

# **Women cabinet ministers in highly visible posts and empowerment of women: Are the two related?**

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**Women cabinet ministers in highly visible posts and empowerment of women: Are the two related?**

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*“Women in public office stand as symbols for other women, both enhancing their identification with the system and their ability to have influence within it” (Burrell 1996: 151)*

Burrell, writing 20 years ago, contended that this positive payoff of having female role models in government “makes the election of women to public office important because, for so many years, they were excluded from power” (p.151). In this chapter we explore whether the appointment of women to top posts in the executive branch may have more of a positive influence on levels of satisfaction and confidence with the government and beliefs of women’s ability to govern than the election of women to the legislature. Whereas previous research studying women’s elite inclusion and authority has focused primarily on women’s access to national legislatures and cabinet posts more generally (Alexander, Bolzendahl, and Jalalzai 2016), we contribute to the study of women’s political empowerment by evaluating women’s access to the most powerful and prestigious cabinet posts.

If symbolic representation of women in government is expected to empower women outside of government, we predict that symbolic representation in the form of women holding top posts – high visibility, high prestige posts, and in particular posts that appear to be some of those with the thickest glass ceiling for women – will be associated with increases in beliefs that women can and should govern. In addition, as representation of women in government becomes more visible, because women hold high ranking, high prestige, traditionally masculine posts in

the cabinet, this means that government projects an image of more diversity, and broader inclusion about who can govern. We predict that this broader inclusion in high profile posts will be associated with greater satisfaction with government, particularly on the part of female citizens. We explore these questions using survey data including countries from around the world, and by examining similar attitude measures to those used in previous studies, to learn whether a woman holding a high profile cabinet post near the time of the survey influences attitudes and in particular attitudes that indicate empowerment of women.

Exploring whether the presence of women in top cabinet posts influences women's political empowerment as citizens is important for several reasons. First, representation of women in cabinets is increasing in many countries, though the expansion is still concentrated in stereotypically feminine policy areas (see Taylor-Robinson and Gleitz 2016). Women holding full cabinet-rank posts is important because cabinet ministers often control budgets and direct bureaucracies that are charged with implementing policies (policies that often impact women), and they often are a driving force in making policy. In contrast, in many countries the legislature, and particularly backbenchers in the legislature receive far less attention from the mass public and often play a reactive role, if not a passive role, in policy making (Cox and Morgenstern 2001). But beyond appointment of more women to any cabinet posts, appointment of women to high prestige cabinet posts, may be more likely to be noticed by the public (Morgan and Buice 2013: 647; Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2016). Morgan and Buice (2013: 656) write, "Because cabinet ministers have national platforms and broader influence, appointing a female minister is a stronger elite cue than nominating women to run for legislative office, and a female minister's national stage enhances her ability to set a visible example, providing an opportunity to promote acceptance of women in leadership." We expect the symbolic effects of women in

elite political posts on women's political empowerment as citizens to be even more likely when women are appointed to the most high prestige or inner circle cabinet posts.<sup>1</sup> Appointment of women to high prestige cabinet posts, while still rare, is becoming more common. Female presidents and prime ministers are the most high profile female government officials, but with only one such post in a country it is still very rare that women are the chief executives. Although the importance of cabinet portfolios varies across countries,<sup>2</sup> identifying portfolios which are recognized as important and prestigious in most countries and on a global scale affords an opportunity to explore if a woman in a very prestigious and high-profile government post is related to empowered attitudes for women in that country.

#### Women in cabinets – how many and in what posts

Representation of women at top levels of the executive branch is expanding, but the expansion has been slow. It was a big step to move from zero women holding full cabinet rank posts to a norm that the cabinet should contain one woman, as for example, Borrelli (2010) refers to there being a “woman's seat” in the U.S. cabinet. Adoption of a norm that at least one woman is required has occurred at different times in different countries and parts of the world – for example, in the 1940s and 50s in Scandinavian countries (Skard and Haavio-Mannila 1985: 78), but not until the late 1990s in Latin American countries (and then not in all countries) (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2005: 840; Luna et al. 2008; Barnes and Jones 2011: 108).

Cabinet posts are a limited resource, and many male politicians want those jobs (Lovenduski

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<sup>1</sup> Inner circle cabinet posts is a term used in U.S. politics to refer to the Defense, Finance, State, and Attorney General posts (Fenno 1959, Cronin 1975; Weisberg 1987; Wyszomirski 1989). Dogan (1989) also uses the term in regard to concentric circles of degrees of importance of cabinet posts in European governments.

<sup>2</sup> The defense portfolio, for example, is more important in some countries than in others (Barnes and O'Brien forthcoming; Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2016). Thus including a general measure of top cabinet posts that we apply to all countries, rather than a country specific definition, biases our results toward the null—making it more difficult to find support for our hypotheses.

1986: 3). Even in Scandinavia where substantial incorporation of women into the top levels of government began decades ago, scarcity of posts is still considered to be an obstacle women face for obtaining highly desirable cabinet seats (Leyenaar 2014: 13-14). Yet there are exceptions. A few presidents and prime ministers have named gender parity cabinets, defined as cabinets where women and men hold equal numbers of full cabinet rank posts. More than ten years have past, for example, since the first gender parity cabinets in Latin America—i.e., President Michelle Bachelet’s cabinet in Chile and President Daniel Ortega’s cabinet in Nicaragua. Most recently Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced a gender parity cabinet (a cabinet that also reflected many other aspects of diversity in his country) when he took office in November of 2015. Other cases of gender parity cabinets have been seen in recent years in Bolivia (with the cabinet also reflecting ethnic diversity), Cape Verde, Chile, Finland, France, Grenade, Iceland, Nicaragua, Norway, Spain, and Sweden (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2005, 2014).

In addition to women’s small numbers in full cabinet-rank posts, women are still typically seen in policy areas that are consistent with societal expectations about “appropriate” policy domains for women: policy areas related to hearth and home and care (Krook and O’Brien 2012; O’Brien et al. 2016). By contrast women remain largely excluded from more masculine arenas such as defense (Barnes and O’Brien forthcoming). According to a compilation of women ministers by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, as of January 2014 for 189 countries, women most commonly held social affairs portfolios (105 of 1096 portfolios), followed by 82 women in the family/children/youth/elderly portfolio, 78 women holding the environment/natural resources

portfolio, 71 in the women's affairs/gender equality portfolio, and 69 women holding the education portfolio.<sup>3</sup>

Yet again there are exceptions, as some women have held high prestige posts in the inner cabinet that fit masculine stereotypes for policy domains: defense, finance, foreign relations (Barnes and O'Brien forthcoming; Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2016). Thus, in this section, we explore women's political empowerment as elite actors (Alexander, Bolzendahl, and Jalalzai 2016) by examining women's access to the most powerful cabinet posts. Figure 1 shows the number of women ministers in these three high prestige posts aggregated by decade for each region of the world.<sup>4</sup> These figures clearly indicate that appointment of women to these top posts is not the norm, but women's access to these posts has increased substantially over time. To begin with, prior to 1980 only 12 women were appointed to the foreign affairs ministry, four to finance, and three to defense. Even in the 1980s women remained largely excluded from the inner circle—occupying only seven foreign affairs portfolios, 12 finance portfolios, and two defense portfolios across the globe. The following two decades, women's access to the finance ministry increased more than fourfold, and women's appointments to foreign affairs and defense posts increased more than six fold and twelve fold, respectively. Although these appointments are still far from routine, as of 2016, almost 200 women had been appointed to the foreign affairs ministry, and 131 women were appointed to the finance ministry. Women's access to the defense portfolio lags much further behind—with only 82 women having ever been appointed to this male-dominated bastion. As of today, women have held these important posts in every region of

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<sup>3</sup> The health portfolio was held by 56 women, the same number of women has held the culture portfolio. More women held the labor portfolio (60) and the trade/industry (64) portfolio ("Women in Politics: 2014, situation as of January 2014, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Female appointments to these posts are based on data in the Guide 2 Women Leaders database (<http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/women> accessed January 30, 2016). We do not include temporary appointments. These data go back to 1929.

the world, except for the defense portfolio. Women remain excluded from the defense ministry in the Middle East.

< FIGURE 10.1 ABOUT HERE >

To further illustrate this trend, Figure 2 maps the appointment of women to these three prestigious posts across the globe. Figure 2 indicates that not only is the overall number of appointments to the foreign affairs ministry higher, but also, more countries have appointed women to the foreign affairs ministry, than to the finance or defense ministries posts. Moreover, there is huge geographical variation in women's access to the inner circle. Whereas leaders in some countries have never appointed a woman to any of these prestigious posts (e.g., numerous countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and the Middle East), leaders in other countries have appointed women to all three of these posts (e.g., multiple countries in South America, Western Europe, and Scandinavia). Further, whereas women remain completely excluded from these powerful portfolios in some countries, in other countries, women have been repeatedly appointed to these positions of power. For example, six different women have held the foreign affairs portfolio in Sweden, five women have held the finance portfolio in Moldova, and six women have held the defense portfolio in Norway.

< FIGURE 10.2 ABOUT HERE >

In this chapter we explore women's political empowerment in the cabinet, as well as the impact of this representation on women in society, using a select set of high profile, typically masculinized portfolios as our lens. We focus on women holding defense, finance, or foreign policy portfolios because those posts are commonly part of the "inner circle" of cabinets (Dogan 1989).

The ministers who hold these posts represent their country in important international arenas, and these posts are often used by presidents and prime ministers to signal the policy tenor of their government (e.g., hawkish or dovish, a move toward or away from neoliberal economic policy). The defense ministry often oversees a large budget and personnel (Barnes and O'Brien forthcoming). The finance minister often has to approve policy initiatives by other ministers that require allocation of budget monies. The foreign minister is the global representative of the country.<sup>5</sup> The literature about the U.S. cabinet views these three posts, along with Attorney General, as the inner cabinet and describes the people who hold these posts as the close advisors of the president, while other cabinet secretaries often are viewed as quite distant from the president, or may be appointed to “buffer” the president from constituencies who are unlikely to receive policy benefits during the administration (Fenno 1959; Cronin 1975; Weisberg 1987; Wyszomirski 1989; Borrelli 2002). As such, these high prestige posts should be posts that male politicians desire, and thus should be particularly challenging for women to obtain, which makes the appointment of a woman to one of these posts a newsworthy event – and one particularly to attract extensive media attention, which, while putting performance pressure on the new woman to hold the post should also increase the likelihood that people in the country are aware that women (actually a woman) is being placed in a very high ranking, and likely unusual post, which is the mechanism that we expect to empower women in the country.<sup>6</sup> For example, the media paid particular attention when Spain’s President Zapatero appointed a woman minister of defense in 2008 and she was photographed inspecting the troops during an advanced stage of her

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<sup>5</sup> As another signal of the post’s importance, in the United States the Secretary of State is in-line to fill the presidency.

<sup>6</sup> It is important to clarify that the importance of the defense post is contested in comparative politics research. Scholars who study politics in Scandinavian countries, with their emphasis on social welfare politics, explain that the defense post is not a prime way to advance a politician’s career, while social welfare posts are good for career advancement (Skjeie 1991). In European parliamentary systems surveys of elites have been used to determine the prestige of various cabinet posts (see Druckman and Warwick 2005; Druckman and Roberts 2008).

pregnancy. Thus we focus on these high prestige cabinet posts because they appear to still constitute a glass ceiling for women – rather like the top post of president or prime minister (Jalalzai 2008; Jalalzai and Krook 2010). As such, we want to explore if there is a particularly strong symbolic representation effect when a woman is appointed to such a post, and whether such appointments are associated with higher levels of satisfaction with and trust in government by women, or by increased acceptance in society of the capacity of women to govern and be viewed as political leaders.

#### Expectations about representation of women in government and women's empowerment

One of the outcomes anticipated from increased descriptive representation of women in government is that women and girls will perceive themselves to be politically empowered (Philips 1995; Mansbridge 1999; Dovi 2002). As Paxton and Hughes (2007: 3) wrote, descriptive representation “symbolizes who is legitimated to make decisions in society.” Barnes and Burchard (2013: 770) explain that descriptive representation of women in government “actuates symbolic representation by sending a signal to the so-called ‘described’ that the political arena represents them and is receptive to their part ... the inclusion of women in politics at an elite level sends messages to women that politics is a woman’s game too (Burns et al., 2001; Carroll, 1994; Reingold, 2000).” Thus, an expectation is that women’s access to elected and appointed posts will foster higher levels of satisfaction with and confidence in government, particularly among women. But will this symbolic effect be actuated if citizens are not aware that women hold government posts?

Another way that inclusion of women in government may be related to empowerment of women in society is by changing attitudes about the capacity of women to govern. Throughout

history leaders, especially political leaders, and even more so military leaders, have been men, and leadership is viewed as a masculine trait. Based on role congruity theory from psychology, people are expected to give more positive evaluations to leaders, or potential leaders, who fit their stereotypes about the leader role.<sup>7</sup> Historically that has meant that people have only thought of men as leaders. But attitudes can change, particularly through exposure to women in leadership posts (Eagly and Karau 2002; Koenig et al. 2011). While the first women to hold leadership posts may be viewed as odd, incongruous, or ill-fit for the job (see Mansbridge 1999: 648-9), with exposure to more women in government, and in particular to women in high profile posts, people may also come to view women as capable leaders (Diekman et al. 2004; Sczesny et al. 2004; Beaman et al. 2009; Eagly and Sczesny 2009; Koenig et al. 2011; Alexander 2012; Kerevel and Atkeson 2015). Thus, a second expectation is that when people can observe women in high ranking posts they will become more confident that women can be leaders and that both women and men can govern. This chapter is predicated on the assumption that when women hold the very top posts in the cabinet citizens will be more likely to be aware of their appointment, and thus it is likely that the presence of those women in government will empower women, even if women holding other, lower profile posts is not associated with a boost in confidence about government or change in opinions about who can govern.

As Schwindt-Bayer (2010: 155) wrote, “women’s representation may affect the way citizens, both men and women, feel about their democracies.” Satisfaction with the democratic regime may increase because seeing women in government sends the signal that the “government values representation and the participation of diverse groups” (p.165). Schwindt-

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<sup>7</sup> An extensive literature explores traits associated with masculine and feminine, as well as traits associated with leadership. See for example, Alexander and Andersen 1993; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a, 1993b, Fridkin Kahn 1994; Heilman 2001; Sanbonmatsu 2002; Lawless 2004b; Banwart 2010; Dolan 2010; Schneider and Bos 2014; Dittmar 2015.

Bayer (2010: Chapter 7) tests this expectation in Latin American countries with the percentage of women in the legislature as the measure of women's presence in government. She finds that both men and women have greater satisfaction with government and greater trust in the legislature as women hold more seats in the legislature, though interestingly there is no impact on trust in the government overall. Karp and Banducci (2008) also examined whether increased representation of women in the legislature has a positive effect on attitudes, examining 35 countries from 2001-06 with Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) data. They too found that more women in the legislature are associated with both men and women being more satisfied with the way government works (p.112). Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler (2005) examined an "integrated model of representation" to study the combined impact of formal, descriptive, and substantive representation. To study how these different aspects of representation influence attitudes they used World Values Survey (WVS) data from the 1995-97 wave of surveys conducted in 31 countries, looking at confidence in the legislature. Their initial finding was that increased descriptive representation of women in the legislature is not significantly related to women's confidence in the legislature (pp.420-21). However, they think that could be because women's representation needs to pass some numeric threshold and further analysis supported that explanation. Zetterberg (2009) examined the impact of gender quotas on women's trust in politicians and in the legislature, looking at Latin American countries. His study found no significant relationship between having a gender quota and the trust female citizens express in their politicians or political parties (p.723).

The impact of representation of women in the legislature on attitudes has also been studied in the US. Lawless (2004a), using National Election Study (NES) data from 1980-98, and controlling for party congruence between the representative and the constituent, found "little

evidence of the independent symbolic effect scholars typically ascribe to women's presence in Congress" (p.82). Dolan (2006), also using NES data but from 1990-2004, controlling for the party of the candidate and the competitiveness of the election, found only "a limited effect" for "presence of a woman candidate" on the respondent's sense of political efficacy (p.695).

Atkeson and Carillo (2007), also using NES data (1988-98), examined if women's attitudes about government responsiveness are effected by representation of women in the state legislature and/or by the presence of a female governor. They found the effect on attitudes is positive. More women in the state legislature is associated with women viewing government as responsive (p.92). A woman governor is associated with both women and men viewing government as responsive (p.90).

Alexander (2012) examined whether there is a relationship between change in the percentage of women in the legislature and change in attitudes about the ability of women to govern (also see Alexander 2015). Using WVS data from 25 countries (mid 1990s to mid 2000s waves of the survey) she finds that "change in the percentage of women in parliament affects women's beliefs, but not men's beliefs" (p.456). Morgan and Buice (2013), examined beliefs about the capacity of women to govern in Latin American countries, using the 2008 AmericasBarometer surveys for 19 countries. They found that representation of women in the legislature is not associated with how women are evaluated as governors. Male respondents, however, rate women's ability to govern more favorably when the percentage of women appointed to the cabinet increases, though they also show that support is transitory if political elites do not continue to appoint women to the cabinet.<sup>8</sup> Alexander and Jalalzai (2016) examine if a female head of state or government (recent or current) impacts attitudes about the ability of

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<sup>8</sup> See also Beaman et al. (2009) for positive but transitory impact of women in government on the attitudes of men. They study the impact of women holding the equivalent of mayor posts in India.

women to govern, using WVS data (2011-14 wave). They find that the impact of a female executive is conditional on the level of democracy in the country, with female executives associated with more favorable evaluations of women's ability to govern for countries in the low democracy category. Studying attitudes in the US Dolan (2010: 76) finds that a "majority of respondents (60%) have a baseline preference for a man candidate."

Recently, scholars have started examining the symbolic effects of women's cabinet appointments. Yet, here too, findings are mixed. Using wave 6 of the WVS, Liu and Banaszak (2016) find that increases in women's numeric representation in the cabinet is associated with higher levels of conventional political participation, petition signing, demonstrations, and unconventional political participation among both women and men. Moreover, the relationship is stronger for women—thereby reducing the gender gap in political participation. Beauregard (2016), by contrast, uses the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems and finds less support for the expectation that women's cabinet representation incites political participation among women. Beauregard demonstrates what whereas women's representation in cabinet posts is associated with increases in both women's and men's propensity to participate in protest and to work with others, it is associated with decreases in other political activity such as voting (men only), political persuasion, campaign activity, and contacting politicians. Finally, using data from 4 waves of surveys from 2008 to 2014 from the AmericasBarometer survey, Barnes and Jones (2016) find that increases in women's appointments to provincial cabinet posts in Argentina is associated with increases in the probability that female (but not male) constituents contact local level government officials. They do not, however, find that women's representation in cabinets is associated with higher levels of trust in local governments.

Possibly these disparate findings can be attributed to the importance of posts held by women. Yes women's representation in legislatures is increasing in many countries, but citizens may question how powerful those posts are, or they may even be unaware of the level of representation of women in their country's national legislature (see Verge et al. 2015). Both Zetterberg (2009) and Morgan and Buice (2013) clarify in their theory that it is women's presence in *visible posts*, or *visible female players* that should have a positive impact on attitudes (also see Fridkin and Kenny 2015; Reingold and Harrell 2010). When women get into government they are often not in the real centers of power (Putnam 1976: 33, 36; Liddle and Michielsens 2000). Cynically, we might think that it is easier for a country to pass a gender quota law if the legislature is not a major player in policy-making.<sup>9</sup> If "the political opportunity structure in a country is consistently structured in a way that is gendered, getting more women into the legislature will not be sufficient to change outcomes; broader representation in more venues may be needed" (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2014: 238). Similarly, if the women appointed to the cabinet hold posts far from the president/prime minister's agenda, or with little budgetary power or policy-making autonomy then the presence of a woman minister may go unnoticed by women, or may send a signal that women are still not valued in politics.<sup>10</sup>

In this chapter we thus expand the study of women's political empowerment by introducing a new measure of elite inclusion and authority (Alexander, Bolzendahl, and Jalalzai 2016): *women's access in top cabinet posts*. In doing so, we examine similar attitude measures to those used in previous studies, to learn whether a woman holding a high profile cabinet post near

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<sup>9</sup> In a study of 17 Latin American countries Zetterberg (2009) concluded that adoption of a quota is not sufficient to increase political participation by women. Barnes and Burchard (2013: 783) also find in African countries that women's political participation is not increased simply with the adoption of a gender quota. That finding underscores the importance of the question of whether election of women via quotas helps to change societal attitudes about the capacity of women to govern. Further, Clayton (2015) shows that the adoption of quotas in Lesotho is associated with lower levels of women's political engagement in local politics.

<sup>10</sup> Annesley and Gains (2010) present an important argument about whether feminist ministers appointed in Britain have had access to the power and resources necessary to affect real policy change.

the time of the survey influences attitudes. Based on expectations developed in the literature, in this chapter we begin to explore if the key to enhancing women's empowerment is having women holding *top* government posts. We hypothesize:

*H1a: Both women and men will be more satisfied with government when a woman holds a high profile cabinet post.*

*H1b: Only women will be more satisfied with government when a woman holds a high profile cabinet post.*

*H2a: Both women and men will express greater confidence in government when a woman holds a high profile cabinet post.*

*H2b: Only women will express greater confidence in government when a woman holds a high profile cabinet post.*

*H3a: Both women and men will exhibit more favorable attitudes about the capacity of women to be political leaders in countries where a woman holds a high profile cabinet post.*

*H3b: Only women's assessment of the capacity of women to be political leaders will be affected by a woman holding a high profile cabinet post.*

### Analysis and Findings

The first part of the chapter showed that it is becoming more common, in more countries for a woman to hold one of the most visible and prestigious, as well as historically masculinized cabinet posts. In this section, we systematically examine whether women's access to top ministerial posts in a country enhances symbolic representation by fostering *satisfaction* with and *confidence* in government and cultivating *beliefs in women's ability to govern* (where higher values correspond to more satisfaction, confidence, and beliefs in women's ability to govern). Using WVS data from 58 countries across 6 waves of surveys from 1981 to 2014, for a total of more than 70 country-years (every country is not included in every wave), we investigate these

three possible components of women's empowerment as three dependent variables (see the chapter appendix for operationalization and variable descriptions).

First, to assess whether or not a woman serving in a "top" ministerial post is associated with higher levels of satisfaction, confidence, and beliefs in women's ability to lead we include a variable *Woman Holds Top Cabinet Post* which is coded 1 if a female holds the Foreign Affairs, Defense, or Finance portfolio in a given country in the year before the survey was fielded (i.e., a one year lag). If women's presence in these top ranking cabinet ministries is associated with an improvement in citizens' attitudes, we expect to observe a positive and significant coefficient for the *Woman Holds Top Cabinet Post* variable.

To evaluate if women's appointments to top ministerial posts are associated with both men's and women's political attitudes, we account for the *Sex* of the respondent (1=Female; 0=Male) and an interaction between *Woman Holds Top Cabinet Post* and *Sex*. If women's presence in a top cabinet portfolio is associated with improved political attitudes among women only (or a larger improvement among women), we should observe a positive and significant coefficient on the interaction term. But, if women in elite political posts exerts a similar effect on both men's and women's responses we should observe an insignificant coefficient on the interaction term. This test is crucial because the symbolic representation prediction – that seeing women in top posts in government will empower women outside of government – should only apply to female respondents. If men are also more likely to give positive evaluations to their government when a woman holds a top cabinet post, our results indicate that a different mechanism—other than symbolic representation—is at work for men (and possibly women). For example, symbolic representation may foster higher levels of satisfaction and trust in the government among women, whereas elite cues may engender these attitudes among men

(Morgan and Buice 2013). Nonetheless, we cannot empirically distinguish between these mechanisms with our analysis.

In addition to these key independent variables, we control for important country level factors including the percentage of women in the legislature, the number of years since women were granted suffrage, and the level of democracy in each country. We also control for a battery of individual-level factors including respondents' ideology, political interest, sexist attitudes, and socioeconomic and demographic characteristics that are common in existing analyses in the literature and thus facilitate comparing our findings, with this new higher benchmark measure of where women are in the cabinet (i.e., high visibility, high profile posts), to existing literature. Given the structure of our data (i.e., respondents are nested within country-years) we use a multilevel model (with random intercepts for the country-year) to estimate the relationship between women's access to top ministerial posts and men's and women's satisfaction with government, confidence in government, and beliefs in women's ability to lead. The results for these analyses are presented in Table 1 in models 1, 2 and 3. We discuss the significance and magnitude of our findings below.

< TABLE 10.1 ABOUT HERE >

To begin with, we find that having a female minister in a top cabinet post is positively and significantly associated with higher levels of satisfaction in government. Indeed respondents are almost twice as likely to report being "very satisfied" with the government when there is a female Defense, Foreign Affairs, or Finance minister (see chapter appendix for predicted probabilities and discussion). Consistent with earlier studies regarding presence of women in the legislature (e.g., Karp and Banducci 2008; Schwindt-Bayer 2010), this relationship is not statistically different for men and women. Rather, the appointment of a woman to a prestigious

cabinet portfolio is associated with an improvement in both men's *and* women's satisfaction with government. In sum, the results from Model 1 show strong support for Hypothesis 1a but not for Hypothesis 1b, and thus indicate that women holding high visibility, high profile cabinet posts is correlated with improvements in attitudes, but not that that change works through symbolic representation that empowers women but not men.

Next, with respect to Hypotheses 2a and 2b, the results reported in Model 2 show that women's access to powerful cabinet posts is also positively correlated with respondent's confidence in the government. Specifically, female ministers in top posts are associated with a 4% increase in the probability of respondents saying they have "a great deal" of confidence in their government and a 6% decrease in respondents saying that they have no confidence at all in the government. And it is important to underscore that again we see that this relationship is not significantly different for male and female respondents, and thus Hypothesis 2b is not supported. Both men and women exhibit higher levels of confidence in the government when women have recently held top positions in the cabinet—lending support for Hypothesis 2a.

Finally, turning to Model 3, we assess the extent to which the appointment of women to top cabinet posts is associated with improved assessments of women's ability to govern. In contrast to previous research that shows increases in women's numeric representation in the legislature or cabinets is associated with stronger beliefs in women's ability to govern (e.g., Alexander 2012, 2015; Morgan and Buice 2013), we do not find evidence that women's access to top cabinet posts augments perceptions of women in leadership. Future research needs to delve into the reasons why women holding high profile posts in the cabinet would be associated with both men and women having greater satisfaction with or confidence in government, but not with improved evaluations of women's ability to govern. Possibly broader inclusion in the

highest ranks of government promotes a sense of support for government through a signal that government is more broadly representative, but a survey question asking baldly whether men make better governors than women still primes traditional templates of leadership that leaders are men.

In addition to women in the cabinet exerting symbolic effects on citizens' attitudes, our analysis also shows a strong and consistent relationship between women's numeric representation in the legislature and satisfaction with government, confidence in government, and positive perceptions of women in leadership. This is interesting because previous research has reported mixed findings where women's numeric representation in the legislature is concerned. But, our global analysis of political attitudes from 1981 to 2014 offers strong support for the long theorized relationship between women's legislative representation and improved perceptions of government and women's ability to lead. Together the results from our analysis indicate that *both* women's access to top cabinet portfolios and women's numeric representation in national legislatures may be instrumental in cultivating support in and confidence for government.

### Conclusion

Less than three decades ago, women were conspicuously absent from three of the most powerful, prestigious, and high profile cabinet portfolios: foreign affairs, finance, and defense. Access to the cabinet is imperative for women's political empowerment because ministers have control over how policy is administered within their purview, and often have the capacity to influence policy within the area of their ministry; therefore impacting whose interests get represented via policy design, implementation, and policy outcomes. In this chapter we explore patterns of women's access to these prestigious posts. In doing so, we move the study of

women's political empowerment forward by broadening both the vision and measure of women's elite inclusion and authority (Alexander, Bolzendahl, and Jalalzai 2016). We find although women continue to be dramatically underrepresented in these important portfolios, the number of female appointments has increased notably in recent decades. As of today, a woman has been appointed to the foreign affairs portfolio in over half of the countries in the world. Women are also gaining ground in the finance and defense ministries, as a woman has been appointed, at least once, to these portfolios in approximately 45% of countries and 30% of countries respectively. Moreover, women have been appointed to each of these portfolios in every region of the world, with one notable exception—i.e., in the Middle East women remain wholly excluded from the defense portfolio, (two women have been appointed to the foreign affairs portfolio [Israel in 1959 and 2006] and one woman has been appointed to the finance portfolio [Lebanon in 2009]).

We then theorize that women's increased access to these high-profile political posts may have important symbolic implications for women's attitudes towards the government and their perceptions of women's ability to lead, and that it may also be related to men having positive attitudes toward government. Using WVS data from 58 countries from 1981 to 2014 (6 waves of surveys) we find that women's presence in top cabinet posts is positively associated with *both* women's and men's satisfaction with and confidence in government. Nonetheless, women's representation in high-profile cabinet posts is not associated with more positive evaluations of women's ability to lead. Together, these findings provide preliminary evidence that women's presence in highly visible cabinet portfolios may carry important symbolic effects, though it does not have as broad an impact as we hypothesized.

These findings have important implications for our understanding of how women's access to high-profile political posts in some countries may shape citizens' attitudes about the government. Just as women's continued exclusion from powerful posts may signal that government fails to achieve the basic principles of representation—thereby eroding satisfaction with and confidence in the government—our findings suggest the expansion of women's political empowerment into the upper echelons of government fosters confidence and satisfaction. Given these important implications for democracy, future research should further consider the symbolic effects of women's high-profile cabinet appointments in larger samples and across a broader range of political attitudes and also for participation/engagement in politics. Indeed, although the global scope of the WVS offers a major advantage, the survey includes less than a third of the world's countries. As women's access to high-profile portfolios remains limited—particularly the finance and defense portfolios—there are only a small number of countries in our sample where women occupied one of the three most coveted ministerial posts. Thus, future research needs to examine the generalizability of these findings. Another avenue for future research is whether women's appointment to top cabinet posts has an ongoing impact on satisfaction with and confidence in government or whether attitudes “reset” quickly if women do not continue to occupy visible posts. Further research is also needed to examine why appointment of women to high prestige cabinet posts is, at least in this analysis, not associated with attitudes by either women or men that women are as able as men to be political leaders.

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Table 1: Symbolic Consequences of Women Holding High-Ranking Cabinet Posts

	(1) Satisfied	(2) Confidence	(3) Men Are Better Leaders
Sex of respondent	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.02)	0.52** (0.02)
Woman Holds Top Cabinet Post	0.51* (0.26)	0.47** (0.23)	0.07 (0.17)
Sex * Woman Holds Top Cabinet Post	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.04)
Married	0.04** (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
Left Ideology	0.05** (0.00)	0.05** (0.00)	-0.05** (0.00)
Age	-0.00** (0.00)	0.00** (0.00)	-0.00** (0.00)
Education	-0.04** (0.00)	-0.05** (0.00)	0.06** (0.00)
Political Interest	0.17** (0.01)	0.20** (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)
Income	-0.01 (0.01)	0.04** (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
Sexism Motherhood	-0.10** (0.02)	-0.14** (0.02)	0.36** (0.02)
Sexism Economy	0.06** (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	-0.47** (0.02)
% Women in Parliament	0.04** (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)	0.04** (0.01)
Years Since Suffrage	-0.02** (0.01)	-0.01** (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Democracy	-0.46** (0.22)	-0.73** (0.19)	0.47** (0.15)
Cut 1	-1.72** (0.35)	-1.82** (0.31)	-1.17** (0.25)
Cut 2	0.31 (0.35)	0.09 (0.31)	0.41* (0.25)
Cut 3	3.23** (0.35)	2.14** (0.31)	2.64** (0.25)
Random Intercepts			
Country-Level	0.31** (0.14)	0.32** (0.10)	0.20** (0.07)
Year-Level	0.37** (0.11)	0.21** (0.06)	0.12** (0.04)
Observations	46962	47246	46902
Country-Years	77	79	78

Standard errors in parentheses \* p<.10, \*\* p<.05, \*\*\* p<.01

Figure 1: Female Ministers Holding Top Cabinet Posts World Wide

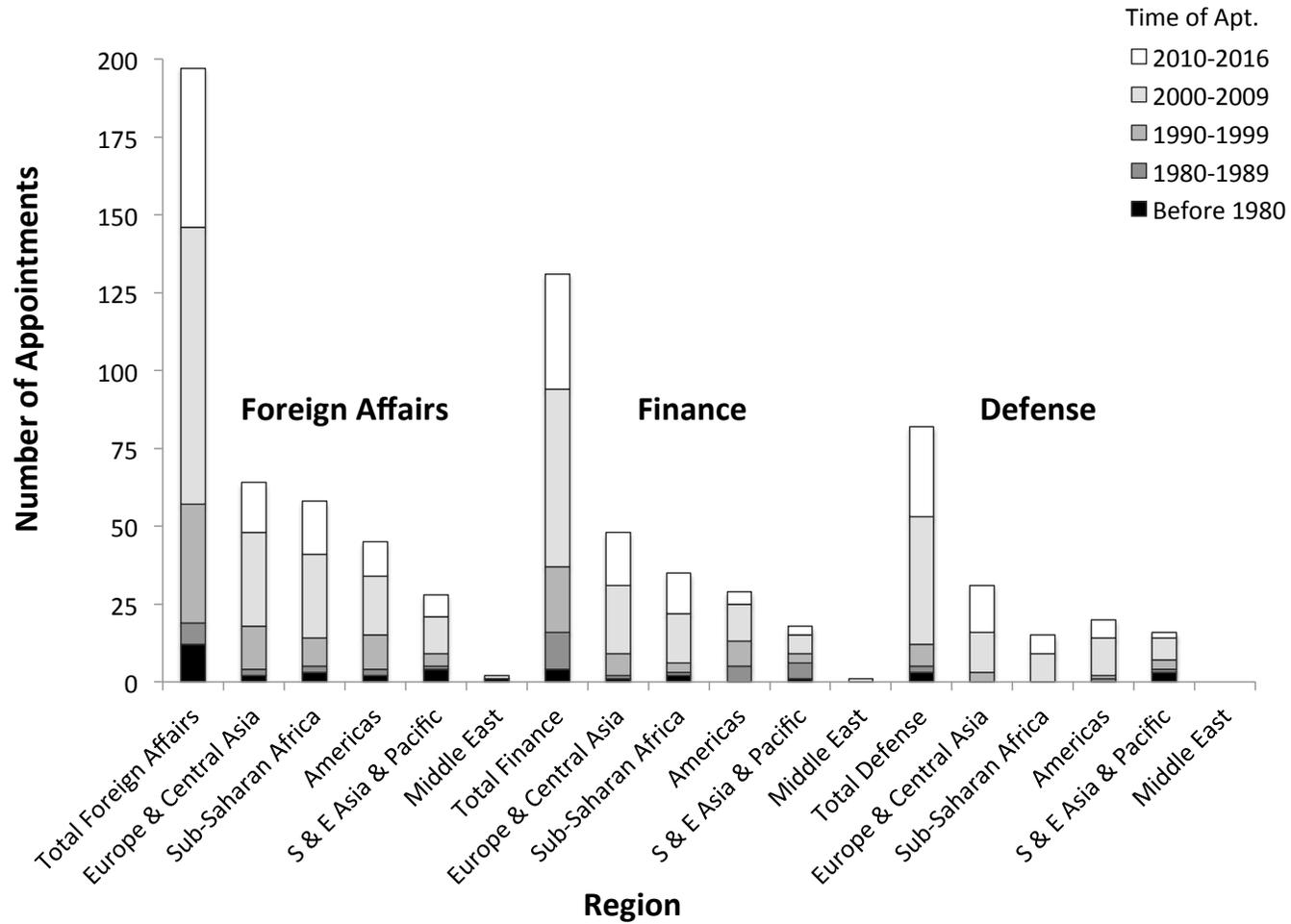
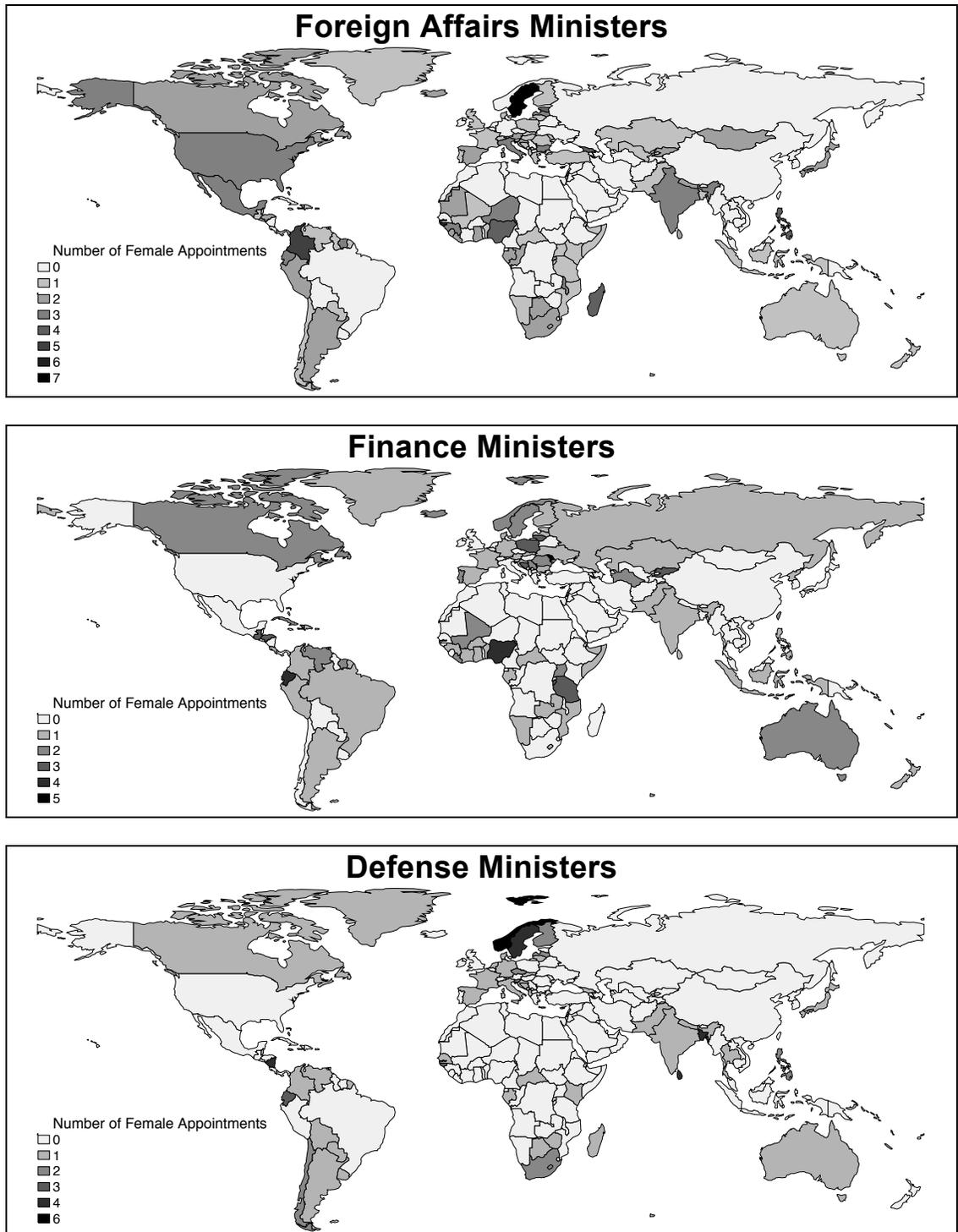


Figure 2: Female Ministerial Appointments to Top Cabinet Posts Around the World



## Appendix

### *Dependent Variables: Operationalization and Descriptive Statistics*

Here we discuss the operationalization and variable descriptions for the dependent variables in our analyses. The first, *satisfied*, asks how satisfied respondents are with the people in national office. This variable ranges from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 4 (very satisfied) with a mean of 2.2. The second dependent variable, *confidence*, asks how much confidence respondents have in the government. Confidence ranges from 1 (none at all) to 4 (a great deal) with a mean of 2.3. Finally, the third dependent variable, *men lead*, asks respondents how strongly they agree with the statement that men make better political leaders than women. Men Lead ranges from 1 (strongly agree) and 4 (strongly disagree) with a mean of 2.7. Given that each of these dependent variables is measured on an ordinal scale (i.e., a 4-point scale), we estimate an ordered logistic regression for each of the dependent variables.

### *Findings: Predicted Probabilities and Discussion*

Whereas our model predicts that 5% of respondents report being “very satisfied” with government when there is a female in a top cabinet post (and 41% are “satisfied”), only 3% of respondents report being “very satisfied” when these posts are all occupied by men (and 33% are “satisfied—an 8% point difference in cabinets with and without women in top posts). By contrast 14% report being “very unsatisfied” when a woman occupies one of the top posts compared to 21% when the posts all remain in the hands of men. In sum, the appointment of a women to the Defense, Foreign Affairs, or Finance post is associated with a 2% increase in the probability of respondents saying they are “very satisfied” with the government, and a 7% decrease in the probability of respondents saying they are “very unsatisfied” with the government. This relationship is not statistically different for men and women. Taken together results from Model 1 show strong support for Hypothesis 1a but not for Hypothesis 1b.

With respect to Hypotheses 2a and 2b, the results reported in Model 2 show that women’s access to powerful cabinet posts is also positively correlated with respondent’s confidence in the government. Whereas our model predicts that 14% of respondents report having “a great deal” of confidence in the government when there is a female in a top cabinet post, only 10% of respondents report having “a great deal” of confidence when these posts are all occupied by men. By contrast, 12% of respondents report having no confidence at all in the government when there is a woman in a top position compared to 18% when women are excluded from the top cabinet positions. Specifically, female ministers in top posts are associated with a 4% increase in the probability of respondents saying they have “a great deal” of confidence in their government and a 6% decrease in respondents saying that they have no confidence at all in the government. As before, we see that this relationship is not significantly different for male and female respondents, and thus Hypothesis 2b is not supported. Instead, both men and women exhibit higher levels of confidence in the government when women have recently held top positions in the cabinet—lending support for Hypothesis 2a.