

**LATINA AND AMERICAN INDIAN WOMEN LEADERS,  
POLITICAL REPRESENTATION, AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY\***

**Diane-Michele Prindeville**

**Abstract**

In a representative democracy, where citizens have an impact on public policymaking only indirectly through their elected/appointed officials or through grassroots activists, the representativeness of these political leaders is a matter of great importance. Traditionally, this representativeness has been examined on three dimensions: descriptive congruence, policy congruence, and attitude congruence. Using data from interviews with female political elites (both public officials and grassroots activists), 83% of whom are either American Indian or Hispanic, and telephone surveys of 326 women in New Mexico, 27% of whom are either American Indian or Hispanic, this research examines descriptive and attitude congruence between political elites and the public on environmental policy issues. The findings contribute to the literature by (1) reporting on attitude and descriptive congruence within understudied populations (both women in general and racial/ethnic subgroups of women) and (2) revealing that attitude congruence varies by type of elite - elected/appointed versus grassroots activist.

**Key Words:** Latinas, American Indian Women, Political Leaders, Environmental Policy