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Does Gender Matter?

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN THE
GOVERNANCE OF SOUTHERN MUNICIPALITIES

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This study attempts to answer the question of whether gender matters by comparing female and male mayors in deep south states according to their demographic and political profiles, policy preferences, and views on women's issues. We find that sometimes gender matters and in other cases it appears not to matter. Not surprisingly, mayors are most concerned with infrastructure, economic growth, and crime regardless of the sex of the mayor. There are, however, some very real differences between male and female mayors in the south including support for women's issues.

There are more women serving in political office in the United States than ever before. The gains women have made in recent years are significant and the number of women running for elected office has increased fivefold since the early 1980s (Allen 1994). Likewise, women are making gains internationally (Milne 1996). However, although approximately 30,000 women are serving in elected offices nationwide, women still trail men in every category of political office.

In the 104th Congress, for example, of 100 U.S. Senators only eight were female; of 435 members of the U.S. House only 49 were female. The same is true at the state level. As of 1996, only 1,517 of the 7,461 state legislators in the United States were female, of the 330 statewide elected executive offices only 53 were female and, to date, only 13 women have served as governor. The trend continues at the

local level. MacManus and Bullock cite an International City/County Management Association nationwide questionnaire reporting that 634 of 4,860 mayors surveyed were women. This survey says that roughly 13% of the nation's cities are headed by female mayors (1996). However, the numbers are increasing. The number of U.S. cities with populations exceeding 30,000 headed by a woman in city hall has increased from seven in 1971 to 47 by 1977, and continued to increase from 76 in 1983 to 94 in 1987 to 151 in 1991.¹ Moreover, many of the nation's largest cities like Pittsburgh, San Diego, the District of Columbia, and even Houston in the south have elected female mayors.

The year 1992 was hailed as "the year of the woman" in politics. This phenomenon, the perceived power of the first lady, and the emergence of women's issues atop the political agenda, have resulted in an increased interest in the study of women and politics (Rule 1990). Yet, inadequacies remain in our understanding of the topic. For example, while much research exists on gains by women in state legislatures and on the voting behavior of women in office, insufficient attention has been given to women serving in the executive branch of government, and in certain geographic regions such as the deep south, an area that lags behind the rest of the nation in the gains realized by women in electoral politics (Rule 1990).

Gender has emerged as a potentially important political variable (Weir 1996). The question of whether gender matters in politics is multifaceted. For example, the phenomenon of women seeking office has been and remains a complex issue (Brown, et al. 1996, Darcy, et al. 1994, Perry 1993, Witt, *et al.*, 1994). Gender may matter in who gets elected or whether a potential candidate even

¹ See National Women's Political Caucus homepage for updated data.

decides to run for office. Gender may matter in the political careers and occupational and educational backgrounds of office seekers. In office, gender may influence voting decisions, especially regarding support for women's issues. Finally, gender may play a role in the development of officeholders' political attitudes and values.

Mayoral politics is of particular interest in studies of the connection between gender and politics because the local level connotes entry-level politics and the starting point of political careers. Additionally, executive office may give the office holder challenges and opportunities unique from those found in the legislature and executive powers may be more substantive than those available to legislators (Brown, et al. 1996; Darcy, et al. 1994; Grunwald 1992; Margolies-Mezvinsky 1994). Executive offices in government, such as the presidency and governorship (and possibly the mayorship), are gender-specific offices in the minds of voters, who tend to associate necessary characteristics of the offices with men (Weir 1996). These phenomena pose an interesting dynamic for women in politics, one worthy of study. On the other hand, it would stand to reason that the chief executives of municipal governments might be interested in little other than municipal services and economic growth and, accordingly, one might expect few differences to arise between female and male mayors.

Some challenges for women politicians may be unique to the deep south. The region remains a barrier for political women, as southern states rank last in progress made by women in election to public office (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Gurwitt 1993; Weir 1996; Williams 1979). In states such as California, Colorado, Hawaii, and most of the northern states, women account for more than 20% of state legislators; Washington state leads the nation with a legislature that is almost 40% female. On the other hand, the state legislatures of the four deep south states examined in this paper—Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi—consist of only 3.6%, 18.2%, 9.7%, and

11.5% females, respectively.² While the regions most successful in electing women to head city hall such as New England and the Pacific Coast states have a woman serving in one out of every five mayoral seats, in the South only six out of 100 mayors is a woman.

This study addresses the question of gender in elected office by considering gender on four conceptual levels in mayoral politics in four southern states. The paper examines southern mayors' (1) demographic profiles and backgrounds; (2) their political profiles and careers; (3) their policy preferences; and (4) their views about women's issues. The literature suggests that these four areas are important to understanding the role of gender in politics, although the research largely ignores these areas at the level of local politics and executive office (Brown, Heighberger, Shockett 1996). Other studies of women in politics have used similar approaches to answer the gender question. A study of female governors by Weir, for example, considers four primary questions, three of which are similar to this study: previous political background; issue position or preference; and views or support for, women's issues (1996).

A POLITICAL GENDER GAP?

Around 1980 interest arose in the possible existence of a political gender gap (Cook, Thomas, Wilcox 1994; Cook and Wilcox 1991; Frankovic 1982). Much scholarly evidence, such as the notable Center for the American Woman and Politics survey project, supports the existence of a gender gap and, more pertinent to this study, differences between female and male appointed and elected office

² See *Women in State Legislatures*' reports and *Fact Sheets* by the Center for the American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University.

holders. We can think of the gap as threefold: (1) different political attitudes between males and females, becoming most pronounced with women's issues; (2) differences between women elected to national and local offices, with women at the national level generally more liberal and feminist than women at the local level; and (3) differences between non-African Americans and African-American women, the latter tending to be more liberal than both men and white women (Romney and Harrison 1987). On the other hand, some studies have found that gender may not be important in politics. For instance, it has been found that women pursuing an open seat or special election where there is no incumbent do better than those opposing an incumbent and no differently than men in such political contests (Kelly, Hulbary, Bowman 1996). As such, defeating an incumbent is a challenge faced by both sexes, although there are many more male incumbents.

Demographic Profile. The manner in which women are socialized may impede their political ambition and this, along with questions of family responsibilities to their children or husbands, may limit a woman's decision to run for office (Allen 1994; Carroll 1985; Ruble 1993). Demographic factors such as marital status and parenthood are potentially important factors. Many early studies of female politicians supported the importance of demographic factors, finding practical explanations such as family obligations as responsible for the under representation of women in politics (Sapiro 1982; Werner 1968). Women are believed to pursue a "mommy track" to elected office; that is, waiting until their children are grown before running for office and, as such, female politicians are less likely than men to be under the age of 40 (Mandel 1981). Women in politics are more likely than men to be single parents and women still face the problem—or at least a problem perceived by the public—of balancing family and work (Milne 1966).

Research has found that women in office differ demographically from their male counterparts (Dolan and Ford 1997; Milne

1996). For instance, research has shown female legislators to be, on average, less educated and older than their male colleagues, and having worked in lower paying jobs (Dolan and Ford 1997; Milne 1996). Yet, MacManus and Bullock (1996) found that, on average, female mayors are slightly better educated than male mayors, in that they are more apt to have either a college degree or a graduate education. Thomas (1994) found female legislators to differ notably from their male colleagues in education, occupation, and other demographic variables. However, women legislators are now more educated, have diverse and better occupations, and generally differ from the women first elected in the 1960s and 1970s (Thomas 1994). If the demographic characteristics of females running for and serving in office begins to duplicate the demographic characteristics of males, perhaps women will achieve parity with men in public office (Dolan and Ford 1997; Milne 1996).

Political Profile. Women have faced a variety of challenges in winning elections. Besides the public's reluctance to vote for a woman and discrimination from male colleagues, they face a myriad of difficult social and cultural hurdles. These obstacles are manifested in a variety of ways. Most early research pointed to fundamental differences between the political careers of female and male politicians, including the belief that women were less ambitious, less likely to pursue a higher office once elected, and more reluctant to consider politics full-time (Dolan and Ford 1997). Expected qualifications for candidates, such as education, occupation, and previous political experience may work against women candidates with non-traditional political backgrounds (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Williams 1979). The traditionalistic culture of the south may enhance such bias (Allen 1994; Darcy, Welch and Clark 1994; MacManus and Bullock 1993). Winning election may be hampered by the difficulties women may experience in fund-raising, lack of credibility with financial donors, and a lack of social and political access to finances and campaign financiers (Allen 1994; Cantor and Bernay 1992). More-

over, incumbency as a source of financial advantage is more likely to work to the benefit of males, who are more likely to be incumbents or have longer periods of tenure in office. Yet, today there are several organizations dedicated to funding female candidates for political office such as the Women's Campaign Fund, the National Women's Political Caucus, EMILY's List ("Early Money is Like Yeast"), and WISH ("Women in the Senate and House").

The literature suggests that women may have a different base of electoral support than men (Brown, Heighberger, and Shockett 1996; Sorauf 1988; Trafton 1984). For instance, there is evidence that women are more likely to vote Democratic or to vote for another woman. Other studies suggest that female voters may lack information and may not realize the extent of gender discrepancy in elected office that, in turn, may prevent them from voting for another woman (Henry 1994). It has also been found that women are more likely to do better in seeking local office or minor offices than major statewide or national offices (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Williams 1979). For example, studies of female politicians, including mayors, found that women may be more likely to run and win in certain types of districts and mayoral races, usually these are less powerful and less prestigious legislative districts and mayorships (Darcy, Welch and Clark 1994; ManManus and Bullock 1996). Women lack role models and female mentors for entering politics. A possible key factor in helping women in politics is that of "mentoring," whether from experienced political women or well-respected male officeholders (Kelly and Fisher 1993; Baxter and Lansing 1983).

Research has shown that there are differences in political party affiliation and ideology. Women—including women at the local level and female party activists in the south—are often more likely than men to be Democrats or vote Democratic and to consider themselves liberal (Kelly, Hulbary, and Bowman 1996). Women who get elected to local offices often have an active civic past, high incomes and educational levels, be sympathetic to women's rights, and more likely

to get elected in affluent, progressive, larger communities, particularly in the north (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994).

Perceived differences between men and women candidates may work to the advantage of women. Women in politics are perceived as having more integrity and fairness than men and are thought to be less "political" (Allen 1994; Gelb and Palley 1982). Relatedly, women are viewed as exercising power differently than men and with a higher degree of morality and compassion (Margolies-Mezvinsky 1994). If there are differences, and if those differences in political careers merge, perhaps women will enjoy equal status with men in politics (Dolan and Ford 1997).

Policy Priorities. Earlier research suggests that women in office have different policy priorities than men in office (Baxter and Lansing 1983; Beckwith 1986; Gelb and Palley 1982; Mandel 1981). The priority differences often pertain to women supporting women's issues such as sexual harassment statutes, breast cancer research, child care and early childhood social services, domestic violence and rape prevention, abortion rights, and comparable worth legislation, to name a few. Accordingly, women are less supportive of "force" issues or such gendered (masculine) issues as national security and economic policy (Mandel 1981). Recent studies of women elected to Congress in 1992 have found that women in Congress pursue an agenda of women's issues, but the absence of women in positions of power in Congress limits their success (Riordan and Kirchhoff 1995).

Public perceptions of women in politics seem to support the notion of a difference in policy orientation and preference. Women are seen as having more compassion, more support for community, children, and the family. Women are believed to have more interest in social services, in helping the disadvantaged, and other nurture issues (Cantor and Berney 1992; Mandel 1981; Smolowe 1992). Studies of local politics find that women are seen by voters as more capable in dealing with social service issues while men rate higher in dealing

with economic development and city infrastructure (Brown, Heighberger, and Shockett 1996).

Women's Issues. A variety of policy issues are commonly viewed as women's issues. These include abortion rights, gender equality, sexual harassment, child services, domestic violence, and others, as discussed above. Research has shown that women in office and women in the general public are more supportive and liberal on such issues and are more supportive of affirmative action and social welfare programs (Kelly, Hulbary, Bowman 1994). Gender could also differentiate other policy areas. For example, public opinion research has shown that women differ from men in issues of war and peace. Women appear to be more concerned than men with issues of peace and those issues closer to home such as domestic social issues (Brown, Heighberger, Schokett 1996; Darcy, Welch, Clark 1994).

METHODOLOGY

In late 1994 and early 1995, questionnaires were mailed to female and male mayors in four states: Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi. These states are commonly seen as deep south states and differentiated in their politics from the rim south states of Florida, North Carolina, Virginia, and Texas (Kelly, Hulbary, and Bowman 1994). We mailed the survey to every female mayor in the four states and a similar number of male mayors selected at random. Female mayors who did not respond were contacted a second time. A response rate of around 40% for women and a return rate from almost as many men provided a total response of 105 questionnaires, including 58 female respondents and 47 male respondents. Thirty of the respondents were from Alabama, 34 from Georgia, 21 from Louisiana, and 20 from Mississippi.

The survey tapped the four factors examined in this study: (1) demographic questions (including questions on age, race, education, occupation, marital status); (2) questions assessing political profiles (including political party, ideology, and political ambition-career); (3)

policy preference measures (including policy and administrative matters); and (4) political views concerning women's issues (including equity, social services, childcare services, comparable worth, and support for feminism).

FINDINGS

Demographic Profile. The data in Table 1 show that there are demographic similarities between female and male mayors. For instance, similarities exist between female and male mayors with respect to age and education. Though more women than men are age fifty or greater, almost an equal percentage of women and men—about 20%—are age 49 or less. About 13% more male mayors have college or law/graduate degrees than female mayors; on the other hand, women are slightly more likely to have “some college” than men—30% to 26%—and only about 7% fewer women than men are college graduates.

As the figures in Table 1 show, female mayors are more likely than male mayors to be black. While almost 83% of the male mayors are white, only about 63% of the female mayors are white. While 93% of the male mayors are married, only about 68% of the female mayors are married. Females are also less likely than males to come from backgrounds in business and more apt than their male colleagues to list their occupation as either a profession (teaching, lawyer, nurse) or a nontraditional occupation (homemaker).

The figures in Table 1 do not correspond to the findings of earlier studies that suggest a difference in age and educational levels between men and women office holders. Nor does this study mirror the literature suggesting female mayors would be less likely than males to be younger. Almost 50% of the women but only 35% of the men come from nontraditional backgrounds (professions, homemakers, and other nontraditional occupations) rather than such traditional political backgrounds (business and politics).

TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE BY GENDER
 (in percents)

	Male	Female
Age		
39 and under	0.0	5.0
40-49	21.1	15.0
50-59	21.1	33.3
60 and above	43.9	36.7
Race		
White	82.5	63.3
Black	14.0	35.0
Marital Status		
Single	0.0	3.3
Married	93.0	68.3
Divorced	0.0	13.3
Widowed	5.3	15.0
Separated	1.8	0.0
Widowed	5.3	15.0
Education		
Less than high school	0.0	1.7
High school graduate	15.8	23.3
Some college	26.3	30.0
College graduate	38.6	31.7
Law/Graduate School	19.3	13.3
Occupation		
Politics	1.8	0.0
Business	36.8	20.0
Blue Collar	8.8	8.3
Agriculture	3.5	0.0
Government	1.8	5.0
Profession	19.3	28.5
Retired/Homemaker	15.8	21.7
Other	1.8	10.0

Note: percents may not sum to 100 due to rounding and nonresponses.

Political Profile. Table 2 presents the figures for the political profiles of the mayors. Approximately one-half of all respondents consider themselves ideologically "moderate." While a few respondents of both sexes consider themselves "liberals," no male considers himself "highly liberal," but almost 7% of the females describe themselves as "highly liberal." Overall, male mayors are more likely to identify themselves as "conservatives" and female mayors are more likely to identify as "moderates." Overall, however, women mayors were not overwhelmingly liberal, as the literature suggests, a finding that may reflect the general conservatism of the deep south states. Roughly one-half of all respondents are Democrats, but a higher percentage of men than women are Independents, about 26% to 18%, and a higher percentage of women than men are Republicans, 23% compared to about 18%.

Contrary to the literature, the figures in Table 2 report that women appear to be more interested than men in pursuing higher political office, 75% of the men saying they want no higher office, but only 67% of the women showing a similar lack of interest. These figures question findings of earlier studies suggesting that women may be more politically ambitious than men.

Women have spent less time in office than men, 38% of them had been in political office in office two years or less compared to about 25% of men. At the other end of the scale, 33% of males have been in office 11 or more years compared with only 18% of the female mayors. As the literature suggests, women have less experience in office. The same might be said of party affiliation. The figures show that about 52% of female and 51% of male mayors are Democrats while 23% of female and about 18% of male mayors are Republicans. This finding is contrary to much of the literature, which suggests women are much more likely to be Democrats than are men.

Policy and Administrative Preferences. For most policy issues, gender does not matter in city hall. As Table 3 shows, the percentage differences on policy issues such as crime and safety, civil rights, economic/business, public works/infrastructure, recreation, and government reform are similar between females and males. Male and

TABLE 2
POLITICAL PROFILE BY GENDER
 (in percents)

	Male	Female
Political Ideology		
Highly conservative	21.1	13.3
Slightly conservative	28.1	23.3
Moderate	47.4	50.0
Slightly liberal	1.8	6.7
Highly liberal	0.0	6.7
Political Party		
Democrat	50.9	51.7
Republican	17.5	23.3
Independent	26.3	18.3
Other	1.8	5.0
Political Ambition		
No higher office	75.4	66.7
State legislator	7.0	10.0
Governor	0.0	0.0
National Office	3.5	6.7
Mayoral Tenure (in years)		
1-2	24.6	38.3
3-6	29.8	28.3
7-10	12.3	15.0
11 or more	33.3	18.3

Note: percents may not sum to 100 due to rounding and nonresponses.

females prioritize some of the same issues and some issues are low priority for mayors of both sexes. Top priority issues for both female and male mayors include infrastructure (68% of women and 74% of men), followed by economic and business policy (56% to 52%) followed by crime and safety concerns (47% of women and 51% of men). These issues are typical municipal priorities.

Fewer than 20% of both female and male mayors list government reform, education, civil rights, and women's issues as top priorities. These issues are lower priority than areas of traditional

TABLE 3
POLICY PREFERENCES BY GENDER
 (in percents)

	Male	Female
I have supported programs specifically for women		
No	71.9	71.7
Yes	28.1	26.7
Compared to other mayors, my relationship With the city council is		
Much better	56.1	51.7
Somewhat better	12.3	20.0
About the same	24.6	25.0
Somewhat worse	3.5	3.5
Much worse	1.8	0.0
Top priority issues as mayor		
Crime and Safety	50.9	46.7
Social Services	7.0	31.7
Women's issues	1.8	6.7
Civil rights	8.8	5.0
Economy/Business	56.1	51.7
Education	14.0	6.7
Public works/Infrastructure	73.7	68.3
Recreation/Amenities	38.6	43.3
Government reform	17.5	16.7

Note: percents may not sum to 100 due to rounding and nonresponses.

municipal services. Yet, while of lower priority to both sexes, females and males differ on their relative prioritization of education policy and women's issues. Female mayors are more likely than males to prioritize women's issues. The most noticeable difference occurs with social services, listed by more than 31% of female mayors as a top priority, yet only 7% of males agreed that it was a top priority.

The literature suggests that women officeholders are more interested in women's issues, issues of equity such as civil rights, and nurture issues such as social services. While a majority of women in

this study do not list these issues as top priorities, female mayors are, however, more likely than male mayors to prioritize women's issues and social services. Yet the differences are not across-the-board. For example, 71% of females and 71% of males say that they had not supported programs specifically for women. Yet, while almost 7% of female mayors highly prioritized women's issues, fewer than 2% of male mayors gave a high priority to women's issues. The issue of policy preferences and support for women's issues needs further study.

There was almost no difference in the relations female and male mayors had with the city council; just over one-half of both sexes felt that their relations with their council are "much better" than average.

Views on Women's Issues. As Table 4 shows, female and male mayors tend to agree with one another on feminism and the issue of comparable worth. At all levels of agreement, corresponding numbers were found between men and women showing some support for feminism. Roughly 40% of both sexes "strongly agreed" and roughly one-half of both sexes "agreed" that they supported legislation for comparable worth in government jobs. However, there are differences in issues important to women. Fifty percent of the female mayors but only 35% of the male mayors "strongly agree" or "agree" that government should provide child care services. Women are slightly more willing than men to "strongly agree" or "agree" that there should be increased support for social services, 45% to 40%; this finding may not be surprising, as the literature suggests that females are more supportive of such women's issues. Finally, almost 82% of the women mayors, but only 65% of the male mayors "strongly agree" or "agree" that the women's movement should do more to promote equality.

As Table 5 shows, when asked if it mattered whether women were elected to public office in their communities, only a small number of respondents—female or male—felt it made "much difference" regarding programs for dealing with women's issues, municipal spending practices, and ethics in politics. However,

TABLE 4
POLITICAL VIEWS ON WOMEN'S ISSUES BY GENDER
 (IN PERCENTS)

	Male	Female
I consider myself a supporter of feminism		
Strongly agree	8.8	11.7
Agree	42.1	36.7
Disagree	26.3	33.3
Strongly disagree	8.8	8.3
Government should provide childcare		
Services		
Strongly agree	10.5	20.0
Agree	24.6	30.0
Disagree	45.6	36.7
Strongly disagree	3.5	1.7
Government should increase its commitment		
To social services		
Strongly agree	8.8	18.3
Agree	31.6	26.7
Disagree	31.5	45.0
Strongly disagree	19.3	6.7
The women's movement should do more to		
Promote equality		
Strongly agree	17.5	26.7
Agree	47.4	55.0
Disagree	17.5	15.0
Strongly disagree	7.0	0.0
I support legislation for comparable worth		
In government jobs		
Strongly agree	42.1	40.0
Agree	47.4	53.3
Disagree	3.5	1.7
Strongly disagree	3.5	1.7

Note: percents may not sum to 100 due to rounding and nonresponses

TABLE 5
PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER BY GENDER
 (in percents)

	Male	Female
<i>Does it matter if women are elected in your community:</i>		
Concerning an increase in programs dealing with women's issues		
Much difference	10.5	8.3
Some difference	45.6	46.7
No difference	36.8	35.0
Concerning municipal spending priorities		
Much difference	5.3	13.3
Some difference	33.3	41.7
No difference	56.1	41.7
Concerning a commitment to ethics in politics?		
Much difference	12.3	25.0
Some difference	36.8	35.0
No difference	45.6	35.0
Men try to keep women out of political power		
Strongly agree	5.3	13.3
Agree	17.5	40.0
Disagree	49.1	40.0
Strongly disagree	22.8	3.3
Women in politics work harder than men		
Strongly agree	10.5	36.7
Agree	47.4	36.7
Disagree	28.1	16.7
Strongly disagree	5.3	11.7
It is more difficult for women than men to balance family concerns with a political career		
Strongly agree	10.5	31.7
Agree	47.4	45.0
Disagree	28.1	11.7
Strongly disagree	5.3	10.0

Note: percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding and nonresponses

respondents of both genders thought that the election of women would make "some difference" in programs dealing with women's issues; almost 47% of women and about 46% of men felt that the election of more women in their communities would make "some difference" concerning an increase in programs dealing with women's issues. Female mayors are more likely than male mayors to feel that the election of more women would make "much difference" in city municipal spending, 13% to 5%. Together with those respondents who feel election of women would make "some difference" in municipal spending, the difference between men and women mayors increases: 55% percent of women think election of women would make "much" or "some" difference, but fewer than 39% of the men agree. Women are also more likely to think the election of women would make "much difference" in a commitment to ethics—25% of the women think it would make "much difference," but only 12% of the men felt the same way.

There were some noticeable differences between men and women in their views of women in politics. By a margin of 26%, female mayors were more likely to "strongly agree" that women work harder than men. Women are also more likely to "strongly agree" that balancing family and career is more difficult for women in office than men than men.

While over one-half of the female mayors believe men try to keep women out of political power, less than 23% of the men agree.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study are mixed. Sometimes, there is little difference between female and male mayors in the south. In other instances, differences are evident. Some research at the national and legislative levels of government, especially studies where female politicians were found to be much more supportive of women's issues, seem pertinent to the study of female mayors in the deep south. Female mayors are more supportive than male mayors of women's issues and, while such issues do not tend to be top priorities for the women, the

issues are not typically seen as top concerns at the local level. The differences in support between women and men are considerable.

While earlier research has found that women in politics were more likely than males to be feminists, liberal, and older, this study produced mixed results. Demographically, female and male mayors are only a little different in terms of age and education. There are differences, as suggested in the literature, in marital status, race, and occupation, with female mayors more likely to be non-married, to be black, and to come from nontraditional occupational backgrounds than male mayors. Contrary to the literature, women may be more politically ambitious than men. The findings show female mayors with less job experience than their male counterparts. Female mayors are also slightly more likely than males to be liberal, although mayors of both sexes were overwhelmingly more likely to be moderates or conservatives, a finding that may be a product of the southern sample.

Perhaps the largest difference between the sexes in this study is that female mayors are more likely than male mayors to perceive that the election of women would make a difference in several political and policy areas, notably municipal spending priorities and ethics. In addition, the study shows that women believe they face difficulties not experienced by men in pursuing political office. These perceptual differences are considerable. Finally, while mayors of neither sex list women's issues as a top priority, female mayors are much more likely than male mayors to make women's issues and social services a priority.

Perhaps women in the south are more conservative and traditional than women in other regions of the United States. This may also be true of female politicians in the south when compared with their non-southern peers. Yet there are several issue areas where female mayors in the south are more liberal than their male counterparts and exhibit more support for women's issues than male mayors. It also appears as if some research on women nationally and on women in legislative politics holds true for women in the south and women in the mayor's office.

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