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RESEARCH ARTICLE



County governing boards: where are all the women?

Leander D. Kellogg ^a, Al G. Gourrier^b, E. Lee Bernick^a and Katheryn Brekken^c

^aUniversity of Nevada Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV, USA; ^bUniversity of Baltimore, Baltimore, MD, USA; ^cCollege of Southern Nevada, Las Vegas, NV, USA

ABSTRACT

This research seeks to explore the extent of women representation on county governing boards and tests several hypotheses to explain variation in representation. This study evaluates a random sample of 394 of the more than 3000 counties in the United States. Half of the counties did not have any women serving on their county governing boards. A two-stage analysis using first a logit model sought to explain when counties have women commissioners and then a truncated regression analysis evaluated the percentage of women serving on county boards. Size of governing boards, size of government, religious adherence, and two election formats had significant effects in explaining when a county had women commissioners. Three variables (religious adherence, level of support for President Obama, and size of governing boards) were significant in explaining the percentage of women serving on county governing boards with size of the boards operating opposite of the hypothesized direction.

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The existing research on women as elected representatives has been primarily at the national and state level, with some research on women running and winning elections at the municipal level. However, Fox (2011) in an essay on gender politics offers several suggestions of future research that need to be addressed including the analysis of women and politics at the local level. For many scholars local politics is defined as municipal politics and this is unfortunate since there are other important local governments including counties. These “forgotten governments” play a major role in our intergovernmental system (Benton 2005).

Although scholars once overlooked county governments, the last several decades have seen a growing literature addressing the many complex issues and opportunities associated with counties (Benton 2005; Benton et al. 2007).

County governments were established as early as 1634 in Virginia and as such are one of American’s oldest forms of government. Today counties invest over \$550 billion dollars annually in local services and infrastructure, employ more than 3.5 million people, and service nearly 308 million county residents (NACo 2016, 6). Counties are not only an extension of the state, but they also provide a long list of services to the citizenry. For example, counties are responsible for transportation and infrastructure services such as

roads, bridges, utilities, public transportation, airports, telecommunications, and recycling. Community health is another important county responsibility such as providing hospitals, immunizations programs, public health, and substance abuse treatment. Counties also provide justice and public safety services such as law enforcement agencies, county courts, correctional facilities, public defenders, and coroners. Lastly, counties provide other vital services such as public records, elections and polling centers, tax assessment and collection, recreation centers and parks (NACo 2016). In other words, counties matter. This research seeks to explore these understudied local governments and to examine the status of women as elected county officials. Specifically, the research seeks to examine the extent to which women hold positions on county governing boards.

Representation is the sine qua non of American democracy. However, the extent to which American legislative institutions adhere to this goal has been a source of debate and even litigation. One problem in evaluating the degree to which reality matches theory is how one should define representation. At a minimum, some maintain, representation ought to be at least descriptive (Pitkin 1967; Meier et al. 2005). Mansbridge's article in 1999 entitled "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? ..." captures the essence of descriptive representation. While some nations have created quotas for designated groups (Schwindt-Bayer and Squire 2014), in the United States descriptive representation translates into the belief that a representative body should reflect, in general terms, the demographics of the body politic.

Concerns regarding descriptive representation are a central feature of gender politics research in the United States. Osborn (2014) maintains that electing women to office strengthens democratic legitimacy and increases the opportunity for diverse interests to be considered in the legislative process (146). Moreover, there is evidence that electing women to office leads to substantive differences in public policy with previous research finding women elected to federal and state offices were more likely than men "to focus on women's issues such as gender equity, day care, flex time, abortion, minimum wage increases" and other social programs (Thomas 1991; Fox 2011, 95). Therefore, our research looks at the extent to which women serve on county governing boards and what explains the variance in the percentage of women on these governing boards.

Literature review

The literature on representation and gender at the sub-national level generally focuses on state legislatures (Darcy, Hadley, and Kirksey 1993; Werner 1998; Whistler and Ellickson 1999; Swers 2001; Fraga et al. 2006; Shea and Harris 2006; Elder 2012) with additional research focusing on municipalities (Bullock and MacManus 1991; Alozie and Manganaro 1993; Brown, Heighberger, and Shocket 1993; Adams and Schreiber 2011; Smith, Reingold, and Owens 2012). MacManus (1996), in one of the few exceptions, looked at gender composition of county governing boards and indicated, "that the proportion of women serving on county governing boards is smaller than any type of elective body other than the U.S. Congress" (66). Additionally, Crowder-Meyer and Smith (2015) looked at county offices and compared them to place (city, town, and village) offices where they found "that the gender gap in local political representation can be lessened by building more robust networks of female leaders, enhancing partisan competition, and stimulating women in the electorate to support women's candidacies" (295).

Notwithstanding the paucity of work on gender politics at the county government level, it is possible that findings from research on state legislatures and municipalities may translate to county governments.

Although the literature on representation and gender at the county level has been sparse, there is literature addressing the effect of women's representation in municipalities, women in county level offices, and county level office's impact on policies that are gendered. For example, Saltzstein (1986) found female mayors lead to an increase in non-clerical and professional/administrative parity in a national sample of municipal bureaucracies (159–160).

Deckman (2006) found that women school board members were more likely to support multiculturalism and the inclusion of homosexuality in sex education while being less supportive of school prayer and creationism than men school board members (106). Lublin and Brewer (2003) – while studying women representation in U.S. Southern counties – found women held a majority of clerkship-type offices, but rarely won elections to high-paying leadership, executive, or law enforcement positions (391). Farris and Holman (2015) specifically looked at the attitudes and policies of county sheriffs' concerning violence against women. Their study found that sheriffs' attitudes that included violence against women and rape myths were less likely to have policies in place to appropriately address violence against women (1130).

Additional literature on women as elected officials at the state and municipal levels have uncovered a variety of other possible explanatory factors. Women were more likely to be elected from districts with higher levels of educational attainment and income (Karnig and Walter 1976). Smith, Reingold, and Owens (2012) developed a complex measure of community well-being and concluded that communities with positive economic forces encouraged more female representation.

Place and space may also be linked to the ideological and cultural factors, which have also been posited to be determinants of women's electoral success. Smith, Reingold, and Owens (2012) found cities that elect a larger percentage of women were more liberal communities (321). Hill (1981) found political culture to play an important role in the states with those states possessing a moralistic culture to have more women representatives. Miller (2000) almost twenty years later contended that the prevalent traditionalistic culture in the South and “old boy” network discourages women from running for office. Moore (2005) found conservative religious views had differing effects on White and minority women's ambition to seek public office.

Early research on women as elected officials focused on a third broad area of explanatory factors by looking at the structural arrangements of elected offices (Bullock and MacManus 1991). Darcy, Hadley, and Kirksey (1993) found that under-representation of Blacks and women are one and the same. Specifically they found that “women are more likely to be elected in multi-member districts than in single-member district systems. Interestingly, Black women were more likely to come from multi-member district systems whether in overwhelmingly white or black majority constituencies” (73). However, Crowder-Meyer, Gadarian, and Trounstine (2015) found in their study looking at city level elections that women were “significantly advantaged” in district elections as opposed to at-large elections (318). Finally, Trounstine and Valdini (2008) also found district elections increased women representation but this benefit applied only to White women whereas minority women were not affected by either electoral system (554).

Finally, scholars have found a link between the nature and structure of the elected office. Hill (1981) explains, “women tend to hold legislative seats in states and communities where legislatures are least professional and legislative services least desirable” (159). Hill posited two explanations for this: first, greater compensation, tenure opportunities, and prestige in holding office may create stiffer male competition for office. Second, where legislative service is more of a full-time occupation, roles of women – homemakers and mothers – may indicate that women have less opportunity or time to serve (Hill 1981, 159). Crowder-Meyer, Gadarian, and Trounstine (2015) came to similar conclusions in their study of city level offices as to why women may find success in city clerkships versus administrative and legislature positions such as mayor or councilmember. Alozie and Manganaro (1993) determined “that council size helps to predict the presence or absence of women on city councils” (396) with women more likely to be elected to a larger council. Alozie and Manganaro (1993) also discuss *descriptive tokenism* as a possible explanation for this result, meaning that if there are more seats available, then the majority may be more willing to share as a symbolic gesture (393).

In sum, we know little about the nature of county elected boards and the presence of women in comparison to other levels of government. This research borrows from that literature to aid in explaining variations at the county level using contextual factors of elections, ideology and socioeconomic measures, and characteristics of their communities.

Methodology

This study looks at the extent of women commissioners serving on county governing boards at one point in time – 2014.¹ There are currently more than 3000 county governments in the United States.² To examine the composition of county government office holders we originally created a stratified random sample of 400 counties from 3138 counties.³ We divided the counties into two strata: one for all counties over 100,000 in population (19% of the counties) and a second one for all those counties under 100,000. We then drew a random sample in each stratum. Besides the two states (Connecticut and Rhode Island) that do not have county governments and Alaska and Vermont who do not have functioning county governments, Maine is the only state that does not have at least one county in the sample.

This research is part of a much larger study on county governments. Our original source of collecting data was through county government websites. When we were unable to determine the gender of county officials through information presented on the website we contacted county governments by phone to obtain the composition of the elected board. County governing boards across the country, and even within a state, vary in size. In the sample the number of commissioners in any one county was as few as 1 to as many as 40. In fact, county governing boards are typically not very large with 40% of the counties in the sample having five member boards and another third of the counties having three member boards.

One criterion to evaluate representative institutions is to determine the extent to which a governing board mirrors the population it represents. For example, if a community consisted of 25% of a particular demographic group, Hispanics, then the legislative body is said to be representative if 25% of its members were Hispanics. Our initial analysis of the data provided evidence that many of the 394 counties used in this research were

not representative. There was a non-normal distribution with just over 50% of the counties having no women representation. As a result, a two-stage analysis was conducted. In the first stage of the analysis we sought to understand what factors accounted for the election of a woman to the county governing board.

Next, we used a truncated regression analysis to explain the level of women serving as county commissioners.

Dependent variables: For this first stage we create a binary dependent variable with counties that have any women representation coded as a “1” and counties without any women coded as a “0”. With this dependent variable a logistic regression analysis was employed. In the second stage of the analysis the focus was on the 193 counties with women serving as a commissioner. For these counties the dependent variable was the percentage of women who serve on the county governing board and a truncated regression analysis was used.

Independent variables and hypotheses: The first model, a logistical regression analysis, used nine variables and the second model, a right truncated regression analysis, used the same nine variables. We believe that the nine variables should operate in the same manner for both stages of the analysis; as a result only one set of hypotheses are presented (for the second stage, the hypotheses of the dependent variable – percentage of seats – is in parentheses).

In the analysis we employed three independent variables that were used to measure the socioeconomic and political characteristics of the county. First, we measured the economic well-being of a county using an index that taps the degree to which a county is under economic stress. The score for each county is a result of a factor analysis that consisted of the following county population characteristics: percent on food stamps, percent below poverty, per capita income (negatively loaded), percent with Associates degrees or higher (negatively loaded), female single head of household, and percent county population minority. This variable implies that counties with high scores were poor and its citizens had lower levels of education.⁴ As such we hypothesized a negative relationship (Karnig and Walter 1976). This variable is labeled *Economic Stress*.

H1: Counties under greater economic stress are less likely to elect women representatives (have a lower percentage of women commissioners).

A second characteristic of the county thought to be important is the ideological orientation of the citizenry. We measure ideology by using the level of support for President Obama in the 2012 election. Democratic counties are more liberal. The assumption is that liberal counties will have more elected women (Smith, Reingold, and Owens 2012). Data used the percentage of a county voting for Obama in 2012 with the variable labeled *Democratic Vote*.

H2: Counties with a larger Democratic vote are more likely to elect women representatives (have a higher percentage of women commissioners).

In a somewhat similar vein, the religious adherence of the county population may serve as a surrogate for cultural conservatism (Johnson 1976). This variable measured the percentage of the population in a county affiliated with a religious congregation. Higher percentage of religious adherence in a county would be indicative of the presence of a conservative, traditionalistic culture (Miller 2000; Moore 2005). Counties with greater

religious adherence will be more conservative and have fewer elected women (Moore 2005). Data for this variable were collected from ARDA.org and the US Religious Census 1952–2010 (Clifford et al. 2012). This variable is labeled *Religious Adherence*.

H3: Counties with greater religious adherence are less likely to elect women representatives (have a lower percentage of women commissioners).

The literature on electing women to local government offices has studied electoral formats as a predictor of women representation (Bullock and MacManus 1991; Darcy, Hadley, and Kirksey 1993; Trounstone and Valdini 2008; Crowder-Meyer, Gadarian, and Trounstone 2015). In other words, researchers have attempted to determine if single-member districts, multi-member districts, or at-large districts make a difference in election outcomes for women. Unfortunately, the results are inconclusive and, at times, contradictory. In our sample of county governments there were a variety of formats to elect commissioners. *Election Format* included four dummy variables that captured different structures for elections including: single-member districts, single-member districts with voting at-large, multi-member districts, and at-large with no districts. Counties using some combination of single-member and at-large elections were the reference group. Crowder-Meyer, Gadarian, and Trounstone (2015) found single-member districts were more favorable to women being elected to city councils. Single-member districts with voting at-large are where individuals come from a specific district but the entire population of the county elects them and this resembles at-large elections, which tend to have a negative impact on women representation (Trounstone and Valdini 2008; Crowder-Meyer, Gadarian, and Trounstone 2015). Counties with multi-member districts have been shown to favor the election of women (Darcy, Hadley, and Kirksey 1993). These variables were the number of counties with each election format and were obtained from county websites and the National Association of Counties (NACo).

H4a: Counties with single-member voting districts are more likely to elect women representatives (have a higher percentage of women commissioners). H4b: Counties with single-member, at-large voting districts are less likely to elect women representatives (have a higher percentage of women commissioners). H4c: Counties with multi-member voting districts are more likely to elect women representatives (have a higher percentage of women commissioners). H4d: Counties with at-large voting districts are less likely to elect women representatives (have a lower percentage of women commissioners).

A characteristic of the governing board itself is believed to explain the likelihood of women being elected. There is evidence that larger boards create greater opportunities for women to be elected (Alozie and Manganaro 1993). This variable is labeled *Size of Governing Board* and has a range of 1–40.

H5: The larger the elected board, the more likely a county is to elect women representatives (have a higher percentage of women commissioners).

Our final independent variable measured the size of county government. Counties with more administrative capacity were thought to be more professional, which would reduce the likelihood of elected women (Hill 1981). This variable is labeled FTE and was the number of full-time equivalent employees working in an administrative capacity as reported in the Census of Governments.

H6: Counties with larger governments are less likely to elect women representatives (have a lower percentage of women commissioners).

Findings

Stage 1: As noted previously, slightly more than half (50.7%) of the counties in the study did not have a single woman serving as a county commissioner. As a result, the first task was to determine, using a logistic regression analysis, what factors explained the presence or absence of women on county governing boards. Table 1 provides the results of the binary logistic regression used with the dependent variable: presence of a woman commissioner on the board. The X^2 for the full model was 63.6 and was significant at $p < .001$ providing support for the full model. Two of the hypothesized explanatory variables (H1 Economic Stress and H2 Democratic Vote) were not statistically significant though the coefficients were in the hypothesized direction. The Religious Adherence variable was hypothesized to have a negative impact on the odds of a woman being elected to the county commission and as hypothesized, an increase in the percentage of community members affiliated with religious organizations decreased the odds of women serving on the boards. In fact, a one-unit change in the percent of the county residents belonging to religious congregations reduces the odds of women serving by 89%.

Hypothesis 4 actually consisted of four sub-hypotheses corresponding to the four dummy variables used to measure Election Formats. Two of the four election formats, multi-member districts and district representation with at-large voting, were not statistically significant. On the other hand, single-member districts and at-large elections were both significant. The results provide evidence that, as hypothesized, single-member districts increased the odds of women being elected to county governing boards relative to counties that had more than one election format (Crowder-Meyer, Gadarian, and Trounstein 2015). In fact, counties with single-member districts were 2.5 times more likely to have women elected to the board relative to our referent form of elections. The coefficient for counties with at-large elections was significant and positive – this was opposite from what was hypothesized. The odds ratio for the at-large county election variable indicated

Table 1. Explaining women representation on county boards (logit model).

Independent variable	Coefficients	Standard errors	Odds ratio
<i>County characteristics</i>			
Economic Stress	-.217	.132	
Democratic Vote	.018	.010	
Religious Adherence	-2.167*	.735	.115
<i>Election formats</i>			
Single-member District (SMD)	.928*	.394	2.530
SMD, Vote at Large	.444	.509	
At-large District	.998*	.430	2.714
Multi-member District	.548	.569	
<i>County government characteristics</i>			
Size of Governing Board	.374**	.070	1.454
FTE	.010*	.004	1.010
<i>Summary statistics N = 394</i>			
$X^2 = 63.60^{**}$			
Pseudo $R^2 = .232$			

*Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

**Significant at the $p < .001$ level.

that these counties were 2.7 times more likely to have women as commissioners than the referent format.

The two County Government variables were significant. Hypothesis 5 predicted that the size of the governing board would be positively related with the likelihood of women being elected and that is precisely what happened. A one-seat increase in a governing board increased the odds of women serving by 45%. On the other hand, Hypothesis 6 predicted a negative relationship between size of county government and the odds of a women serving on the governing board. However, the larger the FTE the odds of a women getting elected, though small, was positive. In sum, the logistic analysis provided insight into the basic question of why some counties have women elected to the governing boards while other counties do not. Election format, size of the county governing board, and size of county administration all increased the odds of women serving. But, the religiosity of the citizenry had a negative effect reducing the odds of women being elected.

Stage 2: The second stage of the analysis used a truncated regression analysis with the dependent variable the Percent of Women serving on a county governing board. In conducting the truncated regression analysis one can set a lower limit for the value of the dependent variable upon which all cases less than or meeting that criteria are excluded from the analysis. The lower limit set in the analysis was set at “0”, which means all counties with no women serving on the county governing board were excluded from the analysis resulting in the number of observations used in the analysis was 193. The percentage of seats held by women in the 193 counties ranged from 5% to 100% (in a single county in Ohio all three members were women). The truncated regression analysis used all nine of the original independent variables. The six hypotheses were similar to those proposed in the first stage. The results in Table 2 provide little support for three of the six hypotheses with FTE, Economic Stress, and Election Format not statistically significant. Moreover, the sign of the coefficients for Single-member District Vote at Large, Multi-member District, Size of Governing Board, and Size of Government were not as hypothesized. While size of the county government, FTE, was significant in explaining whether a woman might serve on a county governing board, it was not significant in explaining the percentage of women on a board.

Table 2. Explaining percentage of women on county boards (truncated model).

Independent variable	Coefficients	Standard errors
<i>County characteristics</i>		
Economic Stress	-.005	.008
Democratic Vote	.002*	.001
Religious Adherence	-.110*	.052
<i>Election formats</i>		
Single-member District (SMD)	-.032	.049
SMD, Vote at Large	.041	.058
At-large District	-.034	.052
Multi-member District	-.004	.052
<i>County government characteristics</i>		
Size of Governing Board	-.008**	.001
FTE	.000	.000
<i>Summary statistics</i>		
N = 193		
$\chi^2 = 66.60^{**}$		

*Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

**Significant at the $p < .001$ level.

Both the Democratic Vote and the Religious Adherence variables were significant and in the hypothesized directions. A 1% increase in the Democratic vote corresponded to a unit increase in the percentage of women serving on a governing board. The Religious Adherence variable had a negative coefficient ($-.110$) supporting the hypothesis that religiosity would have a negative impact on women representation. Interestingly, the Size of Governing Board was significant but opposite the hypothesized direction – larger boards resulted in a lower percentage of women commissioners. The results of the two different analyses provided evidence that understanding women representation in county governing boards is complex and factors that determine if a woman serves on a board may not explain how many will serve.

Discussion and conclusion

This research sought to determine the extent to which women serve on county governing boards. The research found that 50% of the counties had no women elected as county commissioners. Moreover, where women served on boards, they were marginally represented with two-thirds of the governing boards having less than 30% of seats held by women. To put it bluntly women do not serve and make decisions on an important democratic institution: county governing boards. This is significant since county governments are generally constitutional extensions of a state and provide a host of services that impact the citizenry.

The two-step analysis of the data allowed us to tease out the complex nature of woman representation on county governing boards. Contrary to the literature on other local governments, the economic well-being of a county played no significant role in determining if and how many women served on a board. However, election format and size of county governments were significant in explaining if women might be elected, but not to what extent they served on boards. The larger the county administration the more likely women were to get elected, but the size of county government did little to explain how many women were elected.

Previous research with regard to election format indicated that women fared better in single-member districts rather than other formats especially at-large elections. Unfortunately, the current research cannot support the notion that single-member districts are better than at-large elections. In fact, the current research found both district and at-large elections increased the odds of women getting elected. While this may seem contradictory, one needs to keep in mind that county governments employ a variety of election formats and even in a single county more than one procedure for electing commissioners may be employed. Thus, the research would appear to indicate that either of these formats was better than the other types of election systems. However, the results for the second stage provided little support for any election format influencing the percentage of women on governing boards. One potential explanation for the lack of support for election format could be that county elections are primarily partisan elections (83% of the counties in our sample had partisan elections). At the municipal level, partisanship plays a role with women less likely to be elected in partisan elections than non-partisan elections (Squire and Smith 1988; Smith, Reingold, and Owens 2012, 322). It would appear that partisanship has a similar effect on county elections when measuring the percentage of women on government boards. In other

words, the format may impact the odds of a woman serving, but not how many women will serve.

In the first stage of the analysis, the Size of Governing Board variable was significant and in the hypothesized direction – the odds of women getting elected increased with an increase in the size of the county governing board. Perhaps, increased board size enhances the opportunity available for women to run or the increase in board size may allow for some form of “tokenism” as Alozie and Manganaro (1993) have speculated? This research does not allow us to answer the question, but an analysis of women deciding to run versus those that win controlling for board size might provide some additional insight. However, the Size of Governing Board variable in the second stage – although still significant – was not in the hypothesized direction. Rather, the increase in size of the county board reduces the percentage of women serving as commissioners. One possible explanation for this finding rests with the fact that the percentage a seat represents is a function of the size of the legislative chamber. In other words, a single individual elected to a position on a governing board could represent 33%, 20%, or 14% if the board size consisted of 3, 5, or 7 seats, respectively. Thus, a group could easily be seen as being either over represented or underrepresented simply as a function of the size of the institution and not through any electoral success or failure. Thus, the inverse relationship uncovered in this research for size of board and percentage of women on the board might well be an artifact of the measures employed.

The Democratic Vote measure operates in a somewhat unique fashion. The Democratic vote did not improve the odds of a women getting elected, but in those counties that met the threshold of electing a woman, the more Democratic the county the greater the percentage of women serving on the board, which is consistent with previous research. If county elections are partisan elections, as previously noted, then party identification may play an important role as a cue for voters. Moreover, partisan identification may well be more important for voters in county elections than in other local elections because, while important, county governments do not tend to receive the media attention that municipal governments are accorded; therefore, citizens may use party as a cue for voting. Unfortunately, we do not have information to further tease out this phenomenon.

The Religious Adherence variable was the most significant variable in both explaining if women would be elected to a county board and the extent to which they would be represented. In both stages of the analysis there was a negative relationship for Religious Adherence. In other words, the more citizens who were members of religious congregations the less likely the odds women would get elected to the county governing board and the smaller the percentage of women serving on those boards. It is not our contention that religion, itself, is at play, but the level of religious identifiers measures conservative values thus creating a more “traditionalistic” political culture serving to maintain the status quo (Miller 2000; Moore 2005).

However, these two variables (Democratic Vote and Religious Adherence) might appear to be opposing forces they very well may be two different measures tapping into a single dimension: the ideology of the citizenry. Looking at both together paints a picture that allows us to understand that conservative constituencies may be less receptive of women as elected officials while liberal counties may be more welcoming. Our findings support earlier research that has found the political ideology of a constituency as a strong

predictor in local elections (Smith, Reingold, and Owens 2012) and must be seriously accounted for in understanding why women win or lose elections.

In sum, county governments, as local governments, have not received the attention they deserve given their impact on the citizenry. Moreover, the finding in this research has demonstrated that one cannot simply extrapolate from municipal elections to county elections. This research found over half of the counties in our sample had no women elected county board members. While undergoing significant change, counties have vestiges of a more traditional culture that support the “good old boy network” of elections and undermine electoral change and representation.

Notes

1. In the research we use the term commissioner to represent the individual office holder elected to the representative policy-making unit in a county. The name of that body and the office holder’s title varies across the 48 states. For example, in Wisconsin they are referred to as Supervisor while in Arkansas they are titled as “Justice of the Peace.”
2. The exact number of counties should be easily determined; however, it is not, since some units of government could be interpreted as a municipality, a county or both. For example, the U.S. Census Bureau in its *Governance Organization Summary Report* determined that the consolidated Nashville-Davidson County would be counted as a municipality. In reporting data from the American Community Survey (ACS) the Bureau presents the data for Davidson County. As a point of reference, we have counted the locality as a county based on Census from ACS and NACo.
3. It should be noted not all states have functioning county governments (Connecticut, Rhode Island). In other states there are counties according to the Census Bureau but they do not have elected boards (Alaska and Vermont). It should also be noted that in a few states some areas of the state are not within county government jurisdictions. In drawing the random sample of county governments no county in Maine was selected. Finally, our sample of 400 counties provides us a margin of error $\pm 4.5\%$. Our initial sample of 400 counties was reduced to 394 once counties from Alaska and Vermont were removed, as they do not have functioning county governments.
4. Data were collected from Five-Year Estimates of the ACS.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

ORCID

Leander D. Kellogg  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4734-652X>

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