

Reproductive Rights and Wrongs: Impact of Gender in Framing Political Decisions by Female Governors

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Framing Reproductive Rights

- Approach informed by **gender, party, religion**
- **Gender most influential** when party ideology and religious doctrine framed in opposition
- For Democrats, a **'women's issue,'** Republicans **muted gendered aspect**
- Democratic, Pro Choice, religious governors faced **'forced choices,' suffered consequences**
- **(Dis) Connecting** personal and political

Women, Politics Reproductive Rights

- **Growing number of women in politics, reaching higher levels of office**

31 total female governors total, record of 9

1925 2 Women Governors

1935- 1967 0 Women Governors

1994 4 Women Governors

- **US lags behind other countries**

26 female heads of state worldwide

Women, Politics Reproductive Rights

- Glass Ceiling, Stereotypes
- Masculine and Feminine Issues
- Gendered Governing Styles
- Framing

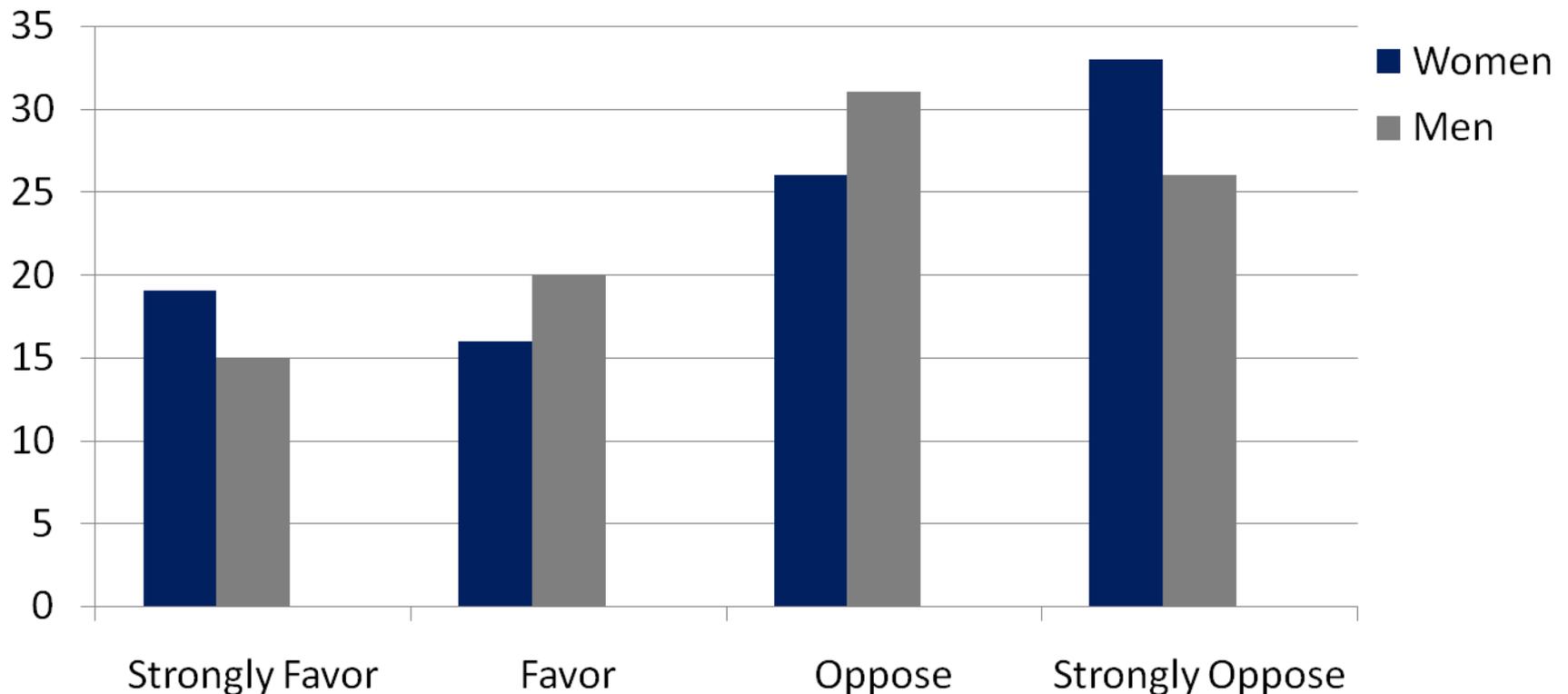
Gender Gap- Reproductive Rights

- Genders differ on reproductive rights
 - Position
 - Importance
 - Voting Cue

Gender Gap- Reproductive Rights

- Women hold stronger positions on abortion than men

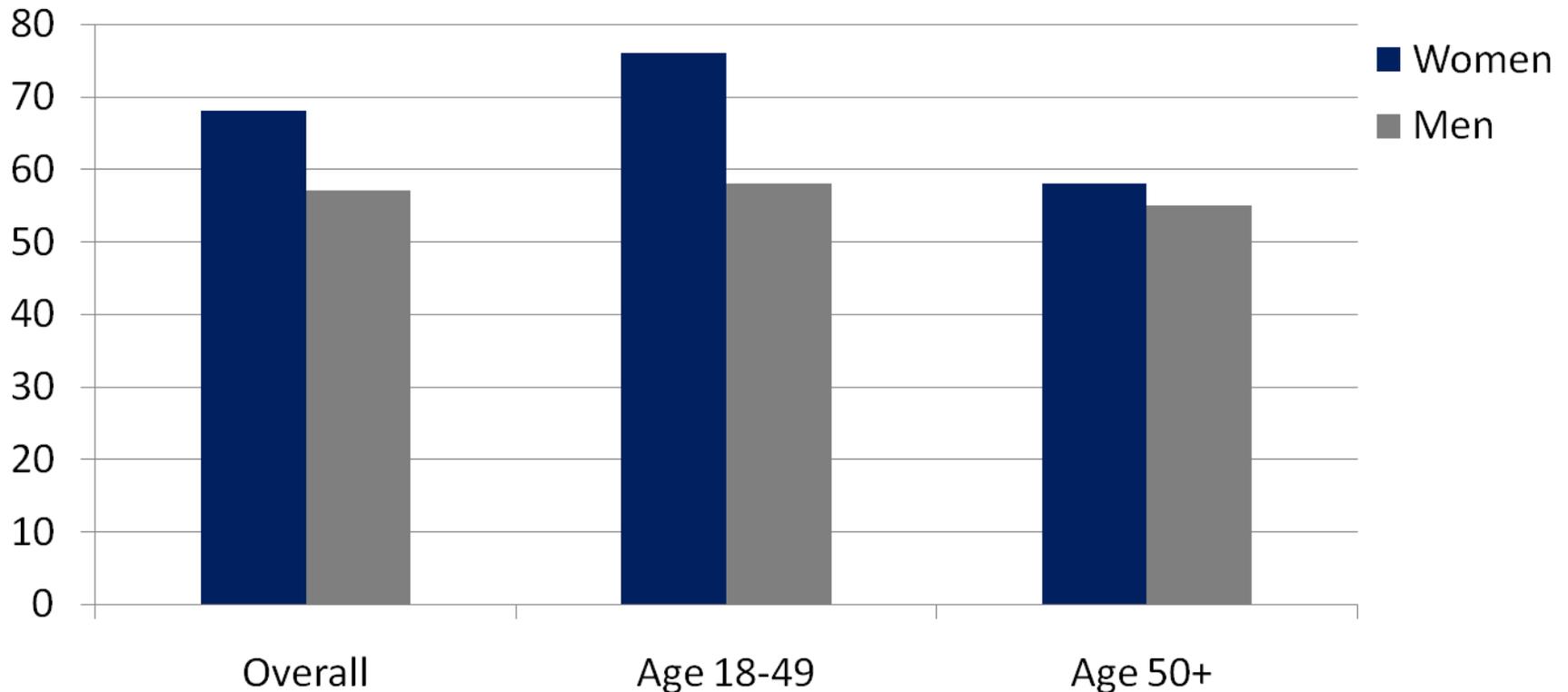
Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose, more restrictions on abortion?



Gender Gap- Reproductive Rights

- More women consider abortion 'very important'

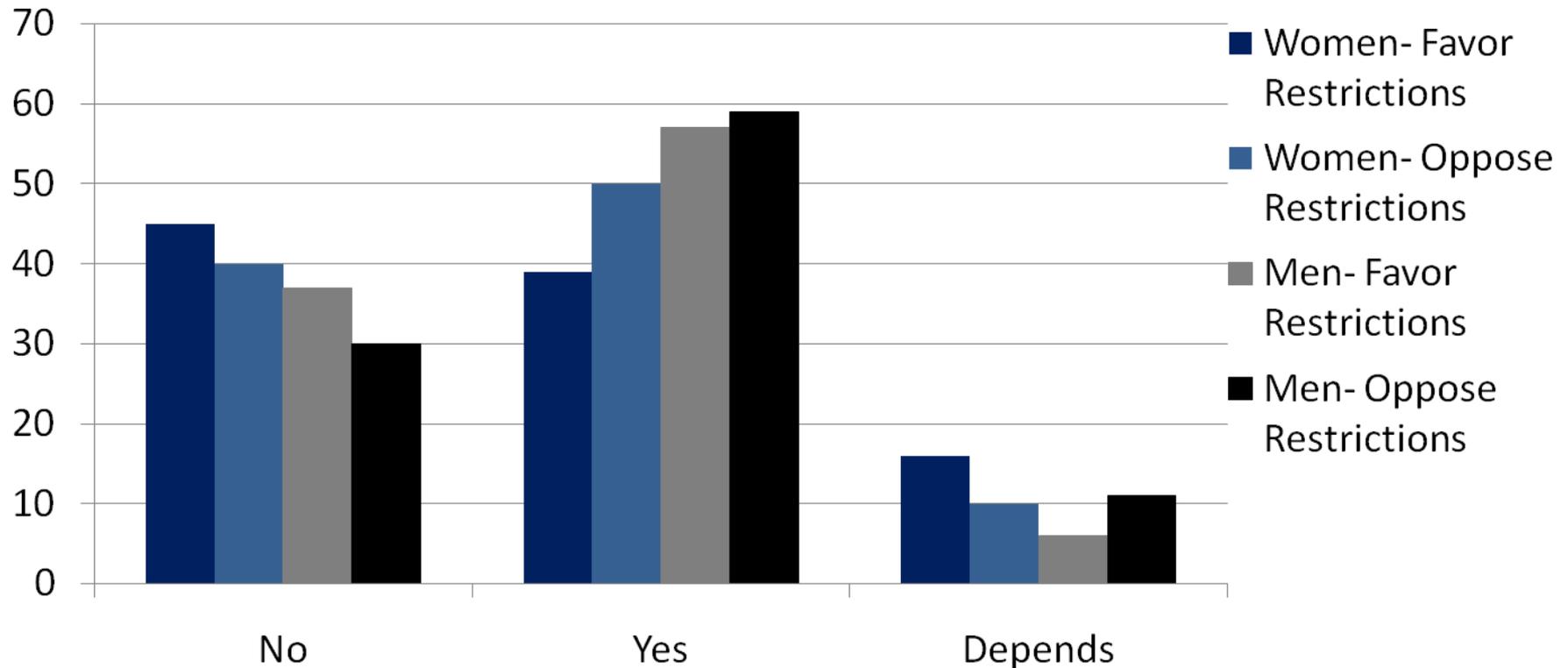
Percentage rating abortion as 'very important'



Gender Gap- Reproductive Rights

- Abortion more of a voting issue for women

Would you vote for a candidate who disagrees with you about abortion?



Social Significance

- Right to abortion, a **woman's issue**, handled by **women in male dominated field**
- Topic representative of **challenges** faced by executive women
- Extent of female '**ownership**' of issue
- Governors are **role models** to upcoming generations
- **Real world policy** implications

The Governors

Jane Swift
(R-MA)
2001-2003



Judy Martz
(R-MT)
2001-2005



Linda Lingle
(R-HI)
2002-Present



Olene Walker
(R-UT)
2003-2005



M. Jodi Rell
(R-CT)
2004-Present



Sarah Palin
(R-AK)
2006-Present



RuthAnn Minner
(D-DE)
2001-2008



Janet Napolitano
(D-AZ)
2002-2008



Jennifer Granholm
(D-MI)
2003-Present



Kathleen Sebelius
(D-KS)
2004-2008



Kathleen Blanco
(D-LA)
2004-2008



Christine Gregoire
(D-WA)
2005-Present



Research Methodology

- **Phase 1- Media Content Analysis**
 - Official biographies, press releases, signing statements, voting records
 - Newspaper articles
 - Qualitative and quantitative analysis (approx. 375 publications)

Phase 1- Findings

- **Approach informed by gender, party, religion**
- **Gender most influential when party and religion framed in opposition**
 - Gov. Christine Gregoire (D-WA) Pro Choice
 - Gov. Jennifer Granholm (D- MI) Pro Choice

Phase 1- Findings

Gender

- **For Democrats, a ‘women’s issue’**

Gov. Christine Gregoire (D- WA) Pro Choice

“I am Pro Choice, I believe in a woman’s right to choose.”

- **For Republicans, gendered aspect muted**

Gov. Olene Smith Walker (R-UT) Anti Abortion

“I believe in the sanctity of life.”

Phase 1- Findings

- **Democrats more likely to personalize issue, some exceptions**

Gov. Janet Napolitano (D- AZ) Pro Choice

Napolitano said the pro life bill “represents undue government intrusion into the relationship between a woman and her doctor, her family, her religious counselor, or whomever else she wishes to consult in making this most difficult of personal and medical decisions.”

Gov. Sarah Palin (R-AK) Anti Abortion

Phase 1- Findings

- **Pro Choice religious Democratic governors faced ‘forced choices,’ suffered consequences**

Gov. Jennifer Granholm (D- MI) Pro Choice

“(She) should be ashamed as a Roman Catholic to support the legal slaughter of innocent, unborn children.”

Phase 1- Findings

- **Democrats disconnected personal and political**
Gov. Kathleen Sebelius (D- KS) Pro Choice
*Catholic faith teaches that “all life is sacred”
“Personally, I believe abortion is wrong.
However, I disagree with the suggestion that
criminalizing women and their doctors is an
effective means of achieving the goal of
reducing the number of abortions in our
nation.”*

Phase 2- Questionnaire

- Sent to all twelve governors, currently collecting responses
- **Unfiltered, direct response** through three open ended questions
- **Why?**
 - Inherent media bias
 - News forms our opinions

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Questionnaire Design

1. In your political life, you are a member of the Republican/Democratic party. How would you describe your personal political philosophy, and how does that compare to the stated ideology of the party?
2. To what degree do you think your personal life and your gender influence your governorship? If you have religious affiliation, how extensively does your religious belief affect your policy positions and the way you govern?
3. For this study, we are specifically interested in how female governors treat the issue of reproductive rights. Please relay to us your stance on this topic, and discuss the factors that affected the development of your position as specifically as possible.