

Are Women Commissioners More Compassionate Spenders? Evidence From Florida County Governments

American Review of Public Administration

1–15

© The Author(s) 2024

Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/02750740241247566

journals.sagepub.com/home/arp



Vernise Estorcien¹, Can Chen², Apu Deb³ and Milena I. Neshkova³

Abstract

While the number of women in government has increased, prior research on whether enhancing women's political representation alters policy choices has produced inconclusive findings. This study asks if higher women's participation in electoral institutions at the local level is associated with a different spending profile. Using Peterson's typology of developmental, redistributive, and allocational government programs, we argue that legislative bodies with more female members will spend more on redistributive programs than on developmental or allocational. Using data from Florida's 67 counties between 2005 and 2015, our analysis supports this theoretical expectation. In line with critical mass theory, women's representation in county commissions must reach a threshold of about 33% to sway budgetary decision-making toward more extensive redistribution. We also find that the traditional commission form of government intensifies the redistributive effect of women commissioners on county spending while having a home rule charter has no significant effect.

Keywords

gender, distributional equity, commission, county government, Florida, compositional data

Introduction

Democratic values of fairness and equality require that women be present in political institutions in a way that is representative of them in the population. Women's participation in electoral institutions increases the legitimacy of political decisions (Arnesen & Peters, 2018; Lawless et al., 2018) and has widely been accepted as an indicator of a country's level of democratic development (Bush & Zetterberg, 2021). Although women's representation in the U.S. government has increased in the last decades, most legislative institutions are still dominated by men. In Congress, only 24% of the Senate and 27% of the House of Representatives are women (Blazina & Desilver, 2021). The situation is similar at the state level—just 12 out of 50 states (24%) elected female governors in 2023 (CNN, 2022). In the state legislatures, women occupy about 30% of the seats. With about 17.3% of commissioners' seats in U.S. counties held by women in 2018, women's political representation in local government is lower than in the federal and state governments (Boex & Walti, 2019). Given that women constitute 51% of the population, these numbers indicate that women's representation is still disproportionately low at all levels of government. Moreover, women in both the public and private sectors remain underrepresented in senior management positions (Bishu & Headley, 2020; Blazina & Desilver, 2021; Guy, 2018).

While many would agree with the normative desirability of women's descriptive representation for reasons of political equality and democracy, this study goes further and asks

whether women's electoral representation substantively impacts budget allocation toward greater redistribution. Prior research on whether women's representation affects policy outcomes produced mixed findings. Scholars reported that women in elected positions are especially attuned to issues important to women, children, and families (Dolan, 1998; Osborn, 2012; Swers, 2001). Compared to men, women legislators tend to support programs in education, health, and welfare (Berkman & O'Connor, 1993; Dolan & Ford, 1995; Funk & Philips, 2019; Saint-Germain, 1989). If female public officials hold distinctive policy preferences from their male counterparts, increasing their representation might result in substantive policy changes. Using data from Brazilian municipalities, Funk and Philips (2019) show that women in legislatures channel more funds toward feminine policy areas. Other studies, however, find no significant effect of women's

¹Paul H. O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs, Indiana University, Indianapolis, USA

²Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA

³Department of Public Policy and Administration, Florida International University, Miami, Florida, USA

Corresponding Author:

Vernise Estorcien, Paul H. O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs, Indiana University Indianapolis, Indianapolis, USA.

Email: vestorci@iu.edu

representation on budgetary outcomes (Devlin & Elgie, 2008; Ferreira & Gyourko, 2014).

Here, we seek to shed light on this issue by examining whether women's electoral representation impacts budgetary decisions and how it affects the distribution of resources among spending categories. Theories of democratic representation, gender leadership, and emotional intelligence posit that women act based on their lived experiences. As such, they might make more compassionate choices when voting for programs that serve disadvantaged groups and families, such as social safety, gender equality, childcare support, and food stamps (Bratton, 2005; Burrell, 1996; Dolan, 1998; Gerrity et al., 2007; Swers, 1998, 2001). Women tend to foster a sense of shared responsibility that emphasizes collective welfare and policy outcomes aligned with principles of social justice and equity (Bovens, 2007; Moore, 1997; Rawls, 2001). Compared to men, they are more motivated by communal well-being and concern for others (DeHart-Davis et al., 2006; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Fox & Schuhmann, 1999). Based on these theoretical considerations, we hypothesize that having more women commissioners will be associated with different spending patterns. To model budget trade-offs, we use Peterson's (1981) classification of government programs into developmental, redistributive, and allocational and posit that the larger the women's share in a legislature, the higher the budget share of redistributive spending relative to developmental or allocational spending. But how prevalent should women's representation be to alter legislative policy choices? Also, how do the characteristics of political institutions affect the ability of women to secure their preferred budget allocation? To answer these research questions, we draw on data from Florida's 67 counties between 2005 and 2015. We measure women's representation on a county commission as the proportion of seats women hold on the boards of county commissioners. The findings reveal that having more women commissioners alters budget allocation by increasing the share of redistributive spending relative to developmental or allocational spending. Thus, enhancing women's representation in local legislative bodies contributes to the well-being of the less advantaged. We also find evidence of a critical mass effect. When women on county councils reach a threshold of 33%, the redistributive share of budget allocations significantly increases relative to the developmental and allocational. Finally, our results show that the institutional setup moderates the effect of women's representation on counties' spending decisions—women's impact on redistribution is magnified in the traditional commission setting but not affected by charter adoption.

Our study contributes to the literature on women's leadership by investigating how gender affects the spending priorities of local governments. We empirically demonstrate that electing more women county commissioners increases government responsiveness to the needs of disadvantaged

groups. In this sense, women's representation in county legislatures is important to help alleviate inequalities among social groups. Yet, they need to hold at least 1/3 of the council seats to affect the county's spending behavior. This finding demonstrates the relevance of critical mass theory in explaining women's influence in budgetary settings. Finally, local political institutions, such as the form of government, moderate the ability of women commissioners to steer budget allocation toward more extensive redistribution. While the reformed county governments have been able to offer more services to their residents and establish new sources of revenue to fund them, our analysis reveals that these progressive features might hinder women commissioners' ability to pursue more extensive redistribution.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. The next sections review the local budget process in Florida, the setting of the study, and the literature on the intersection of gender and budget outcomes. We draw on theories of democratic representation, emotional intelligence, critical mass, and gender leadership to develop our expectations about the effect of gender on spending patterns at the local level. Next, we discuss our sample and the empirical strategy to estimate the impact of women's representation on allocation across spending categories. We follow with the results and their implications for the theory and practice of democratic governance. The last section concludes and provides directions for future research.

Local Budget Process in Florida

Like most states, Florida has a balanced budget requirement for its local governments. The budget process at the county level begins with agencies, such as the sheriff and tax collector offices, submitting their budget requests for the forthcoming fiscal year. The county budget officer then prepares and presents the budget proposal to the county board of commissioners, which reviews it and makes modifications. Before adoption, the board arranges a public hearing to gather feedback on the proposed budget. Then, the board publishes a summary statement of the adopted budget in the local paper. The budget should be posted on the county website 30 days after adoption, and all budget documents—tentative budget, adopted tentative budget, and final budget—are archived in the county auditor's office as a public record.¹

Budgets are planning documents that set the funding levels for various public programs. Although many programs are crucial for the overall functioning of the government and community well-being, legislators cannot fund them equally due to resource constraints and balanced budget requirements. They need to prioritize, as spending more on some programs means less money for others, a process known as a budgetary trade-off.

While there are various typologies of public programs and spending categories (Cogburn & Schneider, 2003; Choi & Neshkova, 2019), Peterson's (1981) classification of developmental, redistributive, and allocational

programs is especially useful for the purposes of this study. First, we seek to understand whether women commissioners favor more redistribution. Second, prior research has extensively applied Peterson's typology and confirmed its usefulness in analyzing budget trade-offs in local and state governments (e.g., Choi et al., 2010; Hwang & Gray, 1991; Jordan, 2003; Kwon & Gonzalez-Gorman, 2019; Yu et al., 2019).

Within this typology, developmental programs generate economic growth and stability. Developmental spending includes funding for highways, transportation, utilities, and sewage. Local governments use it to attract or retain business investment in the community. Redistributive programs entail taking from the well-off and giving to those less advantaged. These programs include welfare and public health services. While elected officials may shy away from redistributive programs, they are essential for the well-being of low-income residents and for balancing the scales among social groups. Allocational, or "housekeeping," programs include services such as police, street maintenance, fire, parks and recreation, and security. These programs do not benefit any specific group and have a neutral impact on the economy.

In recent decades, county governments in the United States have become major players in providing redistributive services, such as social welfare and public health. The state of Florida has imposed various fiscal rules and mandates to limit the ability of county governments to raise additional revenue to pay for new or expanded services. Despite such mandates, Florida county governments possess vast discretionary power to determine their budget allocation and direct public resources toward redistributive programs (Choi et al., 2010).

Gender and Budgetary Choices: Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Theories of democratic representation and emotional intelligence suggest that the lived experiences of female public officials inform their policy preferences. Because these experiences are profoundly different from those of men, so are women's stands on policy issues. The recent literature on gender budgeting closely links women's participation in resource allocation with the welfare state. Thus, we expect women commissioners to prioritize redistributive programs that benefit women and other marginalized groups. Yet, what is the share of women in the legislature needed to steer the allocation toward more pronounced redistribution? Critical mass theory suggests that women's representation in electoral bodies must reach a certain threshold to affect policy outcomes (Kanter, 1977). Below, we review the main theories informing our empirical analysis and discuss the mechanisms through which women could influence budgetary outcomes.

Democratic Representation

The classic work of Pitkin (1967) distinguishes among four types of representation: formalistic, symbolic, descriptive,

and substantive. The descriptive and substantive forms of representation are the most relevant to our study and provide insights into why electing women can lead to positive policy outcomes for underrepresented groups. In this case, descriptive representation goes through gender. Women share similar experiences stemming from their social roles and expectations; thus, female representatives are more likely to understand the needs of female constituents. Including groups that resemble the population in relevant characteristics and who can better communicate and "act for" that population increases the legitimacy of the decisions made by legislative institutions (Mansbridge, 1999). Prior research also reveals that women value gender representation more than men and are likely to accept the outcome, even if it is unfavorable, if the decision-makers are representative of the community (Arnesen & Peters, 2018). In a cross-national setting, Liu and Banaszak (2017) demonstrate that increasing the percentage of female members of the cabinet boosts women's political participation. Thus, the number of women elected as county commissioners serves as a measure of descriptive democratic representation.

Substantive representation, on the other hand, relates to the policy implications of women's presence on county commission boards. The shared demographic characteristics and experiences shape women's positions on policy issues. In this sense, descriptive representation can lead to substantive representation. Gender, in this case, serves as a cue for the policy preferences of the representative. According to Pitkin (1967), responsiveness is a fundamental dimension of representation. For example, women in Florida counties might expect that electing a female county commissioner—who looks like them and shares similar life experiences—will also advance policies in their best interest. Prior research provides ample evidence that officials, who share a similar demographic background with citizens, better understand their needs, which ultimately leads to citizens receiving higher-quality services (Arnesen & Peters, 2018; Dolan, 2002; Keiser et al., 2002). Women commissioners are likely to advocate for more social programs because they are important to women, with education and healthcare being examples.

Indeed, female politicians often campaign on issues salient to women. Once elected, they tend to pursue legislation in education, childcare, and family health (Barnes, 2016). Because women can better relate to and feel passionate about such issues, they outperform men in these domains. One notable example is the Family Medical and Leave Act (FMLA), which was passed as a result of strong gender support (Sabharwal, 2015; Tamerius et al., 2010). These findings corroborate with Mansbridge (2005), who argues that increasing the representation of women in elected office "improves substantive representation for women in every policy for which we have a measure" (622).

Prior research on women's representation in administrative agencies has produced similar findings. Federal agencies headed by women achieve higher rulemaking performance, mainly when they focus on women's issues (Potter & Volden, 2021). Dolan (2000) argues that female senior executives are more supportive of women's issues than their male counterparts and build a more female-friendly organizational environment. Overall, scholars agree that women's representation in both political and administrative institutions is critical for women's issues to get on the agenda.

Female legislators are in a better position to understand not only the needs of women but also those of other underrepresented groups (Schwindt-Bayer, 2010; Thomas & Wilcox, 2014). According to Mansbridge (1999), without descriptive representation, underrepresented citizens' voices are less likely to get heard due to a lack of attention by public officials. Reingold and Smith (2012) find that women in the legislatures ease the eligibility restriction for citizens seeking welfare services and improve access to benefits under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. Similarly, Gunderson (2022) reports that prosecutor race and sex significantly affect prosecutorial outcomes, and having more female county prosecutors could reduce the female and Black jail populations. Thus, women's political representation is not only important for reasons of gender equality but also for reasons of social equity by making governments more responsive to underrepresented groups.

Women's policies are intertwined with welfare policies in so-called gender budgeting,² an approach that calls for gender impact assessments of budget allocations, differentiating among women, children, and men as users of public services. As Marx (2018, p. 1182) explains, "[o]ne of the main themes in the gender budgeting discourse is the welfare state." Traditional budgets are viewed as gendered constructs, "patriarchal instruments of power" that reflect the dominant politico-economic power relations in society and reinforce women's dependency on men (p. 1183). Because the budgeting process requires expert knowledge and is, in essence, a technocratic exercise, it is considered inherently masculine and undemocratic, as it excludes other segments of society. The appearance of neutrality serves to hide the power relations that disadvantage and oppress women and minorities. In this sense, women's issues and struggles for gender equality have become closely linked to the redistribution of resources, including money, power, and time (Marx, 2018).

Emotional Intelligence

Why might women better understand the needs of less advantaged groups and seek more extensive redistribution? We argue that emotional intelligence (EI), a term coined by Salovey and Mayer (1990), is a possible underlying mechanism. EI is defined as "the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotions; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability

to understand emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p. 10). Because emotions are crucial for logical reasoning, learning, and memory, their combination with intelligence amplifies one's intellectual comprehension and leads to changes in thoughts and actions (Mayer et al., 2008). Prior research has used EI to gain insight into the lives of individuals and the workplace (Joseph & Newman, 2010). Higher EI has been found to enhance performance and leadership (Day & Carroll, 2004; O'Boyle Jr et al., 2011; Wong & Law, 2017).

While both men and women can exhibit EI in the workplace, scholars report that authentic emotion is associated with higher job satisfaction and lower turnover intent for women but not men (Yang & Guy, 2015). Women are more likely to experience emotional attachments, which, in turn, affect the way they perform their professional duties. Compared to men, women are more empathetic, sensitive, and affectionate (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002). In a similar vein, DeHart-Davis et al. (2006) document that female heads of health and human service agencies are more compassionate than their male counterparts. Female public officials also exhibit more communal behaviors and are motivated differently than men. Studying U.S. local governments, Fox and Schuhmann (1999) find that women city administrators enter the job to enhance the community's quality of life. In contrast, their male counterparts are instead motivated by personal gains. Women also foster more collaborative styles than men and favor consensual and democratic decision-making (Fox & Schuhmann, 1999; Gipson et al., 2017). Female leaders in Congress are more cooperative than their male counterparts when looking for problem solutions (Lawless et al., 2018). Further, women in public offices rely more on peer support and maintain strong relationships with external groups like clients and constituents (Jacobson et al., 2010).

Based on prior research, we expect that having more women on county councils will result in higher spending for social programs, given their importance to female and minority voters. We argue that the underlying mechanism for this behavior goes through the compassion and concern for others, with which women approach their work as legislators. Moreover, their emotional intelligence helps them better understand the needs of disadvantaged groups. Thus, our first hypothesis is as follows:

H₁: Counties with more women commissioners will allocate more resources to redistributive programs than developmental or allocational programs.

Yet female legislators might act no differently from their male counterparts. The theory of gendered organizations suggests that women, especially those in male-dominated professions, feel intense pressure to prove themselves and might adopt masculine behaviors (Bishu & Headley, 2020).

Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson (2009, p. 686) define a gendered institution as “one where power relationships [...] are constructed in a way that systematically reinforces gender differences.” Such institutions tend to limit the impact of women’s participation in decision-making processes (Bego, 2014; Escobar-Lemmon & Taylor-Robinson, 2016). Gender stereotypes generally portray men as having more valuable traits and being more competent (Eagly, 1987; Ridgeway, 1997), prompting women to “behave like men.” Examining Brazil’s municipalities, Funk (2015) finds that female mayors do not exhibit more participative behavior than their male counterparts and adopt masculine leadership styles.

Critical Mass Theory

Over the last two decades, critical mass theory has gained prominence in explaining women’s and minorities’ representation in political institutions (Childs & Krook, 2008). The theory posits that an underrepresented group needs to increase its relative size, that is, to attain critical mass, before it can alter the political agenda and influence policy outcomes. To move the needle, the group needs to constitute a “large minority” (Krook & Mackay, 2011; Meier & Xu, 2022).

While there are multiple reasons why women are underrepresented in political institutions, we briefly mention two that refer to systematic biases and prevent women from pursuing leadership roles more generally. First, congruity theory points out the mismatch between female gender roles and leadership roles associated mainly with masculine-oriented traits (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Gipson et al., 2017; Heilman, 1983, 2001). The stereotypical attributes linked to being a woman are perceived as inconsistent with the character traits needed to serve in leadership positions, which Eagly and Karau (2002) argue leads to lesser access for women to leadership roles and more obstacles to overcome to become successful. Second, women are subject to second-generation bias, which refers to the existence of subtle patterns and workplace rules that appear neutral but create a context that inadvertently advantages men.

Prior research has examined various mechanisms through which critical mass theory works in the case of women representatives (Childs and Krook, 2008; Kanter, 1977). Women are natural allies with other women in the organization and can form coalitions based on shared experiences and policy preferences. When the number of women in the legislature increases, they are more likely to sway the behavior of both their female peers and out-group members. Moreover, when the underrepresented group grows larger, the individual members become more visible and differentiated from one another. Thus, to achieve the budget allocation they favor, women need to reach a certain threshold. Furthermore, it is easier for a larger group to overcome the problems of tokenism and develop supportive alliances from the external

environment, including community groups, advocacy organizations, and other stakeholders.

Empirical evidence provides overall support for critical mass theory. Smith (2015) suggests that having more women in elected offices increases the likelihood of other women in bureaucratic positions receiving growth opportunities. Atkins and Wilkins (2013) report that it was not until the representation of minority and female bureaucrats reached about 20% that teen pregnancy rates decreased.

Our second hypothesis is informed by critical mass theory and postulates that women’s political representation in local legislative institutions will affect budget allocation only after women commissioners grow in numbers. As with the first hypothesis, we are interested in the effect of women on the likelihood of adopting more redistributive policies compared to developmental or allocational policies. Specifically, we expect that:

- H₂: Women’s representation on a county commission needs to reach a critical mass to influence county spending toward greater redistribution.

The Role of Local Political Institutions

The effect of women’s representation in commissions on budget allocation likely depends on the county’s institutional context. Baron and Ferejohn (1989) argue that the political institutions’ structure, formal rules, and policy discretion significantly influence how elected officials make decisions. For a long time, U.S. counties have served as administrative extensions of their respective state governments (Benton, 2003a). Urbanization and rapid population growth in the 1980s and 1990s increased the demand for services from this level of government and led to a process of modernization. The reformed counties have taken on additional responsibilities for service provision independent of the state government (Benton, 2003a). Counties across the country pursued legislative changes like the adoption of home rule charters that would allow them to provide services not previously permitted by state constitutions and statutes. Counties were able to assume control of various social, medical, and eldercare services and pursue new revenue sources to fund them (Benton, 2003a). County government modernization sought to provide that level of government with a more active role in public service provision. The adoption of the home rule charter granted county officials greater discretion and resulted in growth in size, both in terms of employees and expenditures (Benton, 2002; Choi et al., 2010). Moreover, counties that rely less on revenue from higher levels of government have more flexibility on how to allocate funds (Benton, 2003c; Park, 1996; Schneider & Park, 1989).

In addition to pursuing home rule charters, counties restructured the way they operated. As part of the reform movement, many moved away from the traditional

commission form of government inherited from the times when counties were small and the demand for services was low. The main forms of county government today are: 1) the traditional commission, 2) the commission-administrator (or manager), and 3) the commission-elected executive.

The structural features of county governments have significant policy implications and can impact the ability of elected officials to allocate funds. Prior research has extensively studied the effect of modernization on county government spending decisions (Benton, 2003b, 2003c; McDonald III, 2015; Morgan & Kickham, 1999). Consistent with the service expansion nature of county government reform, DeSantis and Renner (1994) report that counties with a commission-administrator form of government have higher overall spending than those with the traditional commission form. Benton (2003c) compares the traditional commission form of government without a home rule charter to an appointed administrator/elected executive commission form with an adopted home rule charter and finds that modernization of government structure increases total spending as well as spending for traditional and regional services. In a later study, Choi et al. (2010) examine whether the form of a county government alters its spending priorities and reveal that a reformed government (commission-administrator and commission elected executive) is associated with lower redistributive and developmental expenditures. Yet, they also show that the adoption of a county charter increases redistributive and developmental spending.

As for women's representation, prior research has demonstrated that electing more women commissioners in counties with the traditional commission government increases welfare expenditures (McBrayer and Williams, 2022). In counties with a home rule charter, female commissioners have more flexibility and autonomy to respond to the needs of residents (Benton, 2002). In a study of California's county boards, Park (2014) reveals that the effect of women's representation on welfare spending is conditioned on having a home rule charter. Based on prior work, we expect that county government political institutions will moderate the effects of women's political representation on budget allocation.

H₃: County government institutional setup moderates the effect of women's political representation on budget allocations.

Data and Method

Sample and Variables

The empirical analysis draws on data from Florida's 67 counties³ over 11 years—from 2005 to 2015.⁴ This provides us with a balanced panel data set with 737 county-year observations.

We selected Florida counties as the unit of our analysis for the following reasons. First, for a long time, American counties have been considered the "forgotten governments" in

local government research (Menzel et al., 1992). Even fewer studies have examined the effect of women's political representation in county commissions on budget outcomes. This is a significant knowledge gap, given that county governments are a crucial element of the fabric of American democracy (de Benedictis-Kessner & Warshaw, 2020). Second, Florida counties vary considerably in their social-demographic and political-economic context. In this sense, they provide an excellent research setting to study the link between women's political representation and government spending. Third, Florida counties have continued to grow in size and allocate resources to economic development and other public services. Fourth, county governments in the Sunshine State follow the generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP), which ensure detailed, reliable, and comparable reporting of financial data. Nonetheless, we acknowledge that findings derived from county governments in a single state might have limited external validity.

Dependent Variables. Our dependent variables reflect the allocation of county budgets. Following Peterson (1981), we distinguish among three types of government spending. *Redistributive Spending* includes county expenditures for public health and public assistance. *Developmental Spending* comprises county expenditures for transportation, economic development, housing and urban development, and physical utilities. *Allocational Spending* denotes county expenditures for general government services, public safety, environmental protection, and culture and recreation.

Measuring Women's Representation in County Commissions.

The main explanatory variable is women's political representation, operationalized as the percentage of seats women hold in a county commission per year (*Women Commissioners %*). Commissioners are elected by the county voters to serve on the legislative body—a council or a commission—and have broad legislative discretion. If serving in a charter county, they also have "home rule" authority to determine what is right for their county (Jewett, 2014).

Figure 1 plots women's political representation in Florida county councils. We note that the percentage of women commissioners varies across counties and over time. Eight counties in our sample had no elected female county commissioners from 2005 to 2015 (Calhoun, Gulf, Holmes, Lafayette, Liberty, Santa Rosa, Sumter, and Suwannee). By contrast, the share of female commissioners is relatively higher in Broward (44%–55%), Miami-Dade (38%–46%), and Sarasota (40%–60%). Several counties have experienced large fluctuations in the share of women on their councils over the study period (e.g., Lake, Okaloosa, Palm Beach).

Moderating Variables. We use two dichotomous variables to tap the effect of local political institutions. The first variable indicates whether a county has adopted a home rule charter

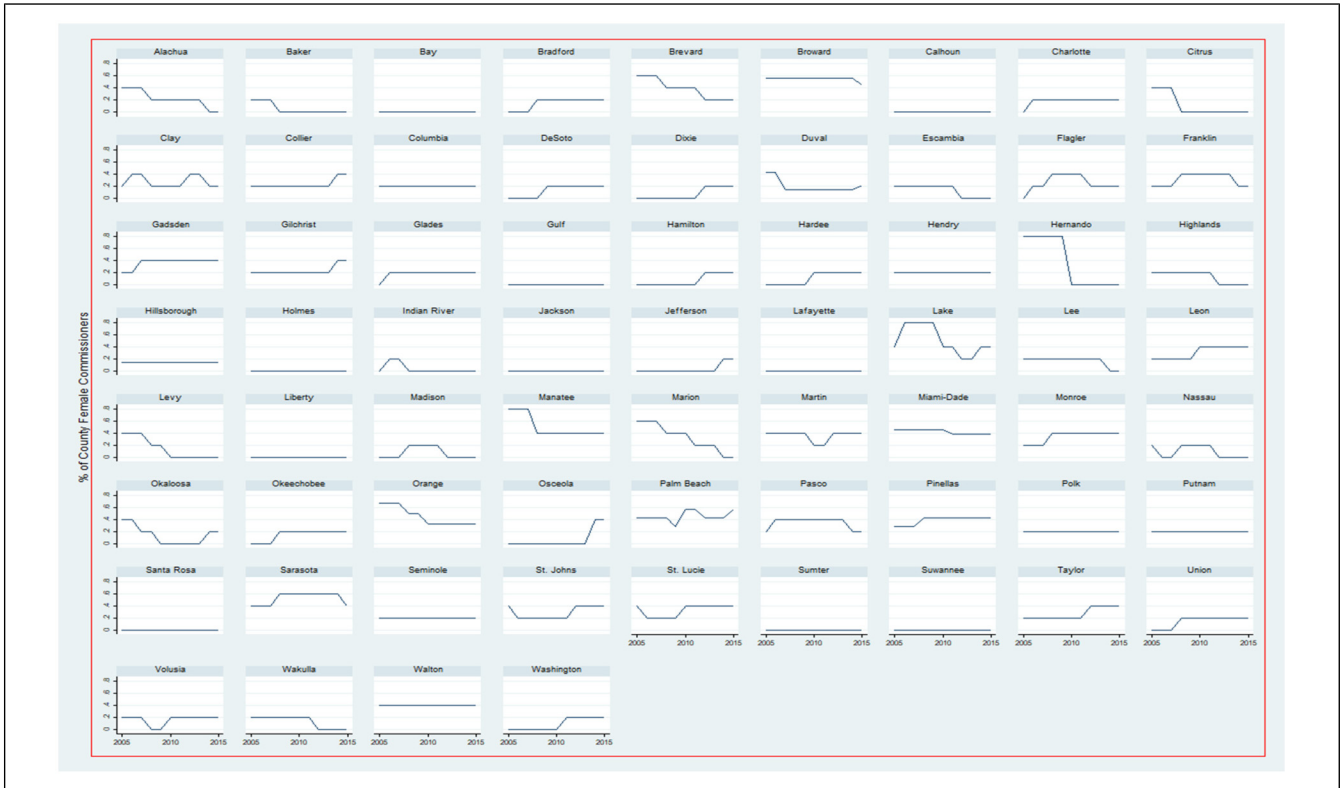


Figure 1. Women's representation in Florida county commissions.

(*Charter*). According to the Florida constitution, charter counties are free to pursue any policies as long as they do not contradict state laws. In contrast, non-charter counties are governed by general or special laws. Further, charter counties have a government structure that is customized to their needs and approved by the residents, while non-charter counties have a structure that is mandated in the state law and can only be amended by the Florida legislature. Charter county governments possess more autonomy in making fiscal decisions than non-charter ones. Thus, women commissioners in charter counties are more likely to have higher flexibility to respond to citizens' needs (Benton, 2002). We expect the adoption of a county charter to magnify the effect of women's representation on redistributive spending.

The second variable accounts for the form of county government. As discussed earlier, there are three forms of county government in Florida: the traditional commission, the commission-administrator (or manager), and the commission-executive. The key difference between the three forms of government is who is responsible for policy implementation. Compared to the other two, the traditional commission form grants the board of county commissioners the most political power. The board not only votes on public policies but also executes them. By contrast, in the commission-administrator (or manager) form, the commission appoints a county administrator or manager to oversee policy

implementation. The commission-executive form has a similar arrangement, but an elected executive (typically a mayor) oversees policy implementation rather than an appointed county manager.

As prior research has demonstrated, county commissioners have more influence in county policy matters, including budgetary decisions, in a traditional commission system (Lineberry & Fowler, 1967; McBrayer & Williams, 2022). When county governments switch to a commissioner-administrator model, they give up some of their autonomy. Moreover, commissioners are likely to defer to the administrator for advice about budgetary needs for the next fiscal year. Often, the administrators possess broad discretion in policy implementation, including the details of budgetary allocations. Thus, we code *Commission Form* as 1 if a county government has the traditional commission and 0 otherwise. We expect this form of government to magnify the effect of women's representation on redistributive spending.

Control Variables. The models include two sets of control variables to account for other plausible explanations of the effect of legislators' gender on county budget allocation. The first set captures the macroeconomic environment of Florida counties. We include measures of unemployment rate (*Unemployment*) and real personal income per capita, log-transformed (*Ln Personal Income*). Socio-demographic factors affect the

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

Variables	Description	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Data Source
Dependent Variables						
Developmental Spending %	Share of developmental spending in county government budget (transportation, economic development, housing and urban development, physical utilities)	30.8	9.1	9.7	75.8	Authors' Construction
Allocational Spending %	Share of allocative spending (general government services, public safety, environmental protection, culture and recreational)	65.4	9.4	21.6	88.2	Authors' Construction
Redistributive Spending %	Share of redistributive spending (public health, public assistance)	3.8	11.1	0.44	45.6	Authors' Construction
Key Explanatory Variable						
Women Commissioners %	The percent of women commissioners in the county legislative body	20.2	18.5	0	80	Florida Division of Elections Florida Associations of Counties (FAC)
Control Variables						
<i>Political Context</i>						
Charter	A dichotomous variable = 1 for county with an adopted home rule charter	0.29	0.45	0	1	FAC
Commission Form	A dichotomous variable = 1 for a county with the traditional commission form of government	0.15	0.36	0	1	FAC
Democratic Vote	Percentage of county residents who voted for the Democratic candidate for U.S. President	46.7	15.9	19.5	91.7	Florida Department of State's Division of Elections
<i>Economic Context</i>						
Unemployment	Percent unemployed labor force in the total population	7.0	2.86	2.2	14.7	UF's Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR)
Personal Income	Real personal income per capita (in 2012 constant dollars)	33,903	11,540	15,478	78,473	BEBR
<i>Sociodemographic Context</i>						
Unincorporated Pop	Percentage of the population living in unincorporated areas	67.9	22.6	0	97	BEBR
Pop Growth	Share of population aged 14 or below in total population	1.2	1.7	-4.7	11	BEBR
Pop Density	Population per squared land mile	338	524	9	3,451	BEBR
White Pop	Share of white residents in total population	82.4	9.8	40.1	95.4	BEBR

demand for public services. Four variables account for the variation in the socio-demographic conditions—log-transformed population density ($\ln(\text{Pop Density})$), annual population growth (Pop Growth), the percentage of the population living in unincorporated areas ($\text{Unincorporated Pop}$), and the percentage of White residents (White Pop). All control variables are lagged by one year. Table 1 lists the variables used in the analysis, along with their definitions, descriptive statistics, and sources.

Estimation Strategy and Model Specification

As discussed earlier, public budgeting involves inherent trade-offs, where spending more on some programs leaves fewer resources for others. In this sense, the shares of government spending on developmental, allocational, and

redistributive programs reflect the annual budget trade-offs and correlate with one another. Thus, the modeling of budget allocation should account for the dynamic nature of the process, where all decisions are made simultaneously. We construct log ratios of spending categories that represent various budgetary trade-offs (Adolph et al., 2020; Lipsmeyer et al., 2017; Philips et al., 2016; Yu et al., 2019). Specifically, we first take the ratio of developmental and redistributive spending and log-transform it. We do the same for the other budgetary trade-off: allocational and redistributive spending. Thus, our two dependent variables are: $\text{Log}\left(\frac{\text{Developmental}}{\text{Redistributive}}\right)$ and $\text{Log}\left(\frac{\text{Allocational}}{\text{Redistributive}}\right)$.

Given the compositional nature of budget data, we estimate a series of seemingly unrelated regressions (SURs) with robust standard errors.⁴ SUR technique is appropriate because it accounts for the residual correlation across

equations by estimating a system of equations simultaneously. Our analysis includes a system of two equations (log ratios).

The model specification is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Budget Share}_{kit} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Women Commissioners } \%_{it-1} \\ & + \beta_2 \text{Political Institutions}_{it-1} \\ & + \beta_3 \text{Economic}_{it-1} + \beta_4 \text{SocioDemographic}_{it-1} \\ & + \gamma a_k + \psi \omega_t + \varepsilon_{it} . \end{aligned} \quad (1)$$

where the dependent variables are the budget shares of county i in year t . *Women Commissioners* $\%_{it-1}$ is the key explanatory variable, measured by the number of women commissioners divided by the total number of commissioners in county i in year $t-1$. The one-year lag accounts for the delayed effect of women's representation on next year's budget allocation. The variables *Political Institutions* $_{it-1}$, *Economic* $_{it-1}$, and *SocioDemographic* $_{it-1}$ capture the impact of political, economic, and social-demographic context, respectively, in county i in year $t-1$. All controls are lagged by one year to mitigate possible endogeneity concerns. The model includes fixed effects for regions (a_k) and years (ω_t) to account for region- and year-invariant unobserved heterogeneity.⁵ The variable ε_{it} denotes the error term.

Results

As Table 1 shows, the share of women commissioners varies from 0% (Bay County from 2005 to 2015) to 80% (Lake County from 2006 to 2009), with an average of 20%. The standard deviation is 18.5%. Overall, these numbers indicate a low level of women's representation in Florida county legislatures.

The budget allocation across spending categories also differs across counties and time. The share of redistributive spending ranges from 0.44% (Liberty County in 2010) to 45.6% (Taylor County in 2005), with a standard deviation of 11%. The share of allocational spending ranges from 21.6% (Calhoun County in 2006) to 88% (Baker County in 2013), with a standard deviation of 9.4%. Finally, the share of developmental spending varies between 9.7% (Baker County in 2013) and 75.8% (Calhoun County in 2006), with a standard deviation of 9%.

Direct Effects of Women's Political Representation on Budget Allocation

Table 2 presents the results of the estimations predicting the effects of women's political representation in county councils on budget allocation. Model 1 uses the log ratio of developmental expenditures to redistributive expenditures, $\text{Log} \left(\frac{\text{Developmental}}{\text{Redistributive}} \right)$, as the dependent variable. Model 2, respectively, uses the log ratio of allocational expenditures to redistributive expenditures, $\text{Log} \left(\frac{\text{Allocational}}{\text{Redistributive}} \right)$.

Table 2. Effects of Women's Representation on County Redistributive Spending.

Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Log(Developmental/Redistributive)	Log(Allocational/Redistributive)	
Women Commissioners % ($t-1$)	-0.716*** (0.179)	-0.591*** (0.156)
Charter ($t-1$)	-0.064 (0.060)	-0.087 (0.062)
Commission Form ($t-1$)	0.571*** (0.113)	0.119 (0.099)
Democratic Vote ($t-1$)	-1.278*** (0.386)	-1.558*** (0.334)
Ln(Personal Income) ($t-1$)	-0.271** (0.131)	-0.410*** (0.132)
Unemployment ($t-1$)	0.048* (0.026)	-0.004 (0.024)
Ln(Pop Density) ($t-1$)	0.090* (0.048)	-0.001 (0.046)
Unincorporated Pop ($t-1$)	0.375** (0.164)	0.567*** (0.149)
Pop Growth ($t-1$)	1.042 (2.213)	1.708 (1.808)
White Pop ($t-1$)	-0.026 (0.448)	-1.072*** (0.391)
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
Region Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
N	737	737
R ²	0.27	0.29

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

In Model 1, the regression coefficient of *Women Commissioners %* is negative and highly statistically significant (-0.716 , at $p < 0.001$). This means that if the share of female county commissioners increases by one percent, the log ratio of the share of development expenditures relative to the share of redistributive expenditures goes down by approximately 0.7%. In other words, an increase in women's political representation in county councils raises government expenditures in the denominator category (redistributive) relative to that in the numerator (developmental). This finding provides support for the hypothesis that enhancing women's political representation in county commissions will increase the share of redistributive spending relative to the share of developmental spending.

Among the controls, three variables have a positive and statistically significant effect on budget allocation. These are *Commission Form*, *Unemployment*, *Ln (Pop Density)*, and *Unincorporated Pop*. Their positive coefficients suggest that the traditional commission form of county government, higher unemployment, population density, and unincorporated population decrease the share of redistributive spending

relative to the share of developmental spending. The negative and statistically significant coefficients of *Democratic Vote* and *Ln (Personal Income)* indicate that counties with a higher share of Democratic voters and a higher level of personal income per capita spend more on redistributive programs relative to developmental.

Similarly, in Model 2, the coefficient of *Women Commissioners %* is negative and highly statistically significant (-0.591 , at $p < 0.001$), suggesting that an increase in women's political representation is associated with an increase in redistributive expenditures category relative to allocational. To offer an interpretation—if the share of female county commissioners increases by one percent, the log ratio of the share of allocational expenditures relative to redistributive expenditures goes down by about 0.6%. This result supports the expectation extended in H_1 that greater women's representation in county commissions is associated with a higher share of redistributive spending relative to the share of allocational spending.

Turning to the control variables, we note that four return statistically significant. *Democratic Vote*, *Ln (Personal Income)*, and *White Pop* have a negative sign, suggesting that counties with more Democratic voters, higher personal income per capita, and more white residents will see an increase in the share of redistributive spending relative to allocational spending. As in Model 1, the coefficient of *Unincorporated Pop* is positive, indicating that an increase in the unincorporated population is associated with a decrease in the share of redistributive spending relative to allocational spending.

Critical Mass Effects of Women's Political Representation on Budget Allocation

Table 3 reports the models testing for a critical mass effect in women's political representation on the distribution of county budgets. We expect that women commissioners need to grow in numbers in order to influence county spending toward greater redistribution. To empirically test this expectation, we use indicators for different threshold levels of women's representation (Collins et al., 2010; Scheurer, 2014). According to the United Nations, a "critical mass" of at least 30% of women within legislative bodies should influence government policymaking (United Nations Equal Opportunities Commission, 2003). Thus, we categorize women's political representation on a county commission into three groups: from 0% to 33.32% (low representation), from 33.33% to 66.65% (medium presentation), and above 66.66% (high representation). The variable *Women Share_Low* takes the value of 1 if women's political representation is below 33.32% and zero otherwise. It is used as the reference category in the analysis. The variable *Women Share_Medium* assumes the value of 1 if women's political representation is between 33.33% and 66.65% and zero otherwise. The variable *Women Share_High* is coded as 1 if women's political representation is greater than or equal to 66.66% and zero otherwise.

Table 3. Critical Mass Effects of Women's Representation on Redistributive Spending.

Variables	Model 3 Log (Developmental/ Redistributive)	Model 4 Log (Allocational/ Redistributive)
Women Share_Medium (t) –1)	–0.228*** (0.069)	–0.207*** (0.060)
Women Share_High $(t-1)$	–0.231 (0.153)	–0.250* (0.151)
Charter $(t-1)$	–0.075 (0.061)	–0.101 (0.063)
Commission Form $(t-1)$	0.606*** (0.115)	0.148 (0.099)
Democratic Vote $(t-1)$	–1.262*** (0.394)	–1.535*** (0.340)
Ln(Personal Income) $(t-1)$	–0.283** (0.135)	–0.415*** (0.134)
Unemployment $(t-1)$	0.050* (0.026)	–0.002 (0.024)
Ln(Pop Density) $(t-1)$	0.086* (0.048)	–0.002 (0.024)
Unincorporated Pop $(t-1)$	0.378** (0.166)	0.573*** (0.149)
Pop Growth $(t-1)$	1.282 (2.310)	1.943 (1.860)
White Pop $(t-1)$	0.054 (0.453)	–1.011*** (0.393)
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
Region Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
N	737	737
R ²	0.26	0.29

Note: The variable *WomenShare_Low* is omitted as the reference category in the estimations. Robust standard errors in parentheses.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

As Table 3 shows, the medium category of women's representation is significantly different from the reference category in Model 3, while both the high and medium categories of women's representation are significantly different from the reference category in Model 4. The negative coefficient of *Women Share_Medium* in Model 3 indicates that in comparison to counties with low women's representation, counties with medium (between 33.33% and 66.65%) women's representation are associated with a significant increase in the share of redistributive spending relative to the share of developmental spending. Similarly, the negative coefficients of *Women Share_Medium* and *Women Share_High* in Model 4 mean that in comparison to counties with low women's representation, counties with medium (between 33.33% and 66.65%) and high (more than 66.66%) women's representation see a significant increase in the share of redistributive spending relative to those of allocational spending. These results support our hypothesis and suggest that

women's representation must reach a critical threshold of 1/3 of the seats to steer budget allocation toward more redistributive spending relative to developmental and allocational. The estimated effects of the control variables in Models 3 and 4 are similar to those in Models 1 and 2.

Moderating Effects of Local Political Institutions

The models reported in Table 4 test whether the county institutional setup moderates the effect of women's political representation on budget allocations. We argued that county institutions—having a home rule charter and a traditional commission form of government—condition the redistributive effect of women's political representation.

In Models 5 and 6, the coefficients of the interaction term *Women Commissioners %* × *Commission Form* are negative

Table 4. Moderating Effects of Local Political Institutions.

Variables	Model 5 Log (Developmental/ Redistributive)	Model 6 Log (Allocational/ Redistributive)
Women Commissioners % (<i>t</i> -1)	-0.198 (0.160)	-0.311** (0.148)
Women Commissioners % × Charter (<i>t</i> -1)	-0.098 (0.284)	0.168 (0.273)
Women Commissioners % × Commission Form (<i>t</i> -1)	-4.873*** (0.674)	-3.150*** (0.738)
Charter (<i>t</i> -1)	-0.040 (0.090)	-0.126 (0.091)
Commission Form (<i>t</i> -1)	1.023*** (0.113)	0.405*** (0.098)
Democratic Vote (<i>t</i> -1)	-1.405*** (0.379)	-1.686*** (0.335)
Ln(Personal Income) (<i>t</i> -1)	-0.332*** (0.129)	-0.450*** (0.131)
Unemployment (<i>t</i> -1)	0.040 (0.024)	-0.010 (0.023)
Ln(Pop Density) (<i>t</i> -1)	0.064 (0.048)	-0.025 (0.046)
Unincorporated Pop (<i>t</i> -1)	0.197 (0.145)	0.451*** (0.134)
Pop Growth (<i>t</i> -1)	0.807 (1.978)	1.539 (1.678)
White Pop (<i>t</i> -1)	0.265 (0.420)	-0.913** (0.378)
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
Region Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
N	737	737
R ²	0.36	0.33

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

and statistically significant. These results imply that increasing the share of female commissioners in counties with the traditional commission form of government raises redistributive expenditures relative to developmental and allocational. By contrast, the coefficient of the interaction term *Women Commissioners %* × *Charter* in Models 5 and 6 fails to reach statistical significance at the conventional levels. These results indicate that the effect of the share of women commissioners on the budget allocation among the developmental, allocational, and redistributive categories is independent of the adoption of county charters.

Discussion and Conclusions

While many scholars have argued that women behave differently than men in political settings and that women's descriptive representation is crucial for equity and democracy, prior research has produced mixed findings on whether electing women to public offices results in disparate policy outcomes. In this study, we examine whether women's representation in legislative institutions affects budget decisions and, if yes, how it alters the distribution of resources among spending categories. Data from Florida's 67 counties over 11 years show that enhancing women's political representation increases the share of redistributive spending relative to developmental and allocational. The finding that improving women's representation substantially changes the counties' spending priorities speaks to women's different needs and legislative preferences. It also adds credibility to new approaches, such as gender budgeting, which requires that government budgets include impact assessments across various social groups and open the budget process to broader public participation. Women, for instance, are disproportionately affected by austerity policies. According to the Office of Evaluation Sciences, women and minorities were more likely to require emergency rental assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic than other social groups (Office of Evaluation Sciences, 2022).

We also document that women's political representation in Florida county commissions is low (around 20%). While this number is close to the national average for county governments, it is still the lowest among all levels of government. This is a sobering fact, given that women comprise 51% of the population and have distinct needs and preferences about resource allocation. As women continue to be severely underrepresented in local political institutions, their influence is well explained by critical mass theory. Specifically, they need to secure 1/3 of commission seats before they can influence the county budget toward more redistribution.

Our analysis demonstrates that county political institutions, such as having a commission form of government, moderate the effect of women's representation on budget allocation. The traditional commission form of county government intensifies the redistributive effect of women commissioners on county spending. This finding shows that the modernization of American counties in response to urbanization, population

growth, and the increased demand for public services might constrain the ability of women commissioners to pursue higher redistribution. While entangling the reasons and specific mechanisms behind such effects remains a task for future research, these are rather unexpected consequences of county reformation.

The findings of our study trace several avenues for future research. First, we examined the overall effect of women's representation in county commissions on budget allocation. Yet, women are not a monolith. Future work could study the influence of intersectionality and other demographic characteristics on allocation among budget categories. Second, our results and prior literature point to women's compassion as a likely mechanism for seeking more extensive redistribution of public resources. One might argue, however, that women act this way because they perceive benefits to voters like themselves and the electoral coalition that brought them to office. Scholars could explore this further by zooming in on the decision-making calculus of individual commissioners and inquiring about their motivation. Third, while our study's large sample size allowed for robust inferences, future research could expand beyond Florida and examine whether the effects documented here hold for other governments. Fourth, using panel data, our analysis revealed that reformed county governments might hinder the ability of women elected officials to sway budget allocation toward greater redistribution. Future work could use qualitative data to better understand the mechanisms behind these effects.


Declaration of Conflicting Interests


The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iDs

Vernise Estorcien  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4857-4209>

Milena I. Neshkova  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3108-6014>

Notes

1. Florida Statute 2018. County Annual Budget (<https://www.flsenate.gov/Laws/Statutes/2018/Chapter129/All>)
2. Some scholars refer to it as gender responsive budgeting (Viswanath & Mullins, 2020).
3. The U.S. local governments' functions, structures, and budget authority vary considerably across states. Focusing on one state ensures comparability.
4. The Florida Office of Economic & Demographic Research has been providing comparable county government financial data since 2005, which is why we chose 2005 as the start year. Due to data availability on Florida county commissioners, the study period ends in 2015.
5. Estimating a separate regression for each spending category (developmental, allocational, and redistributive) would assume false independence across categories and ignore the presence of budget trade-offs. A credible strategy for compositional data is to estimate the three budget categories jointly, using a seemingly unrelated regression (SUR). The literature on statistical modeling of compositional data (Adolph et al., 2020; Lipsmeyer et al., 2017; Philips et al., 2016) suggests using the log-transformed ratios of budget categories. Therefore, we jointly estimate the logged ratios of each budget category relative to a baseline category using a SUR model.
6. In a study of the political economy of state budget trade-offs, Adolph et al. (2020) estimate a SUR model without state fixed effects because of several time-invariant state institutional variables. Instead, the study controls for the state's region (Northeast, Midwest, South, or West). Following this empirical strategy, all estimations use regional fixed effects rather than county fixed effects because some of our institutional variables have little within-county variation. Specifically, we place Florida's 67 counties into 7 regions and include the regional dummies in the models. In this way, all models employ two-way fixed effects—for region and year. Florida regions are based on geographical location (Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, n.d.).

References

- Adolph, C., Breunig, C., & Koski, C. (2020). The political economy of budget trade-offs. *Journal of Public Policy*, 40(1), 25–50. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0143814X18000326>
- Arnesen, S., & Peters, Y. (2018). The legitimacy of representation: How descriptive, formal, and responsiveness representation affect the acceptability of political decisions. *Comparative Political Studies*, 51(7), 868–899. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414017720702>
- Atkins, D. N., & Wilkins, V. M. (2013). Going beyond Reading, writing, and arithmetic: The effects of teacher representation on teen pregnancy rates. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 23(4), 771–790. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mut001>
- Barnes, T. (2016). *Gendering legislative behavior*. Cambridge University Press.
- Baron, D. P., & Ferejohn, J. A. (1989). Bargaining in legislatures. *American Political Science Review*, 83(4), 1181–1206. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1961664>
- Bego, I. (2014). Accessing power in new democracies: The appointment of female ministers in postcommunist Europe. *Political Research Quarterly*, 67(2), 347–360. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912913509028>
- Benton, J. E. (2002). County service delivery: Does government structure matter? *Public Administration Review*, 62(4), 471–479. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0033-3352.00200>
- Benton, J. E. (2003a). County government. *Encyclopedia of Public Administration and Public Policy*, 261–266.
- Benton, J. E. (2003b). County government structure and county revenue policy: What's the connection? *State and Local Government Review*, 35(2), 78–89. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0160323X0303500201>
- Benton, J. E. (2003c). The impact of structural reform on county government service provision. *Social Science Quarterly*,

- 84(4), 858–874. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.0038-4941.2003.08404004.x>
- Berkman, M. B., & O'Connor, R. E. (1993). Do women legislators matter? Female legislators and state abortion policy. *American Politics Quarterly*, 21(1), 102–124. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X9302100107>
- Bishu, S. G., & Headley, A. M. (2020). Equal employment opportunity: Women bureaucrats in male-dominated professions. *Public Administration Review*, 80(6), 1063–1074. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13178>
- Blazina, C., & Desilver, D. (2021). *A record number of women are serving in the 117th Congress*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/01/15/a-record-number-of-women-are-serving-in-the-117th-congress/>
- Boex, J., & Walti, S. (2019). Are women politically represented at the local level in the United States? <https://federalism.us/2019/04/are-women-politically-represented-at-the-local-level-in-the-united-states/#ftn2>
- Bovens, M. (2007). Analysing and assessing accountability: A conceptual framework. *European Law Journal*, 13(4), 447–468. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0386.2007.00378.x>
- Bratton, K. A. (2005). Critical mass theory revisited: The behavior and success of token women in state legislatures. *Politics & Gender*, 1(1), 97–125. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X0505004X>
- Burrell, B. (1996). *A Woman's Place is in the House: Campaigning for Congress in the Feminist Era*. University of Michigan Press.
- Bush, S. S., & Zetterberg, P. (2021). Gender quotas and international reputation. *American Journal of Political Science*, 65(2), 326–341. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12557>
- Childs, S., & Krook, M. L. (2008). Critical mass theory and women's political representation. *In Political Studies*, 56(3), 725–736. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2007.00712.x>
- Choi, N. H., & Neshkova, M. I. (2019). Inequality and competition in state redistributive systems: Evidence from welfare and Medicaid. *American Review of Public Administration*, 49(5), 554–571. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0275074018760305>
- Choi, S. O., Bae, S. S., Kwon, S. W., & Feiock, R. (2010). County limits: Policy types and expenditure priorities. *American Review of Public Administration*, 40(1), 29–45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0275074008328171>
- CNN. (November 9, 2022). Female governors will break a record in 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/09/politics/female-governors-record/index.html>
- Cogburn, J. D., & Schneider, S. K. (2003). The quality of management and government performance: An empirical analysis of the American states. *Public Administration Review*, 63(2), 206–213. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-6210.00280>
- Collins, Jr., Manning, P. M., & Carp, K. L. (2010). Gender, critical mass, and judicial decision making. *Law and Policy*, 32(2), 260–281.
- Day, A. L., & Carroll, S. A. (2004). Using an ability-based measure of emotional intelligence to predict individual performance, group performance, and group citizenship behaviours. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 36(6), 1443–1458. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869\(03\)00240-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(03)00240-X)
- de Benedictis-Kessner, J., & Warshaw, C. (2020). Accountability for the local economy at all levels of government in United States elections. *American Political Science Review*, 114(3), 660–676. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055420000027>
- DeHart-Davis, L., Marlowe, J., & Pandey, S. K. (2006). Gender dimensions of public service motivation. *Public Administration Review*, 66(6), 873–887. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2006.00655.x>
- DeSantis, V. S., & Renner, T. (1994). The impact of political structures on public policies in American counties. *Public Administration Review*, 291–295. <https://doi.org/10.2307/976734>
- Devlin, C., & Elgie, R. (2008). The effect of increased women's representation in parliament: The case of Rwanda. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 61(2), 237–254. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsn007>
- Dolan, J. (1998). Support for women's interests in the 103rd congress: The distinct impact of congressional women. *Women & Politics*, 18(4), 81–94. https://doi.org/10.1300/J014v18n04_05
- Dolan, J. (2000). The senior executive service: Gender, attitudes, and representative bureaucracy. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 10(3), 513–530. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.jpart.a024279>
- Dolan, J. (2002). Representative bureaucracy in the federal executive: Gender and spending priorities. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 12(3), 353–375. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.jpart.a003538>
- Dolan, K., & Ford, L. E. (1995). Women in the state legislatures: Feminist identity and legislative behaviors. *American Politics Quarterly*, 23(1), 96–108. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X9502300105>
- Eagly, A. H. (1987). *Reporting sex differences*.
- Eagly, A. H., & Johannesen-Schmidt, M. C. (2001). The leadership styles of women and men. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(4), 781–797. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00241>
- Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychological Review*, 109(3), 573–598. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.109.3.573>
- Escobar-Lemmon, M., & Taylor-Robinson, M. M. (2009). Getting to the top: Career paths of women in Latin American cabinets. *Political Research Quarterly*, 62(4), 685–699. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912908322414>
- Escobar-Lemmon, M. C., & Taylor-Robinson, M. M. (2016). *Women in presidential cabinets: Power players or abundant tokens?* Oxford University Press.
- Ferreira, F., & Gyourko, J. (2014). Does gender matter for political leadership? The case of US mayors. *Journal of Public Economics*, 112, 24–39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2014.01.006>
- Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (no date). Region county list and map. Retrieved from: <https://ccmedia.fdacs.gov/content/download/65535/file/Distributor%20List%203116.pdf>
- Fox, R. L., & Schuhmann, R. A. (1999). Gender and local government: A comparison of women and men city managers. *Public Administration Review*, 231–242. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3109951>
- Funk, K. D. (2015). Gendered governing? Women's leadership styles and participatory institutions in Brazil. *Political Research Quarterly*, 68(3), 564–578. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912915589130>
- Funk, K. D., & Philips, A. Q. (2019). Representative budgeting: Women mayors and the composition of spending in local

- governments. *Political Research Quarterly*, 72(1), 19–33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912918775237>
- Gerrity, J. C., Osborn, T., & Mendez, J. M. (2007). Women and representation: A different view of the district? *Politics & Gender*, 3(2), 179–200. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X07000025>
- Gipson, A. N., Pfaff, D. L., Mendelsohn, D. B., Catenacci, L. T., & Burke, W. W. (2017). Women and leadership: Selection, development, leadership style, and performance. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 53(1), 32–65. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886316687247>
- Gunderson, A. (2022). Descriptive representation and prosecutorial discretion: Race, sex, and carceral disparities. *American Politics Research*, 50(6), 823–836. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X221082638>
- Guy, M. E. (2018). Three steps forward, two steps backward: The status of women's integration into public management. In *Diversity and affirmative action in public service* (pp. 311–326). Routledge.
- Heilman, M. E. (1983). Sex bias in work settings: The lack of fit model. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 5, 269–298.
- Heilman, M. E. (2001). Description and prescription: How gender stereotypes prevent women's ascent up the organizational ladder. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(4), 657–674. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00234>
- Hwang, S. D., & Gray, V. (1991). External limits and internal determinants of state public policy. *Western Political Quarterly*, 44(2), 277–298. <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591299104400203>
- Jacobson, W. S., Palus, C. K., & Bowling, C. J. (2010). A woman's touch? Gendered management and performance in state administration. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 20(2), 477–504. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mup017>
- Jewett, A. (2014). *County government structure in Florida*. Florida County Government Guide, 5–23.
- Jordan, M. M. (2003). Punctuations and agendas: A new look at local government budget expenditures. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 22(3), 345–360. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.10136>
- Joseph, D. L., & Newman, D. A. (2010). Emotional intelligence: An integrative meta-analysis and cascading model. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 95(1), 54. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017286>
- Kanter, R. M. (1977). Some effects of proportions on group life. In *The gender gap in psychotherapy* (pp. 53–78). Springer.
- Keiser, L. R., Wilkins, V. M., Meier, K. J., & Holland, C. A. (2002). Lipstick and logarithms: Gender, institutional context, and representative bureaucracy. *American Political Science Review*, 96(3), 553–564. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055402000321>
- Krook, M. L., & Mackay, F. (2011). *Gender, politics and institutions: Towards a feminist institutionalism (Vol. 1)*. Springer.
- Kwon, S. W., & Gonzalez-Gorman, S. (2019). Influence of local political institutions on policy punctuation in three policy areas. *Politics & Policy*, 47(2), 300–325. <https://doi.org/10.1111/polp.12295>
- Lawless, J. L., Theriault, S. M., & Guthrie, S. (2018). Nice girls? Sex, collegiality, and bipartisan cooperation in the US congress. *Journal of Politics*, 80(4), 1268–1282. <https://doi.org/10.1086/698884>
- Lineberry, R. L., & Fowler, E. P. (1967). Reformism and public policies in American cities. *American Political Science Review*, 61(3), 701–716. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1976089>
- Lipsmeyer, C. S., Philips, A. Q., & Whitten, G. D. (2017). The effects of immigration and integration on European budgetary trade-offs. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 24(6), 912–930. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2017.1298657>
- Liu, S. J. S., & Banaszak, L. A. (2017). Do government positions held by women matter? A cross-national examination of female ministers' impacts on women's political participation. *Politics and Gender*, 13(1), 132–162. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X16000490>
- Mansbridge, J. (1999). Should blacks represent blacks and women represent women? A contingent “yes.”. *Journal of Politics*, 61(3), 628–657. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2647821>
- Mansbridge, J. (2005). Quota problems: Combating the dangers of essentialism. *Politics & Gender*, 1(4), 622–638. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X05220196>
- Marx, U. (2018). Accounting for equality: Gender budgeting and moderate feminism. *Gender, Work, & Organization*, 26(8), 1176–1190. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12307>
- Mayer, J. D., Roberts, R. D., & Barsade, S. G. (2008). Human abilities: Emotional intelligence. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 59(1), 507–536. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.59.103006.093646>
- Mayer, J. D., & Salovey, P. (1997). *Emotional development and emotional intelligence*. Basics Books.
- McBrayer, M., & Williams, R. L. (2022). The second sex in the second district: The policy effects of electing women to county government. *Political Research Quarterly*, 76(2), 825–840. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10659129221109144>
- McDonald, B. D. III (2015). Does the charter form improve the fiscal health of counties? *Public Administration Review*, 75(4), 609–618. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12389>
- Meier, K. J., & Xu, X. (2022). Critical thoughts about critical mass in representative bureaucracy: A theoretical exploration and empirical illustration. *Governance*, 36(3), 887–907. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12711>
- Menzel, D. C., Marando, V. L., Parks, R. B., Waugh, W. L. Jr, Cigler, B. A., Svara, J. H., Reeves, M. M., Benton, J. E., Thomas, R. D., Streib, G., & Schneider, M. (1992). Setting a research agenda for the study of the American county. *Public Administration Review*, 52(2), 173–182. <https://doi.org/10.2307/976471>
- Moore, M. H. (1997). *Creating public value: Strategic management in government*. Harvard University Press.
- Morgan, D. R., & Kickham, K. (1999). Changing the form of county government: Effects on revenue and expenditure policy. *Public Administration Review*, 315–324. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3110114>
- O'Boyle, E. H. Jr, Humphrey, R. H., Pollack, J. M., Hawver, T. H., & Story, P. A. (2011). The relation between emotional intelligence and job performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 32(5), 788–818. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.714>
- Office of Evaluation Sciences (2022). Equity in the distribution of the Emergency Rental Assistance program. <https://oes.gsa.gov/projects/era-equity/>

- Osborn, T. L. (2012). *How women represent women: Political parties, gender and representation in the state legislatures*. Oxford University Press.
- Park, K. O. (1996). Determinants of county government growth. In D. C. Menzel (Ed.), *The American county: Frontiers of knowledge* (pp. 34–50). University of Alabama Press.
- Park, S. (2014). The politics of redistribution in local governments: The effect of gender representation on welfare spending in California counties. *Journal of Public Policy, 34*(2), 269–301. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0143814X14000075>
- Peterson, P. E. (1981). *City limits*. University of Chicago Press.
- Philips, A. Q., Rutherford, A., & Whitten, G. D. (2016). Dynamic pie: A strategy for modeling trade-offs in compositional variables over time. *American Journal of Political Science, 60*(1), 268–283. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12204>
- Pitkin, H. F. (1967). The concept of representation. In *The concept of representation*. University of California Press.
- Potter, R. A., & Volden, C. (2021). A female policy premium? Agency context and women's leadership in the US federal bureaucracy. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 31*(1), 91–107. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muaa028>
- Rawls, J. (2001). *Justice as fairness: A restatement*. Harvard University Press.
- Reingold, B., & Smith, A. R. (2012). Welfare policymaking and intersections of race, ethnicity, and gender in US state legislatures. *American Journal of Political Science, 56*(1), 131–147. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2011.00569.x>
- Ridgeway, C. L. (1997). Interaction and the conservation of gender inequality: Considering employment. *American Sociological Review, 62*, 218–235. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2657301>
- Sabharwal, M. (2015). From glass ceiling to glass cliff: Women in senior executive service. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 25*(2), 399–426. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mut030>
- Saint-Germain, M. A. (1989). *Does Their Difference Make a Difference? The Impact of Women on Public Policy in Arizona Legislature*.
- Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality, 9*(3), 185–211. <https://doi.org/10.2190/DUGG-P24E-52WK-6CDG>
- Scheurer, K. F. (2014). Gender and voting decisions in the US court of appeals: Testing critical mass theory. *Politics and Policy, 35*(1), 31–54.
- Schneider, M., & Park, K. O. (1989). Metropolitan counties as service delivery agents: The still forgotten governments. *Public Administration Review, 49*, 345–352. <https://doi.org/10.2307/976844>
- Schwindt-Bayer, L. A. (2010). *Political power and women's representation in Latin America*. Oxford University Press.
- Smith, A. E. (2015). On the edge of a glass cliff: Women in leadership in public organizations. *Public Administration Quarterly, 39*(3) 484–517. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07349149150390030>
- Swers, M. (2001). Understanding the policy impact of electing women: Evidence from research on congress and state legislatures. *PS: Political Science and Politics, 34*(2), 217–220. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096501000348>
- Swers, M. L. (1998). Are women more likely to vote for women's issue bills than their male colleagues? *Legislative Studies Quarterly, 23*, 435–448. <https://doi.org/10.2307/440362>
- Tamerius, K. L., Duerst-Lahti, G., & Kelly, R. M. (2010). Sex, gender, and leadership in the representation of women. *Women, Gender, and Politics: A Reader, 243–250*.
- Thomas, S., & Wilcox, C. (2014). *Women and elective office: Past, present, and future*. Oxford University Press.
- United Nations Equal Opportunities Commission. (2003). United Nations targets for proportion of women in leadership and decision-making positions. <https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr02-03/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0314cb2-1636-1e.pdf>
- Viswanath, S., & Mullins, L. B. (2020). Gender responsive budgeting and the COVID-19 pandemic response: A feminist standpoint. *Administrative Theory & Praxis, 43*(2), 230–244. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10841806.2020.1814080>
- Wong, C.-S., & Law, K. S. (2017). The effects of leader and follower emotional intelligence on performance and attitude: An exploratory study. In *Leadership perspectives* (pp. 97–128). Routledge.
- Yang, S.-B., & Guy, M. E. (2015). Gender effects on emotional labor in Seoul metropolitan area. *Public Personnel Management, 44*(1), 3–24. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091026014550491>
- Yu, J., Jennings, E. T., & Butler, J. S. (2019). Dividing the pie: Parties, institutional limits, and state budget trade-offs. *State Politics & Policy Quarterly, 19*(2), 236–258. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532440018822469>

Author Biographies

Vernise Estorcien is an assistant professor in Public Affairs at the Paul H. O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University, Indianapolis. She is a scholar of public policy and administration, race and social equity, and citizen-state interaction programs. Her current projects analyze the individual and organizational characteristics of police youth organizations. She enjoys collaborating with public sector organizations and public citizens to conduct both applied and engaged research to improve service delivery and racial equity.

Can Chen is an associate professor in the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University. His research interests include innovative infrastructure financing, fiscal transparency, disaster finance, and fighting corruption. He is founder and director of the Infrastructure Finance & Policy Lab (iFPL). He serves as chair of the Section on Transportation Policy and Administration (STPA) of the American Society of Public Administration (ASPA) and member of Executive Board of the Association of Budgeting and Financial Management (ABFM). His research was supported by grants from the World Bank, GASB, ICMA, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, and Open Government Partnership.

Apu Deb is a PhD student in Public Affairs at Florida International University. His research interests include local budgeting and finance, fiscal transparency, fiscal decentralization, and financing sustainability initiatives.

Milena I. Neshkova is an associate professor of Public Policy and Administration in the School of International and Public Affairs at Florida International University. She is interested in political and organizational theories and their applications to public policy and public administration at both domestic and international levels. She is a recipient of competitive grants from the National Science Foundation, the Kauffman Foundation, and the European Union Center of Excellence.