving in government positions than residents of Pennsylvania.*

Iowans are less likely to subscribe to negative stereotypes concerning deficiencies in a woman's ability to lead because the state has made women's equality in appointed positions a high public priority. The early adoption of women's interest legislation in Iowa signals a political culture that is more supportive of females holding decision-making positions in government, which will lead to higher evaluations of a woman's qualifications and decision-making capacity to hold leadership positions. Pennsylvania, by contrast has no such legislation to ensure any level of gender balance within the state's institutions. This could reflect more negative stereotypes concerning women's ability to govern held by Pennsylvanians. Lacking women's interest legislation, Pennsylvania residents are also lacking an important governmental cue that gender equality should be valued in the governing process.

*Hypothesis 3: Residents in Iowa will be less likely to express a need for government intervention to ensure gender equality than residents of Pennsylvania.*

Iowa already has gender balance requirements for appointed positions in place at the state level and has recently required gender balance for municipal level appointments. Given the existence of legislation ensuring women's presence on decision-making boards, Iowans will not see further need for government intervention in ensuring gender equality. Pennsylvania has no legislation in place to ensure women's representation in state or municipal decision-making boards. Thus, we should expect to see Pennsylvanians, particularly women, reporting greater support for increased government involvement in ensuring gender equality because the state currently lacks an institutional foundation for such efforts.

### *Sample*

Mail surveys were sent to 750 randomly selected registered voters in the state of Iowa and 750 randomly selected registered voters in the state of Pennsylvania. In each state, the sample was drawn from the official state voter file. All surveys were mailed the second week of June, 2011. The survey was designed to examine public attitudes toward women in decision-making bodies and the levels at which the public supports government mandated gender balance in appointed decision-making bodies. Recent studies have also used original survey data generated from random state and national samples to study various impacts of gender stereotypes on women's representation (Sanbonmatsu 2002; Lawless 2004; Dolan 2010). This project also seeks to assess how attitudes toward women impact the adoption of legislation aimed at increasing women's presence in government. Our study is unique in that it attempts to link public opinion on issues of gender to the adoption of efforts to increase the presence of women in appointed decision-making and advisory positions. We chose the states of Iowa and Pennsylvania because they have similar records on women's representation but differ in the adoption of women's interest legislation concerning gender equity.

Prior to random assignment, we removed registered voters who were not registered as Democrat, Republican, or Independent, voters residing in households with more than three registered voters, voters over 85 years of age, and voters who did not vote in either 2008 or 2010. Voters were then sorted by a household identifier and assigned a random number. This list of voters was then randomly sorted and the first person within each household was selected for inclusion in the study. This ensures that one voter per household was selected for inclusion in the sample, and that the process of selecting each voter within each household was random. These voters were then randomly sorted such that the first N were assigned to receive a survey, and the rest to control (no survey). In Iowa, the voter files are arranged by congressional district. As such, this randomization process was replicated within each district, the purpose of which was to select an even number of voters per district, in theory giving us a geographically balanced sample. For the state of Iowa, this meant randomly selecting 150 registered voters per district. In Pennsylvania, the voter files were arranged by county. The sample was stratified by county population

and twelve counties were randomly selected. The counties surveyed included: Adams, Armstrong, Crawford, Dauphin, Delaware, Lawrence, Perry Schuylkill, Snyder, Warren, Westmoreland and Wyoming. Residents were labeled as “active” or “inactive” in the Pennsylvania voter file. The inactive residents were excluded and a randomly selected respondent pool of approximately 65 voters from each county was selected following the section process outlined in the Iowa procedure. Each region of Pennsylvania was represented in the survey by at least one county and 74% of survey questionnaires were sent to counties with fewer than 200,000 residents.

In Table 1 we show sample statistics for the treatment (survey) and control (no survey) groups by the available covariates for the state of Iowa. The table includes covariates for voting in the November 2010 election, voting in the November 2008 election, political party identification, gender, age, and household size. Because the randomization took place within congressional districts, the sample statistics are separated as such. For the state of Iowa, across all congressional districts, there are no significant differences between those assigned to receive the survey and those assigned to receive no survey at the .10 level of significance. Table 1 also includes the results from a multinomial logit model for each district predicting assignment to the treatment group as a function of the covariates listed in the table. The likelihood ratio test for each district is nonsignificant indicating the groups are balanced across the observable covariates.

[Insert Table 1 here]

### *Survey*

The purpose of our survey was to test for differences between two states with two very different approaches to ensuring gender equity in government. The survey, included in full in the Appendix, attempts to measure respondents’ attitudes toward women in various positions in government (appointed, elected, and policymaking positions). The survey also includes response items measuring general beliefs about whether government should be actively promoting gender equity, items about how men and women make decisions and whether men and women are equally suited for making public decisions, as well as a

final set of items measuring general attitudes toward government. These measures will serve as our key dependent variables of interest. The survey also includes general demographic information on age, gender, and education level, as well as several items measuring whether respondents have served in government or have family members that have served in government, and whether the respondents have actively sought public office or have family members who have done so. Respondents who have served in government or know others who have served may be more open to government action on the issue of gender equity, thus we attempt to control for any differences.

Our hypotheses, as noted earlier, are that we should expect to see differences between male and female respondents, with female respondents being more in favor of gender equity and an active role for government in ensuring gender equity, and that we will see differences between respondents from Iowa and Pennsylvania. Because Iowa has a rich history of promoting gender equity, we believe respondents from Iowa will be more open to women serving in government or public policymaking positions, but will be less likely to see a need for more government activity in this area. By contrast, respondents from Pennsylvania may be less accustomed to women serving in government and therefore less likely to consider women serving in government positions, but more likely to see a need for active government involvement in this area.

### *Results*

Table 2 shows the response rates for Iowa (by district) and Pennsylvania (by county). In Iowa, 234 surveys were returned for a response rate of 31.2 percent. Across congressional districts, the response rate varied from 27 percent to just over 34 percent. The return rate on undeliverable surveys was approximately 3 percent, or 22 surveys. In Pennsylvania, 100 surveys were returned for a total response rate of 13.3%. (31 surveys or 3.65% were returned as undeliverable). Response rates across the counties surveyed varied from 1 percent to 26 percent.

In Table 3 we present sample characteristics for the survey respondents by state. On the available demographics, respondents from both states were quite similar. There were no statistically significant

differences on respondent age, education level, partisan identification (taken from state voter files), government service (or knowing others in government service), and running for office (or knowing others who have run for office). Respondents from the Pennsylvania survey however were more female (71.1 percent), on average, than respondents from the Iowa survey (52.6 percent). In subsequent analyses we control for gender, and the other key demographics, as predictors of attitudes toward women in government.

[Insert Table 2 here]

[Insert Table 3 here]

Table 4 presents responses to the three items on the importance of women serving in government (specifically, appointed, elected, and policymaking positions). Respondents in both states view the issue of women serving in government in some capacity as an important issue, with little variation between states on the three statements. Although Iowa respondents rate the issue as slightly less important, the difference is not statistically significant.

[Insert Table 4 here]

Table 5 compares responses to ten items measuring beliefs about the government's role in ensuring gender equity, beliefs about the differences between the way men and women make decisions, and more general attitudes toward government. Although there are differences on this latter category between respondents in Iowa and Pennsylvania, they do not reach the conventional .05 level of significance. Turning to the seven items measuring differences in beliefs about men and women, and government's role in ensuring gender equity, we do see three significant differences.

First, to the two items measuring the role of the government in ensuring gender equity. In terms of government doing more to ensure women are equally represented on governing boards, Iowa respondents have, on average, lower levels of agreement, a difference that approaches conventional levels of statistical significance ( $p < .10$ ). On ensuring there are an equal number of men and women on decision-making boards in government, respondents in Iowa have significantly lower levels of agreeableness relative to respondents in Pennsylvania ( $p < .05$ ), thus supporting our third hypothesis

noted above. Both items speak directly to established and recently passed legislation in the state of Iowa. As noted earlier, Iowa was one of the first states to require gender balance on state boards and commission in 1987, and in 2009, Iowa became the only state to pass such requirements for local boards and commissions. The lower level of agreeableness for Iowa respondents may reflect citizens' general satisfaction with Iowa government has been doing in this regard, and that there is little need for further action.

To the two items measuring men's and women's ability and suitability for serving in government, Iowa respondents express significantly more favorability toward women's ability and qualification for working in the public sector. Iowa respondents have significantly higher levels of agreement on the issue of men and women being equally qualified for to make decisions on public affairs ( $p < .05$ ), and have significantly lower levels of agreement in response to the item that men are "better suited" for some public decision-making than women ( $p < .05$ ). This supports our second hypothesis that Iowa residents will have more positive gender stereotypes about women's governing abilities due to the entrenched nature of gender equity in the state. We next turn to differences within each state by gender, but return to the above noted differences later in our linear analysis.

[Insert Table 5 here]

In Table 6 we replicate the results from Table 4, separated by state. As expected (Hypothesis 1), there are significant differences between males and females in both Iowa and Pennsylvania regarding attitudes toward women serving in government. Women in both states view women serving in appointed, elected, and policy-making domains as significantly more important than men. These differences are particularly noteworthy in the state of Iowa, where differences are highly significant at  $p < .001$ . Comparing male respondents in Iowa to male respondents in Pennsylvania revealed no significant differences, as did a similar comparison among females.

[Insert Table 6 here]

Table 7 shows the differences between male and female respondents in each state to the ten items presented in Table 4. While male and female respondents in both states differ in their attitudes about the

beliefs of women and government's role in ensuring gender equity, there are noteworthy distinctions between the two states. In seven out of the ten response items, respondents are asked to record their agreeableness on a statement directly comparing men and women. In Iowa, there are highly significant differences between male and female respondents on all seven items ( $p < .01$ ). Female respondents expressed a significantly higher degree of agreeableness that men and women consider problems and make decisions differently, that government should do more to ensure gender balance, that men and women are equally qualified serve on boards, equally qualified to make decisions, and should participate equally in public decision-making. Female respondents expressed significantly lower levels of agreement on the question of men being better suited for some public decisions than women. On the other three items measuring attitudes toward government generally, there are no significant differences between male and female respondents.

[Insert Table 7 here]

Turning to respondents in Pennsylvania, however, we see a slightly different story. While there are significant differences between male and female respondents, these differences are not as sharp and only occur on four out of the seven gender items. In part this is due to the smaller sample of respondents in Pennsylvania (on item 2 and item 6 the difference is substantially similar to the difference for Iowa respondents but not statistically significant). However, it is worth noting that there is no statistical difference, and very little substantive difference, between male and female respondents to the item on whether men make decisions differently than women.

If the differences shown in Table 7 were to remain with a larger sample, it would suggest questions about women serving in government are more polarizing for men and women in Iowa than in Pennsylvania. The sharp contrast between males and females in Iowa on beliefs about men and women as government decision makers may be due to the active role the government in that state has played in pushing for gender equity in government. By making gender equity in government a salient policy issue, the government in Iowa may have raised awareness of possible disparities between men and women serving government, resulting in women being more attuned to its importance relative to men.

In Table 8 we present the results of a linear analysis on the three statements showing significant differences between Iowa and Pennsylvania respondents found in Table 5 (Men and women are equally qualified; Equal number of men and women on decision-making boards in government; and Men are better suited for some public decision-making). The models presented were estimated using OLS regression techniques. The dependent variable for the three models is a 7-point scale of agreeableness, coded 1 (Strongly Agree) to 7 (Strongly Disagree) on the three statements noted above. Given the categorical nature of the dependent variable, the models were also replicated using ordinal logistic regression. The findings between OLS models and ordinal models were substantially similar, thus we present the OLS models for ease of interpretation. We include covariates measuring respondent political party identification as recorded in the official voter for each state, respondent age, education, gender, a dummy variable measuring whether the respondent was from Iowa or Pennsylvania, and an interaction term for gender and state of residence. We also include measures of government service or pursuit of government service.

[Insert Table 8 here]

As shown in Table 8, female respondents express significantly higher levels of agreement with statements indicating men and women are equally qualified to make decisions concerning public affairs (Model A), and that there should be an equal number of men and women on decision-making boards in government (Model B). On average, men's responses to these items are approximately 1 point higher than responses by women on our 7-point agreeableness scale ( $p < .01$ ). Female respondents, as expected, also express significantly higher levels of disagreement on the statement that men are better suited for some public decision-making than women. On average, female responses to the item are 1.6 points higher (more disagreeable) than male responses ( $p < .01$ ). There are also important state specific effects. Respondents from the state of Iowa express significantly higher levels of agreement on the item indicating men and women are equally qualified make decisions concerning public affairs (Model A), as compared to Pennsylvania respondents ( $p < .01$ ). Iowa respondents also express significantly higher levels of disagreement to the statement than men are better suited for some public decision-making than

women (Model C), responding on average 1.3 points higher (more disagreement) than Pennsylvania residents ( $p < .01$ ). We argue this reflective of the active role the government has played in ensuring gender equity in government, and provides further support for Hypotheses 2 and 3.

Given the significantly higher level of agreement expressed by male respondents in Pennsylvania to the statement that “men are better suited for some public decision-making than women” (see Table 5), we also tested for an interaction between respondent gender and respondent state of residence. As shown in Table 8, this interaction in the linear model was negative and significant, indicating male respondents from Pennsylvania express significantly higher levels of agreement than their counterparts in Iowa. Further analysis indicated a main effect for state,  $F(1,317) = 13.62, p < .01, \eta^2 = .043$ , a main effect for gender  $F(1,317) = 19.31, p < .01, \eta^2 = .060$ , as well as a significant effect for the interaction between state residence and gender,  $F(1,317) = 5.59, p < .05, \eta^2 = .018$ .<sup>2</sup>

There are also important differences regarding education and age of respondents. In Model A, respondents with more education express significantly higher levels of agreement with the statement that men and women are equally qualified to make decisions concerning public affairs ( $p < .05$ ). This relationship for education, however, is reversed in Model B. More educated respondents thus seem to believe that while men and women are equally qualified, they do not believe there should necessarily be an equal number of men and women on decision-making boards in government. We also see that, perhaps contrary to popular perception, older respondents tend to express significantly higher levels of agreement with the statement that men and women are equally qualified (Model A;  $p < .05$ ), and more disagreement with the statement that men are better suited for some public decision-making than women (Model B;  $p < .01$ ).

Finally, although not shown, we also conducted linear analysis of the three items measuring attitudes on the importance of women serving in government in appointed, elected, or policymaking positions (see Table 4). Using the same set of covariates as presented in Table 8, OLS and ordinal

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<sup>2</sup> We also conducted two and three-way interactions models with respondent gender and respondent political party, and respondent gender, respondent state, and respondent political party. There was no main effect for political party or the interactions with respondent gender, respondent state, or with both respondent gender and respondent state.

logistic regression models for the three statements indicate, as expected, that women view the notion of women serving in appointed, elected, and policymaking positions as more important than men. This relationship was consistent and significant across all three models ( $p < .01$ ), with women's ratings approximately four-tenths of point lower (more important) than men. Age was also a significant predictor, though less reliably (significance test ranged from  $p < .05$  to  $p < .10$ ), with older respondents viewing the issue as more important. We also found a significant relationship with political party identification. Because this variable is coded as 1=Democrat, 2=No Party, 3=Republican, interpretation of the results is more difficult. However, we found a consistently significant and positive relationship between political party and respondents' views on the importance of women serving in appointed, elected, or policymaking positions ( $p < .01$  in all three models). In other words, as political party identification moves away from Democrat, the issue of women serving in government is viewed as less important.

### *Conclusion*

This study contributes to our understanding of how attitudes toward women impact support for gender equality in governing positions, but more specifically appointed positions. Based on the results from our survey, we find support for all three of our main hypotheses. In general, as expected, female respondents reported higher levels of support for positive evaluations of the ability and desirability of women serving in government positions than male respondents across both states. Female respondents also reported higher levels of disagreement with the stereotype that men are "better suited" for public decision-making than male respondents across both states. Interestingly, in Iowa, female respondents had considerably more agreement on positive attributes associated with women in government and considerably more disagreement that men are "better suited" to make decisions than male respondents. Such differences were not as severe in Pennsylvania.

We also found support for our hypotheses that Iowa and Pennsylvania will have differences in opinion concerning the role of women in government and the government's responsibility in ensuring gender equality. We found higher levels of positive evaluations of the two genders being equal in ability

and qualifications in Iowa, a state requiring gender balance, than in Pennsylvania, a state that lacks gender balance legislation. We also found slightly more support for increased government involvement to ensure gender equality in Pennsylvania and less support for increased government intervention to ensure gender equality on governing boards in Iowa, where gender balance is already required. These findings provide support for our contention that states that adopt women's interest legislation contribute positively toward public attitudes on gender representation compared to states that do not adopt such legislation. We intend to expand this project by completing two more waves of surveys in each state, for a total of 4,500 mail surveys (2,250 in each state). Admittedly, this research would also benefit from a measure of elite position taking on the necessity of gender equality in appointed positions and the fitness and qualifications of men and women to make public policy decisions. In sum, this study represents our initial findings in a larger project concerned with understanding how public attitudes are affected by the adoption of women's interest legislation in the states.

**Table 1: Balance between Treatment and Control by Covariates, Iowa sample**

	District 1		District 2		District 3		District 4		District 5	
	Control	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control	Treatment
Nov 2010	0.72	0.69	0.73	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.76	0.77	0.73	0.73
Nov 2008	0.95	0.93	0.94	0.92	0.94	0.96	0.94	0.95	0.94	0.96
Party ID	1.93	2.02	1.89	1.81	1.96	2.01	2.02	2.11	2.18	2.14
Female	0.54	0.51	0.53	0.48	0.54	0.47	0.53	0.54	0.53	0.50
Age	51.81	50.89	49.92	52.13	49.83	50.49	51.64	50.94	53.33	52.14
HH size	1.94	1.93	1.92	1.90	1.86	1.87	1.94	1.98	1.96	1.95
N =	258,874	150	276,304	150	289,837	150	255,944	150	228,001	150
LR chi-square(6) =	3.89	p = 0.69	7.52	p = 0.28	3.74	p = 0.71	3.03	p = 0.81	3.26	p = 0.78

\*Note: Means are reported for each covariate. Party ID is coded (1=Democrat, 2=Independent, 3=Republican)

**Table 2: Response Rate by District**

IOWA sample			PENNSYLVANIA sample			
	Return by district	Percent by district	County	Surveys Sent	Surveys Received	Response Rate
CD 1	41	27.33	Adams	65	7	10.77
CD 2	52	34.67	Armstrong	60	7	11.67
CD 3	45	30	Crawford	60	16	26.67
CD 4	50	33.33	Dauphin	65	13	20
CD 5	44	29.33	Delaware	65	1	1.54
Total	232	31.2*	Lawrence	65	12	18.46
			Perry	60	6	10
			Schuylkill	65	9	13.85
			Snyder	60	6	10
			Warren	60	10	16.67
			Westmoreland	65	4	6.13
			Wyoming	60	6	10
			No County Specified		3	
			<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>13.33*</b>
						<u>Return rate</u>
Surveys returned			Surveys returned			
undeliverable	23	3.07	Undeliverable	31		4.13

\*Note: This percentage includes the additional of two surveys in which the ID was scratched out thus removing the ability to identify the district from which it was sent.

\*Note: This percentage includes the additional of three surveys in which the ID was scratched out thus removing the ability to identify the district from which it was sent.

**Table 3: Sample characteristics of respondents, by state (mean levels reported)**

	Iowa	Pennsylvania
Gender (1=Female; 0=Male)	<b>0.53*</b>	<b>0.71</b>
Age	4.13	4.08
Political party identification	2.03	2.16
Highest grade level completed	2.19	2.33
Served in government	0.13	0.16
Family member served in government	0.49	0.44
Run for office	0.07	0.09
Family member run for office	0.50	0.44

\*  $p < .05$

Note: Political Party coded (1=Democrat; 2=No Party; 3=Republican)

**Table 4: Attitudes toward women in government, by state (mean levels reported)**

	Iowa	Pennsylvania
Importance of women serving in appointed positions	1.72 N=234	1.55 N=100
Importance of women serving in elected positions	1.72 N=234	1.66 N=95
Importance of women serving in policy-making positions	1.69 N=234	1.62 N=95

Note: Importance coded (1=Very Important; 2=Important; 3=Somewhat Important; 4=Not Important)

**Table 5: Attitudes on women and government, by state (mean levels reported)**

	Iowa	Pennsylvania
Government should ensure that women are present on governing boards	2.85	2.48
Women consider problems differently than men	1.99	1.95
Men make decisions differently than women	2.08	1.85
Men and women are equally qualified to make decisions concerning public affairs	<b>1.68*</b>	<b>2.03</b>
I believe government cares about people like me	4.09	4.49
Men are better suited for some public decision-making than women	<b>5.44*</b>	<b>4.91</b>
Men and women should participate equally in public decision-making	2.17	2.11
There should be an equal number of men and women on decision-making boards in government	<b>3.82*</b>	<b>3.28</b>
I trust members of government to do the right thing	4.91	4.89
All Americans have the ability to serve in public office	4.42	3.94

\*  $p < .05$

Note: Categories coded (1=Strongly agree; 2=Agree; 3=Somewhat agree; 4=Neutral; 5=Somewhat disagree; 6=Disagree; 7=Strongly disagree). For Pennsylvania, N=95 for first item and N=96 for all other items. For Iowa, N=232 for the first, fourth, and seventh items, N=233 for the fifth, sixth, eighth, ninth, and tenth items, and N=234 for second and third items.

**Table 6: Attitudes toward women in government (mean levels reported)**

<b>IOWA</b>		
	Male	Female
Importance of women serving in appointed positions	1.95** N=111	1.50 N=123
Importance of women serving in elected positions	1.99** N=111	1.48 N=123
Importance of women serving in policy-making positions	2.02** N=111	1.39 N=123

<b>PENNSYLVANIA</b>		
	Male	Female
Importance of women serving in appointed positions	1.83* N=29	1.44 N=71
Importance of women serving in elected positions	1.93* N=29	1.55 N=66
Importance of women serving in policy-making positions	1.93* N=29	1.48 N=66

\*\* p < .01; \* p < .05

Note: Importance coded (1=Very Important; 2=Important; 3=Somewhat Important; 4=Not Important)

**Table 7: Attitudes on women and government, (mean levels reported)**

**IOWA sample**

	Male	Female
Government should ensure that women are present on governing boards	<b>3.30**</b>	<b>2.45</b>
Women consider problems differently than men	<b>2.22**</b>	<b>1.78</b>
Men make decisions differently than women	<b>2.24*</b>	<b>1.93</b>
Men and women are equally qualified to make decisions concerning public affairs	<b>1.87**</b>	<b>1.50</b>
I believe government cares about people like me	4.23	3.98
Men are better suited for some public decision-making than women	<b>5.14**</b>	<b>5.70</b>
Men and women should participate equally in public decision-making	<b>2.52**</b>	<b>1.86</b>
There should be an equal number of men and women on decision-making boards in government	<b>4.33**</b>	<b>3.34</b>
I trust members of government to do the right thing	5.12	4.73
All Americans have the ability to serve in public office	4.37	4.47
N	111	122

\*\* p < .01; \* p < .05

Note: Categories coded (1=Strongly agree; 2=Agree; 3=Somewhat agree; 4=Neutral; 5=Somewhat disagree; 6=Disagree; 7=Strongly disagree). N for Females is 121 for the first response item, and 123 for the second and third response items.

**PENNSYLVANIA sample**

	Male	Female
Government should ensure that women are present on governing boards	<b>3.25*</b>	<b>2.16</b>
Women consider problems differently than men	2.24	1.82
Men make decisions differently than women	1.97	1.81
Men and women are equally qualified to make decisions concerning public affairs	<b>2.66*</b>	<b>1.76</b>
I believe government cares about people like me	<b>5.10*</b>	<b>4.22</b>
Men are better suited for some public decision-making than women	<b>3.72**</b>	<b>5.42</b>
Men and women should participate equally in public decision-making	2.48	1.96
There should be an equal number of men and women on decision-making boards in government	<b>3.97*</b>	<b>2.99</b>
I trust members of government to do the right thing	5.17	4.76
All Americans have the ability to serve in public office	4.48*	3.70
N	29	67

\*\* p < .01; \* p < .05

Note: Categories coded (1=Strongly agree; 2=Agree; 3=Somewhat agree; 4=Neutral; 5=Somewhat disagree; 6=Disagree; 7=Strongly disagree). N for Males is 28 for first response item.

**Table 8: Linear analysis of attitudes about women's ability to make public decisions**

	Model A	Model B	Model C
	Men and women are equally qualified	Equal number of men and women on decision-making boards in government	Men are better suited for some public decision-making
Female	-0.818 (0.273)**	-1.041 (0.381)**	1.620 (0.369)**
Iowa resident	-0.700 (0.258)**	0.416 (0.359)	1.282 (0.347)**
Female*Iowa	0.427 (0.321)	0.031 (0.448)	-1.026 (0.434)*
Political Party	-0.008 (0.078)	0.236 (0.108)*	-0.171 (0.105)
Age	-0.130 (0.062)*	-0.009 (0.086)	0.260 (0.083)**
Education	-0.174 (0.063)**	0.358 (0.087)**	0.065 (0.084)
Served in government	-0.200 (0.232)	0.011 (0.323)	0.424 (0.313)
Family member in government	0.191 (0.188)	-0.118 (0.260)	-0.178 (0.252)
Run for office	0.568 (0.302)	-0.118 (0.421)	-0.464 (0.407)
Family member run for office	-0.220 (0.188)	0.500 (0.260)	0.132 (0.252)
F =	3.781**	6.62**	4.753**
N =	312	313	313

\*\* p < .01; \* p < .05

Note: Dependent variables are coded (1=Strongly agree; 2=Agree; 3=Somewhat agree; 4=Neutral; 5=Somewhat disagree; 6=Disagree; 7=Strongly disagree).

## APPENDIX: SURVEY (IOWA sample)

Hello,

#\_\_\_\_\_

This, very brief, survey is intended to gather information about public attitudes toward various aspects of government. We are gathering opinions on members of the Iowa community for the political science department at the University of Northern Iowa.

This is a non-partisan and purely academic survey. This research is neither affiliated with nor funded by any political party, interest group or lobby firm. Your responses will be recorded anomalously; please do not write your name on any portions of the survey. When you have completed the survey please put it in the pre-paid return envelope and stick it in the mail. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact me at (319) 273-6047 or by e-mail at [christopher.larimer@uni.edu](mailto:christopher.larimer@uni.edu). If I am not available when you call, please leave a message and I will call back. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research project, please contact the University of Northern Iowa Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator at (319) 273-6148 or by e-mail at [osp@uni.edu](mailto:osp@uni.edu). Thank you for your help. We appreciate your cooperation.

Please circle your response to the following questions:

- 1.)** I am a  
Male  
Female
  
- 2.)** I am between the ages of  
18-24  
25-34  
35-44  
45-54  
55+
  
- 3.)** The highest educational degree I have earned is  
High school diploma  
Associates Degree  
Bachelors Degree  
Masters or Advanced Degree  
Doctorate
  
- 4.)** How important do you think it is that women serve in *appointed* positions?  
Very Important  
Important  
Somewhat Important  
Not Important

**5.)** How important do you think it is that women serve in *elected* positions?

Very Important

Important

Somewhat Important

Not Important

**6.)** How important do you think it is that women serve in *policy-making* positions?

Very Important

Important

Somewhat Important

Not Important

**7.)** Please rate your responses to the following statements using the scale below:

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Somewhat Agree
4. Neutral
5. Somewhat Disagree
6. Disagree
7. Strongly Disagree

Government should ensure that women are present on governing boards. \_\_\_\_\_

Women consider problems differently than men. \_\_\_\_\_

Men make decisions differently than women. \_\_\_\_\_

Men and women are equally qualified to make decisions concerning public affairs. \_\_\_\_\_

I believe government cares about people like me. \_\_\_\_\_

Men are better suited for some public decision-making than women. \_\_\_\_\_

Men and women should participate equally in public decision-making. \_\_\_\_\_

There should be an equal number of men and women on decision-making boards in government. \_\_\_\_\_

I trust members of government to do the right thing. \_\_\_\_\_

All Americans have the ability to serve in public office. \_\_\_\_\_

**8.)** Have you ever served in government, whether as an elected official, an appointed position, or as support staff?

Yes                      No

**8a.)** If yes, in what capacity? \_\_\_\_\_

(please describe position—elected, appointed, or support staff)

**9.)** If you served in government, what was your experience like? On a scale of 1-7, with 1 being very positive and 7 being very negative, how would rate your experience?

\_\_\_\_\_

**10.)** Do you know anyone, whether a family member or close friend, who has ever served in government, whether as an elected official, an appointed position, or as support staff?

Yes                      No

**10a.)** If yes, in what capacity? \_\_\_\_\_  
(please describe position—elected, appointed, or support staff)

**11.)** Have you ever run for elected office?

Yes                      No

**11a.)** If yes, in what capacity? \_\_\_\_\_ (please describe position)

**11b.)** Were you successful in winning elected office?

Yes                      No

**12.)** Do you know anyone, whether a family member or close friend, who has ever run for elected office?

Yes                      No

**12a.)** If yes, in what capacity? \_\_\_\_\_ (please describe position)

**12b.)** Was this person successful in winning elected office?

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**Coding for Survey**

Question 1: Gender

0=Male

1=Female

Question 2: Age

1=18-24

2=25-34

3=35-44

4=45-54

5=55+

Question3: Education

1=High school

2=Associates degree

3=Bachelors degree

4=Masters or Advanced degree

5=Doctorate

Questions 4-6: Importance of women in appointed, elected, and policy-making positions

1=Very important

2=Important

3=Somewhat important

4=Not important

Questions 8, 10, 11, 12: Serving or running for office

0=No

1=Yes

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