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Urban Government, Democracy, and the Representation of Gender in the United States

Women in American Cities

> When a woman leaves her natural sphere,
> And without her sex's modesty or fear
> Assays the part of man,
> She, in her weak attempts to rule,
> But makes herself a mark for ridicule,
> A laughing-stock and sham.
> Article of greatest use is to her then
> Something worn distinctively by men—
> A pair of pants will do.
> Thus she will plainly demonstrate
> That Nature made a great mistake
> In sexing such a shrew.
>
> —Anonymous letter to Susanna Salter, first
> female U.S. mayor, Argonia, Kansas, 1887[1]

When Argonia, Kansas, elected Susanna Salter in 1887, she became the first woman to hold elected office in the United States. Selected largely as a result of electoral maneuvering by a group of men opposed to a slate of male candidates supported by the Women's Christian Temperance Union, Mrs. Salter's election brought attention

to Argonia from reporters, supporters, detractors, and women's rights advocates.[2] Fast-forward more than 120 years, and women hold local elected offices throughout the United States. Yet despite the passage of time, the increase in the number of women in office, and extensive research on female leaders at the state and national levels, little is known about how female municipal leaders influence policy making in American cities.[3]

Is it important that women hold local office? Currently, 17 percent of mayors of large cities are women.[4] Is this enough? How important is it that urban governments look like the cities and citizens they represent? This book is a careful analysis of how gender does and does not influence the political and policy behavior of mayors and council members. It draws on city council meeting minutes, surveys of and interviews with mayors and city council members, surveys of community members, and urban fiscal and employment data. Many theories of urban politics suggest that the gender of a mayor or city council member should be irrelevant, because electoral concerns, institutional limitations, informal relationships with business, and a drive for economic growth constrain the function of local representatives and make them interested in growth, regardless of gender. Indeed, despite identifying widespread gender effects at higher levels of office, such that women in office are more interested in funding social welfare programs and support feminist issues, the limited scholarship on gender and local politics largely concludes that women fail to similarly influence politics at the local level.[5] I disagree. Although the local level *resists the incorporation of women's interests*, I found substantial evidence that the involvement of women in local politics *does* matter and has consequences for urban policy and the state of local democracy.

To demonstrate the importance of women's representation in local politics, the research presented here addresses a number of questions about female leaders in urban politics and the effects of gender on urban governance. First, why would gender matter at the local level? Can we identify a *cohesive set of urban women's issues*? From where does this array of issues emerge, and does it differ significantly from women's issues at other levels of government? Second, how does the gender of mayors and council members influence *policy preferences*, or how local representatives think about urban policies and politics? Do female leaders

and male leaders express similar levels of support for urban women's issues, such as those relating to children and welfare policies? Do men and women in local office express the same attitudes about representation? Third, does mayoral gender influence the *policy process*, or how cities engage in policy making? What does the election of women mean for the community's engagement in local politics? Fourth, do cities with female leaders make choices different from cities with male leaders about *policy outcomes* and which programs to fund? Finally, do voters make the correct decision for their city when they elect women? Does the presence of women in local office influence the quality of urban democracy and satisfaction with local government? What does the election of women to local office mean for the fiscal health of cities?

To answer these questions, I examine how gender influences (1) policy preferences, (2) policy processes, and (3) policy outcomes. The rest of this chapter presents an overview of three central bodies of knowledge: my conceptualization and operationalization of a set of women's urban issues, the general influence of gender on the behavior of leaders in decision-making bodies, and how urban policy making presents a unique and challenging frame for understanding the influence of women in politics.

Defining Urban Women's Issues

> Our City does not ask us to die for her welfare; she asks us to live for her good, and so to act that her government may be pure, her officers honest, and every home within her boundaries be a place fit to grow the best kind of men and women to rule over her.
>
> —Mary McDowell, "Young Citizen's Creed," 1898

> Those policies that really help women—low-income housing, children's services, improving the schools, protecting women, that sort of thing—those are women's policies in my city. Those are what women come to me about.
>
> —A female mayor, explaining how she would define women's issues or policies in her city

Women have a long history of activism in American urban politics, and extensive research documents women's early work on social

welfare, education, and public works in cities. However, we know much less about how women in modern urban politics behave or influence policies.[6] Using a political development approach, I argue that women's extensive work in and interactions with particular areas of urban policy produce a set of *urban women's issues*, or areas under the purview of urban governance that reflect a history of women's political activism and disproportionately influence the lives of contemporary women in urban America.[7] I include policies that address children, education, affordable housing, social welfare, and violence against women under this definition. I posit that women in modern urban politics, compared to their male counterparts, privilege this set of issues in policy making.

Urban women's issues are operationalized as including children, education, affordable housing, social welfare, and domestic violence for a variety of reasons, many of which relate to a gendered difference in the conceptualizations of social ills—in American political development and in modern times. First, 78 percent of female leaders I interviewed identified one or more of these as local women's issues (see Figure 1.1).[8] Second, these issues have a strong history of women's political activism, including women's nascent political work in the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century United States. Third, women receive the lion's share of services related to these issues. Fourth, women in the public and in political office engage in activism in these areas and value government intervention more than their male counterparts do. Fifth, these urban women's issues represent a subset of traditional women's issues—or "public concerns that impinge on the private (especially domestic) sphere of social life, and particularly those values associated with children and nurturance"[9]—but differ from women's issues traditionally handled by the state and federal governments, such as reproductive rights and pay equality.[10] Finally, these issues continue to be associated with local decision making. While the engagement of state and federal governments in these areas has certainly increased in the last century, intervention largely occurs *within and through* local agencies and governments, not through agencies entirely run by a higher level of government. For example, the Department of Housing and Urban Development administers housing aid to local housing authorities; this significantly differs
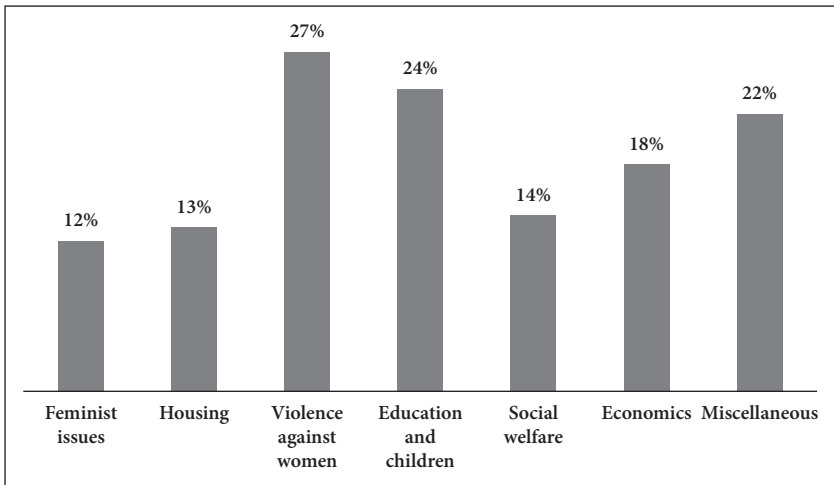
Figure 1.1   Definition of urban women's issues by female mayors and city council members. Leaders could name more than one issue, so percentages exceed 100 percent. Feminist issues include sexual discrimination and harassment, equal pay, abortion rights, and reproductive rights; housing includes affordable housing, housing costs, public housing, and renters' rights; violence against women includes rape, domestic violence, sexual assault, and intimate partner violence; education and children includes child care, summer school, foster care, PTA, school quality, and school violence; social welfare includes welfare, food stamps, WIC (the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children), homeless shelters, job training, and elderly care; economics includes jobs, job creation, wages, property development, and businesses moving to the city; miscellaneous includes cleaning up city hall, fighting corruption, cutting red tape, and eliminating bureaucracy. The data come from interviews with twenty-nine female leaders in the eight case-study cities described in Chapter 3.

from the Social Security Administration, which runs its own agencies in local areas.

I present the case for this array of urban women's issues in three discussions: a brief history of women's political development in activism in these areas in urban America, extant research on use and support of these policies by women and the representation of these policies by women in office, and policy making, particularly in these areas, in urban America. I make the case for a separate subset of *urban*

women's issues and for women in city politics to prefer, pursue, and produce policies within this arena.

For women in the United States (and around the world), gender serves as a central component of political identity. Before I proceed, it is necessary to define *gender*. For the purposes of the research here, I define *gender* as the social construction of biological sex, distinguished from sex, which is a biological marker.[11]

Women's Historical Activism in Cities

For the first several decades of U.S. history, society relegated women to the private home and hearth while men acted for themselves and their female relatives in the public political and economic spheres.[12] Eventually, widespread action, particularly in cities and for the right to vote, led to a decline in the separation between the public and private spheres and women's initial engagement in formal political processes.[13] Before women had formal access to politics, they engaged in a variety of informal activities, largely in local politics. Indeed, "voluntary, locally based moral and social reform efforts" represented the majority of women's early political activism.[14]

The concept of republican motherhood often justified political activism of women in the nineteenth century: women held responsibility for the future of the republic in raising their sons to be civic-minded citizens. From the American Revolution through the Progressive Era in the early 1900s, women began to insert themselves into political causes using "the canons of domesticity," in which women framed their public activism in terms of caring and nurturing.[15] Others conceptualize early women's activism as cloaked in Domestic Feminism, in which women employ the ideal traits of a lady—including caring for the home—to justify work in the public sphere. The notion of a "universal womanhood" cultivated by these ideas was at its core essentially class based, constructed by the growing numbers of white middle-class women, often in an attempt to either control women of the lower classes and other races or create a false sense of a single homogenous group of women; by no means did all women participate in these actions.[16] Despite the class- and race-based nature of this early

activism, republican motherhood and domestic feminism began to change social roles for wide swaths of American women.[17]

In many circumstances, women's participation in politics occurred through informal means or at the fringes of politics. Voluntary associations, lobbying organizations, and informal groups formed by women allowed political participation from the home without threatening traditional gender roles in society.[18] The work of female urban activists focused on providing services to the poor, hungry, homeless, orphaned, and needy; holding men, including public officials, to high moral standards; and reforming public institutions.[19] Women's work in these causes increased substantially through the women's club movement, first created for literary work but evolved in concern for municipal improvements ("an orgy of philanthropy") and transformed again with the Progressive movement in the early twentieth century.[20]

The women's club movement was particularly important in women's local political activism. After the Civil War, well-to-do women formed self-improvement clubs for women denied college educations. Picking up in popularity in the late 1800s, women's clubs evolved to become loci of women's volunteerism and local civic activism. By the early 1900s, most large municipal areas in the United States saw women's club activities in a wide range of areas, such as education, children, housing, welfare, and the protection of women.[21]

Women's slowly growing political activism eventually attempted to expand the boundaries of the private sphere to frame women as social, public, or "municipal housekeepers,"[22] in which a woman's city became her home, with specific responsibilities because "women's function, like charity, begins at home and then, like charity, goes everywhere."[23] As noted by Rheta Childe Dorr in her 1910 discussion of the women's club movement:

Woman's place is in the home. This is a platitude which no woman will ever dissent from, provided two words are dropped out of it. Woman's place is Home. Her task is homemaking. Her talents, as a rule, are mainly for homemaking. But Home is not contained within the four walls of an individual home. Home is the community. The city full of people is the Family. The

public school is the real Nursery. And badly do the Home and the Family and the Nursery need their mother.[24]

In the municipal housekeeping movement, "woman's duty and responsibility" became reforming the city where she lived because "the home is but a reflection in miniature of the broader departments of the municipality and the world beyond."[25] Women's work on urban problems also expanded with the settlement house movement, championed by Jane Addams, in which women worked to solve problems in cities *and* address the underlying causes of urban poverty. Because of the Progressive Era, the work of settlement houses eventually led to the first professional social workers.[26]

   I concentrate on five areas—children, education, affordable housing, social welfare, and domestic violence—of women's work toward alleviating social ills in cities. I trace women's initial activism in these five areas (as opposed to others) for a variety of reasons: First, these issues persist today as problems or concerns for urban government. For example, a substantial amount of women's political activism in the early 1900s involved the campaign for Prohibition. As this campaign is no longer politically relevant, I do not detail the work here or include alcohol regulation in urban women's issues but instead focus on political areas that still produce substantial activism.[27] Second, urban governments continue to address these issues today, as opposed to those, such as prison reform, that migrated to state and federal control. For instance, women fought vigorously in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries for pure food and milk controls, which the federal government today almost exclusively handles.[28] Third, these urban women's issues initially activated women's political participation in the United States, contributed to early feminist movements, added to women's engagement in suffrage work, and represented specific areas of women's awareness. They represent areas in which women expressed concern and mobilized early on in American history—and men largely did not. The need to address them became particularly important to women in urban areas as social problems mushroomed at the speed of the nation's industrialization.[29]

Children and education: American women's activism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on children and education

produced substantial changes in social services and urban education systems, particularly for girls and white children. The maternalists, who argued that women's capacity as mothers extended to an ability to care for society as a whole, made children's welfare a priority and worked through a variety of avenues to improve the lives of women.[30] Girls' education, particularly in trade schools, provided an avenue for women's initial activism in the nineteenth century.[31] Education and children's services were particularly important in urban areas because of influxes of immigrants to cities, the poor state of urban schools (despite "municipal liberty" in school funding), and the unmet need for other children's services like orphanages, Sunday schools, and disease prevention.[32] Urban women's reformers also linked education reform and the protection of children to welfare services: "If [children] were allowed to go to school they would at least be assured of a hot luncheon and the services of the school nurse and doctor."[33]

Through the women's club movement, female urban activists reformed public education by establishing libraries, raising funds to build schools, providing schools (particularly trade schools) for girls, developing home economics courses, and electing women to school boards. Indeed, women ran for school board positions and managed schools well before women won the right to vote. Eventually, pressure from female crusaders and others led to the introduction of compulsory education laws in local areas and states and freely available public education.[34] Women's activism in education produced fundamental changes in the provision of education, views of children as members of society, and the responsibility of urban governments to provide for the needs of young citizens.

Welfare and the elimination of poverty: Early women's activism in the United States focused on benevolent causes, particularly through religious organizations and motivations. The early era of charitable action (which stood out to Alexis de Tocqueville in 1832) often employed a "rhetoric of female benevolence" that encouraged donations to the poor, work for orphans, and other welfare-related activities.[35] The maternalist movement also focused on welfare provision and poverty, particularly among children and mothers. Associations of women provided charity work, often in the form of raw goods (food, tea, or blankets), small amounts of money, spiritual advice, and Bibles.

Later, women's clubs and the municipal housekeeping movement engaged in welfare programs, often arguing for women's particular skill at serving others and "developing the welfare of humanity which man cannot perform."[36] By the early 1900s, women's activism intensified the focus on welfare issues "for the benefit of the poor and the betterment of the city."[37] Women's work on social welfare led to the eventual transformation of American welfare policy at the local, state, and national levels, with women successfully arguing that the government had a responsibility to provide a safety net for the most vulnerable in society.[38] Indeed, by the end of the Progressive Era, "social policy—formerly the province of women's voluntary work—became public policy."[39]

Housing: Problems with housing often attracted women's activism when women identified them as a source for many of the other problems of a city; "to swat disease [women] must swat poor housing."[40] Women's benevolent societies and clubs, settlement houses, and other organizations became actively involved in early work on the regulation of housing for the poor in American cities. Women engaged in a variety of housing-related actions: from lobbying for building codes, regulation of tenement housing, and provision of housing to sending workers to "investigate insanitary conditions of maintenance in tenement houses, and to secure improvements in conditions."[41] Women also often went to the poor to provide services to those in need.[42] Popular accounts of the poor conditions of tenements and urban housing, such as Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives*, inspired women to investigate slums in their hometowns and act on what they found by, for example, instituting housing ordinances.[43] The settlement house movement, largely located in urban slums, exposed the middle- and upper-class residents of the settlement houses to the problems of the urban poor and elevated women's efforts on reforming municipal housing codes and changing urban housing policy. The resulting changes in housing codes combined with rising costs of building materials in the early 1900s to encourage the construction of multiple-unit structures in inner cities, thus dramatically changing the landscape of cities across the country.[44]

Domestic violence, violence against women, and sexual slavery: Early women's activism on violence against women focused on prostitution

and sexual slavery, warning young women moving to cities of the temptation and danger of sexuality, with a particular emphasis on the dangers of white slavery, or kidnappings associated with sex trade in cities in the late 1800s.[45] Addams and other contemporaries connected prostitution and sexual slavery to welfare, housing, and class-based characteristics, arguing that prostitution afflicted the poor more heavily than other classes: "The little girls brought into the juvenile court are usually daughters of those poorest immigrant families living in the worst type of city tenement."[46] Evidence of concern about sexual slavery—and women's sexuality as wrong and needing control or camouflage—emerged in the homes for unwed mothers found in many cities. Much of the rhetoric of reformers focused on women's shared experiences as an argument for the protection of women against the perils of sexual slavery and prostitution.[47]

Significantly later, women's activism in American cities again focused on the entrapment of women—this time in abusive marriages. For much of American history, society and government viewed domestic violence, spousal abuse, and intimate partner violence as outside the traditional realm of political action.[48] In 1871, an American court first recognized that husbands do not have a right to abuse their wives physically in *Fulgham v. State*.[49] However, the criminalization of wife battering did not provide women with recourse against abusive husbands until the early 1970s, with the second wave of feminism. Female activists raised public awareness of domestic violence, established shelters and services for victims, and made demands on political actors—starting with local governments—to address the violence.[50] Women sued their local cities for failing to protect them from spousal abuse.[51] These cases and pressure from women's groups contributed to widespread policy changes at the local level.[52]

In each of these areas of reform, women's early activism produced two profound changes: First, women became politically aware and active and to some extent accepted as political beings because of their work in these areas. In this respect, Mary Beard and contemporaries argued for a political place for women precisely because women had demonstrated their ability to reform municipal institutions. Women's work deserved attention "in the hope that more men [would] realize that women have contributions of value to make to public welfare in all its forms and phases, and come to regard the entrance of women

into public life with confidence and cordiality."[53] The second change involved urban governments: as women became active in education, children's welfare, social welfare, housing, and violence against women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they began to recognize the limits of charity and private work. As women agitated for not just addressing poverty in urban politics but *solving* it, they passed their work on to local government.[54] In many circumstances, ability of women to localize problems meant that the solutions produced by women, "an impressive array of social services and legislative reforms, became a permanent part of what Americans expected from their governments," leading to profound changes for urban governments.[55]

Gender and Attitudes about Women's Urban Issues

Women's activism shaped policy making in education, children, housing, social welfare, and violence against women, and women continue to make these policy areas a priority. In the modern era, women in the general population express high levels of support for government action in these areas and typically support social services more than men do.[56] Generally, the effect of gender on public attitudes is similar to the effect of race or income—that is, a person's gender significantly influences how that person views policies and appropriate government action.[57] Women's support for social welfare programs and government action toward eliminating poverty is evident over time.[58] Table 1.1 displays gender differences in attitudes toward government assistance, social politics, and welfare recipients from 1982 to 2008, using data from the American National Elections Studies.

Women support government assurance of jobs and spending on welfare services at a higher level than men do; similarly, women's attitudes about people on welfare are more positive than those of their male counterparts.[59] Gender differences also appear in other urban women's issue areas, including education, domestic violence, and housing. Men are more willing to cut education spending and less likely to support federal funds going to infrastructure projects, including schools.[60] Women are less likely to blame victims of domestic violence and more likely to believe that government intervention is necessary to address domestic violence.[61] Gender differences also

emerge in support for affordable housing: for example, in a Rhode Island survey, 61 percent of women versus 46 percent of men said that the cost of housing was a very or fairly big problem; men and women surveyed in Oregon revealed similar gaps in support for government action in housing.[62]

Gender differences in attitudes also persist when it comes to evaluations of local government action; women express more concern with local social policies (like welfare and crime) and less concern with local economic policies like development.[63] For example, in a study of Lawrence, Kansas, compared with the men, more women opposed large-scale development and supported social service provision by the local government.[64] Women demonstrate an increased willingness to pay for public services relating to social welfare, such as services for the poor and elderly and job training and placement services.[65] The gender differences persist when examining recent data. The second section in Table 1.1 presents gender differences on three questions about support for taxes for health care, schools, and protecting the environment that were in the Kinder Houston Area Survey, which surveys Houston, Texas, residents about a variety of issues, with women supporting local action in women's issue areas but not other areas.[66]

Gender and the Use of Women's Urban Policies

Women often transformed policy making on education, children, affordable housing, social welfare, and violence against women because of the disproportional impact of these services on women, and these services continue to disproportionally serve women today. Women in the United States receive a larger share of services directed at children and the poor, an indication of what scholars have called a "feminization of poverty."[67] Women live in poverty at higher rates; qualify for and receive welfare benefits, food stamps, public housing, and income assistance more frequently; and are much more likely to be struggling single parents.[68]

Women also interact with these services as employees of and service providers to them. As the primary caretakers of children, women seek jobs with flexibility or take time off work to care for children and the elderly, which influences their earning power and employability.

TABLE 1.1   ATTITUDES TOWARD SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELFARE AND THEIR FUNDING, BY GENDER

Attitudes toward social services and welfare

	Government should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living (1–7 scale, with higher values indicating more agreement)			Government should provide more/fewer services (1–7 scale, with higher values indicating support for more services)			Feelings about people on welfare (0–50 = unfavorable; 50–100 = favorable)		
	Men	Women	Difference	Men	Women	Difference	Men	Women	Difference
1982	3.58	3.94	0.36*	2.5	2.9	0.49*	—	—	—
1984	3.78	4.15	0.37*	2.8	3.1	0.27	50.7	54.3	3.58*
1986	4.24	4.55	0.32	4.7	5.0	0.24	48.1	50.1	1.94*
1988	3.93	4.29	0.36*	2.5	2.8	0.28	49.6	50.1	0.52
1990	4.09	4.57	0.47*	2.7	3.1	0.43*	48.7	51.6	2.92*
1992	3.88	4.32	0.44*	2.5	2.9	0.44*	49.6	52.1	2.58*
1994	3.38	3.92	0.54*	2.4	3.0	0.55*	44.0	46.7	2.75*
1996	3.67	4.07	0.40*	2.3	2.8	0.50*	50.0	51.9	1.96*
1998	3.99	4.46	0.47*	2.7	3.1	0.39*	—	—	—
2000	2.19	2.34	0.16	4.4	4.7	0.29	50.1	53.1	2.98*
2002	—	—	—	—	—	—	51.9	53.8	1.91
2004	4.32	4.69	0.37*	2.6	3.0	0.37*	53.7	57.6	3.91*
2008	1.97	2.19	0.22	5.0	5.3	0.32*	54.5	58.1	3.61*

Attitudes toward municipal funding

	Percentage "willing to pay higher taxes to improve access to quality health care in the Houston area"	Percentage supporting "raising taxes to make major improvements in the Houston area's quality of life, such as pollution control and park improvements"	Percentage supporting "raising taxes to set aside and protect wetlands, forests, and prairies throughout the Houston area"
Male	47	64	61
Female	52*	55*	57*

Social service use and poverty status

	Male	Female
Children and education		
Percentage of single heads of household with own children under eighteen	6.4	23.5
Percentage of workers employed in educational services	31.5	68.5
Affordable housing		
Percentage of public housing residents	25	75
Owner occupancy percentage, family household, no spouse present	56.9	48.6
Social welfare		
Percentage with income in the past twelve months below poverty level	13.9	16.7
Percentage with income in the past twelve months less than 50% of poverty level	5.2	6.4
Poverty percentage for single heads of household with own children under eighteen	35.1	59.4
Median income for single heads of household with own children under eighteen	$41,441	$29,811
Percentage of Medicaid-eligible recipients	40.7	59.3
Percentage of SNAP participants	43.6	56.4
Domestic violence		
Percentage of victims of domestic violence (1994)	15	85
Percentage of population physically assaulted by a current or former partner in their lifetime	7.4	22.1
Rate experiencing intimate partner violence per 1,000 persons age twelve or older (2010)	1.1	5.9

Note: Data on attitudes about social services come from American National Election Studies, *The ANES Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior.* Data on attitudes about municipal funding come from Klineberg, *Kinder Houston Area Survey, 1982–2010.* Data on social service use and poverty status come from U.S. Census Bureau, "Own Children under 18 Years by Family Type and Age," 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, "Select Population Profile in the United States," 2010; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Picture of Subsidized Households for 2009"; U.S. Census Bureau, "Homeownership Rates by Age of Householder and Household Type," 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, "Industry by Sex," 2011; Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, "Medicaid Eligibles Demographics, Selected Fiscal Years," 2010; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, "Gender and SNAP Benefits of Participants by Selected Demographic Characteristic," 2010; Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Intimate Partner Violence, 1993–2010."

* $p < 0.05$, difference of means tests.

This combines with downstream effects from inequality and continued discrimination to generate "a workforce divided by sex."[69] Women also hold the majority of jobs in education and social services.[70] The final section in Table 1.1 presents data on participation by gender in services for children and education, affordable housing, social welfare, and domestic violence. Generally, the data demonstrate that women, compared to men, are more likely to work in and rely on urban women's issue policies. Because cities make policies in these areas, local governments are actively involved in the perpetuation of particular gender roles and women's entanglement with women's urban issues.[71]

Gender and Political Representation

Why might the election of women to local office matter in the production of policies regarding women's urban issues? Generally, the election of women to local office presents two opportunities to produce change: First, female leaders support policies that women prefer or that help women in their community. This *substantive representation* involves female leaders acting for women. Second, women serve as simple *descriptive representatives* by looking like women and thus providing symbolic value by legitimizing the political process and the governing institution.[72] A significant body of research on the connection between descriptive, substantive, and symbolic representation for women generally finds that "women in office do make a difference" by representing women's interests and providing symbolic value.[73] In particular, gender differences consistently emerge in leaders' preference of issues relating to women's interest.

Gender differences in concern about welfare, children, and the family emerge in political representation behavior. Women in a wide variety of political offices care about, promote, and pass legislation relating to family, children, education, and social welfare at higher rates than their male counterparts. The public often applies gender stereotypes to women in office, such as assuming them to be more caring, more competent on compassion issues like health care and education, and more liberal, further demonstrating the association of women in office with caregiving, compassion, and social welfare.[74]

Scholarship on gender differences at the local level has examined policy attitudes and policy outcomes, often finding conflicting evidence as to whether women in local office are different from their male counterparts in attitudes or actions.[75] All city leaders, regardless of their gender, "cite taxes and development as the most important issues in the community."[76] Many of these studies suggest that women entering local office are not fundamentally different in their attitudes from their male counterparts.

Looking at women in local office and their influence on policy outcomes, the limited existing scholarship finds occasional significant relationships between the gender of local officials and policy outcomes.[77] The presence of a female mayor increases female municipal employment and increases use of Community Development Block Grants for public service.[78] Women in local office in India tend to pursue policies of interest to women living in their villages, and female councilors in Norway positively influence the level of municipal day care provided, with more success when women reach 30 percent of the local council. Similarly, municipalities with 30 percent representation by women established gender-equity committees in Norway.[79] Generally, the effects of gender on local policy appear strongest in areas that directly benefit women in their community.

At the same time, investigations of the experiences of women in local office often find that the existing power structure subjugates women's preferences. In attempting to expand affordable housing, women in local office "find norms are firmly entrenched and local agendas are mostly fixed. Budgets are presented to them, zoning laws are in place, and priorities are already established" and the local policy process seems to represent the interests of men, even with the presence of female leaders.[80]

Representation in Urban Politics

Scholarship on urban politics identifies several reasons why women's representation would *not* matter in urban politics. First, the lack of both authority and control over the movement of people, jobs, and money from city to city means that cities give preference to economic development policies over any form of redistribution. Second, because

of these restrictions, cities often collaborate with private actors like businesses to pursue policies, which again gives preference to economic development issues. Third, substantial evidence suggests that efforts to produce policies that conflict with the governing structure often fail, meaning that representatives who do not pursue economic development are stymied in their attempts at other policies. Fourth, although groups of citizens have the potential to influence change in local politics, it is unclear whether they are successful. Furthermore, the diffuse nature of women's residential patterns—that is, that women do not live in a particular area of a city—means that the representation of women's interests is fundamentally different from that of other groups. These four factors suggest that women's interests—not traditionally aligned with economic development—will be subjugated in urban politics.

Urban leaders govern in highly restricted environments. Local and city governments lack autonomy because they are controlled by either Dillon's Rule or Home Rule and because of the constraints put on them by their state and the federal government.[81] Adding to this, cities face significant financial, functional, administrative, and structural limitations, which restrict their ability to do what they want, when they want.[82] Scholars of fiscal federalism also argue that the inability of cities to control the movement of people, jobs, or capital across urban areas requires that city governments focus on specific types of policy making.[83] Because residents can move from one city to another for very little cost, cities have a strong incentive to tailor policies to fit local demand.[84] In particular, the ability of businesses and higher-income residents to choose to move to other locations results in city governments giving preference to the concerns of specific classes of individuals. In addition, local governments are often largely fiscally self-responsible, relying heavily on local taxes for funding.[85] These constraints lead to cities prioritizing the needs of businesses and wealthy residents through bowing to the interests of growth machines, forming coalitions for governing with private actors, and ignoring the concerns of lower-income residents.[86]

Across various types of city governments, in diverse communities and under a variety of mandates from state and federal governments, cities consistently focus on growth (through business attraction and

job creation) and basic service provision (such as garbage pickup or street maintenance) and spend less time and money on welfare and redistribution.[87] Paul Peterson and other scholars of urban politics see this as good and caution that cities should avoid pursuing and funding redistributive policies, because the tax rate for higher-income residents and businesses could drive them from the city, creating a downward spiral of demand for welfare services, provision of these services, and exit by higher-income residents.[88] In his work on city policy making, Peterson argues that cities should favor policies that produce more marginal benefits than marginal costs for the average taxpayer, or what Peterson refers to as *developmental policies*. On the other hand, Peterson sees *redistributional policies*, or those with a smaller marginal benefit than marginal cost for the average taxpayer, as bad for the city, because they drive up the tax rate and result in wealthier residents leaving the city. The fiscal federalism stance, as articulated by Peterson and others, is that the funding of social welfare programs is bad for business, and cities should shy away from redistributional activities. Indeed, history has shown that urban leaders who choose to fund such programs often suffer elector consequences, and their cities suffer economic downturns.[89] However, others find Peterson's ideas and fiscal federalism overly simplistic and far too tied to the idea that rational actors govern cities by simply exercising market decisions when making choices about urban policy.[90]

The constraints on cities, particularly from fiscal restrictions, lead to partnerships between local governments and nongovernmental actors, connecting the "popular control of government and the private control of economic resources."[91] The informal arrangement of public and private actors focuses on the production of a public policy agenda that benefits the members of the regime. As a result, urban policy making often reflects the needs and desires of the public and private members of the governing regime.

The private actors in urban regimes can take many forms, but the involvement of the business community is necessary (but not always sufficient) for a successful regime because "business and the resources they control are too important for the enterprises to be left out completely."[92] Yet despite the scholarly focus on the private actors in regimes, public offices continue to play important roles in urban policy

making, and the representation of the interests of particular groups often influences policy.[93]

The ability of representatives to produce policies that conflict with the governing structure often fails, particularly at the local level. While some scholars find that electing racial minorities to office can promote substantial policy change, others find that expectations of constituents and precedents set by previous mayors cripple the ability of mayors from minority coalitions to change policy.[94] Other scholars suggest there is a consistent and systemic bias against those seeking outcomes that conflict with the goals of the regime, expand the universe of policies offered, or provide substantial redistributional benefits.[95] Yet female leaders are able to change policy discussions and policy outcomes in urban politics across the United States; one principal reason for the success of female leaders lies in their ability to harness the power of groups in their cities.

Neighborhood and community groups, local organizations, coalitions of voters, minority groups, and business associations all perform a variety of functions for local governments that then lead to the representation of the interests of those groups. While Peterson calls city politics "groupless politics" and many studies of group action find little evidence of the influence of neighborhood groups on city governance, others find that community groups represent diverse interests and serve as a conduit to bring attention of city leaders to the needs of the city.[96] Group action serves a particularly important role in the representation of women's issues in urban politics. Local women's organizations have often been responsible for the representation of women's issues at the local level; for example, the presence (or absence) of women's groups is associated with policy making on domestic and sexual violence.[97] Other research suggests that community groups are particularly successful in using unconventional channels and resources to influence urban politics but that the success of these groups depends on connections to formal representation, the local context, and the resources that the groups can provide to local decision makers.[98]

Extensive research on groups in urban politics demonstrates that they have the *potential* to influence policy but that true incorporation requires connections between formal and informal representation,

particularly for marginalized groups. Rufus Browning, Dale Marshall, and David Tabb argue that the representation of the interests of racial minorities requires the formation of active electoral coalitions, success in electoral representation, and membership in liberal governing coalitions.[99] Once minorities meet these formal and informal conditions, descriptive representation and informal action by minorities produce changes in urban government and the representation of minority interests. But what does this mean for women in office?

Local leaders, regardless of where they serve, face roughly equal numbers of men and women in their constituencies. The dispersion of women and men through the population makes the representation of women's interests systematically different from that of many other social groups.[100] In cities, the traditional evaluation of the representation of social groups has focused on racial and ethnic groups or classes of workers, but there is no women's equivalent of a ward of African American or Hispanic voters or neighborhoods of blue-collar workers. In general, the lack of women's segregation in the population suggests that male and female representatives would have equal incentives to represent women's interests. Yet my research demonstrates that women in local office are more interested than men in representing women and women's urban interests and are particularly receptive to demands from women's issue organizations, groups of women, and citizens representing women's urban issues.