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Suffrage Accomplished: Women as Political Participants

Once the legal barrier to the ballot was removed, women entered the electorate slowly, although African American women were reported by at least one account to have registered in large numbers in the South.¹ By and large, they voted similarly to men, but initially in smaller numbers. This slow start led one commentator to declare that women's suffrage was a colossal failure. Women's suffrage was not a failure but rather a casualty of unrealistic expectations—both positive and negative. “Men said that woman suffrage had promised almost everything and accomplished almost nothing when neither of these were true.”² There are some remarkable historical examples of women forming voting coalitions in order to effect social change in their communities. In Nashville, Tennessee, African American and white women formed an alliance to demonstrate their power in expanding government's role and to promote a progressive political agenda.³ The vote opened the door to the public sphere and a corresponding host of politically relevant activities. Now, more than eighty years after gaining the vote, women are more likely than men to register to vote and to actually vote; they are as likely as men to engage in a whole range of extra-electoral activities. Women are, however, less likely than men to donate large sums of money to campaigns, to express interest in running for elective office, and to be recruited for office by political party elites. Also, the forces that attract women to politics are different from those that attract men. The vote did not, however, make women think alike, act alike, or view issues of gender equality similarly. As we saw in the previous chapter, women differ from one another along roughly the same social, economic, and political lines that divide men. These differences influence women's levels and types of political engagement. This chapter examines women's political participation in the electorate as voters, partisans, and members of political organizations.

In the process we will analyze how women's participation differs from men's and how women differ from one another as they pursue gender equality through political participation.

WOMEN ENTER THE ELECTORATE AS VOTERS

After ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, procedures had to be clarified before women could actually cast their ballots. For instance, states had to change their laws and practices to allow women to register, and the pace of change varied by region. Women in Mississippi and Georgia, for example, did not vote in the November 1920 election because the state registrars upheld the existing four-month residency requirement.⁴ Because counties and states did not always keep records of voting registration rates and hardly ever noted the sex of the voter in their records, little data are available to evaluate women's suffrage during the first decade following ratification. As with other new groups of voters, it took time for women to develop voting habits, including accepting the idea that voting was appropriate behavior for women. Interviews with nonvoting women in Chicago conducted in 1923 found that more than 10 percent still believed it was *wrong* for a woman to vote.⁵ In the years that followed ratification, African American women in the North continued to participate in politics, but feeling they had been abandoned by both white feminists in the final hours of the suffrage fight and by the Republican Party, they became disillusioned with national politics.⁶

Although many attribute decreases in overall voter turnout rates during the 1920s to women entering the eligible electorate but not actually casting a ballot, some evidence contradicts that notion. It now seems just as likely that political parties experienced a dealigning period during which partisans of both genders moved away from the existing political parties and were therefore not attracted to vote for a party's candidate.⁷ Sophonisba Breckinridge conducted the first empirical study of women's political participation in 1933.⁸ In *Women in the Twentieth Century*, Breckinridge examined registration rates of men and women in Illinois, the only state to keep records separated by sex. Between 1914⁹ and 1931, women's registration rates in Chicago increased by 10 percent whereas men's decreased by the same percentage. The resulting "male advantage" in registration in 1931 was just 16 percent.¹⁰

Women Voters Outnumber Men at the Polls

By 1980, the gap in registration rates had narrowed considerably, with 80 percent of men and 77 percent of women registered to vote. Women's registration rates surpassed those of men in the 1984 election and have remained higher in every subsequent national election. The 1965 Voting Rights Act was the catalyst for

African American women's dramatic increase in voter registration, particularly in the South. Although registration figures by gender are not available for the period prior to 1975, later voter participation figures suggest that women were well represented among the newly registered Southern voters.¹¹ Since 1980, the proportion of female voters has surpassed the proportion of male voters in every presidential election. In 2008, for example, 65.7 percent of eligible female voters cast ballots compared to 61.5 percent of eligible male voters. The absolute number of women voting has also been higher than that of men in every presidential election since 1964. According to the Pew Research Center, 70.4 million women voted in 2008, compared with 60.7 million men.¹² In nonpresidential years, women have outvoted men since 1986. In the midterm election of 1994, labeled the "Year of the Angry White Male," 44.9 percent of women and 44.4 percent of men turned out. In the 1996 presidential election, 55.5 percent of voting-age women cast their vote, compared to 52.8 percent of men. In real numbers, 7.8 million more women than men cast votes in the 2000 presidential contest.¹³

Estimates of men's and women's voting habits are generally based on post-election surveys. This methodology relies on individuals' correctly recalling whether they actually voted on Election Day. While remembering such information seems like a simple task, the considerable social pressure to fulfil one's civic duty to vote causes many people to misreport having voted, thereby slightly inflating the turnout statistics. Evidence from vote validation studies has shown that men are slightly more likely to misreport voting than are women, making the gap between male and female turnout rates potentially even larger than reported.¹⁴

The gap between men and women at the polls varies depending on a number of sociodemographic characteristics, such as age, race, region of the country, and education. In recent years, women under forty-five years old voted at significantly higher rates than did men in the same age group.¹⁵ However, after fifty-five years of age, the percentage of women voting declined while the percentage of male voters held steady, thus reversing the gender advantage seen in younger age cohorts. For example, among citizens between the ages of sixty-five and seventy-four, 64.8 percent of men reported voting in the 2002 election, compared to only 61.7 percent of women.¹⁶ Researchers are not sure why women's participation tends to decline after age fifty-five when arguably they would have more, not less, resources and time to dedicate to politics. Among African American voters, the gender gap in voter turnout has been consistently larger than in the population at large. Researchers attribute higher participation rates among African American women than men to a feminist identity developed through experiences with both race and sex discrimination, and strong ties to their community and church.¹⁷ In 2000, for example, 59.7 percent of black women voted, compared to 53 percent of black men. This gap is 4.1 points larger than that of the entire population. In the South, where states were slow to admit women to the voting population even after the federal amendment was ratified, the gender gap was largest

prior to the election of 1970. In 1964, the gender gap in the South was nearly double that of the rest of the nation. More recently, regional disparities have largely disappeared. Among those with an elementary-school education, men vote at higher rates than women do. However, a high-school diploma reverses the gap, with women voting at higher rates than similarly educated men. Among those who have some college or a college degree, men and women report voting at roughly the same rates.¹⁸

Other factors beyond gender influence a person's decision to vote or to abstain. Since voter turnout in the United States is consistently lower than in most other developed nations, researchers have studied the motives and behaviors of voters for several decades to answer: Why *don't* people vote? To cast a ballot, citizens must register to vote, which often means navigating a complex bureaucratic process. The 1993 National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), also known as "Motor Voter," made registering somewhat easier. The NVRA requires states to allow citizens to register to vote at the same time they do other business with the state, such as register a car, renew a driver's license, or apply for some forms of government benefits. Although this program registered more people and created a slightly more diverse voter pool in terms of education, age, and race, the effects of the NVRA on actual voter turnout were not as great as had once been predicted. However, voter registration increased in nearly every demographic group for the 2004 presidential election. The Committee for the Study of the Electorate (CASE) estimates that 72 percent of citizens eligible to vote were registered prior to the 2004 election.¹⁹

Overall registration rates for the 2008 election were slightly lower than for 2004 at 71 percent of the eligible population registered to vote. A May 2008 survey of state election officials by the Associated Press found that in the six states that collected voter data by gender, comparing 2008 with 2004, the registration rate for new voters was up 89 percent among women, compared with 74 percent among men. Young people between 18–29 and African Americans were also heavily represented among newly registered, first-time voters in 2008.²⁰

Political scientists have also investigated why people *do* vote. After years of investigation and countless theories, the answer remains a mystery. Some political scientists posit that citizens undertake a rational calculation of the costs and benefits of voting. If the benefits outweigh the costs, citizens appear at the polls. However, the benefits one person derives are difficult to determine since, according to some calculations, a voter is more likely to be struck by lightning on the way to the polls than to change an election's outcome.²¹ So the benefits of voting are more often such intangibles as altruism or a sense of duty fulfilled. The costs vary depending on an individual's circumstances. For women, the costs may be higher than for men since women are still considered the primary caregivers of children and elderly parents, and are more likely to have jobs with less flexible schedules or that pay on an hourly basis, all of which affect the time that women have to go to the polls. And yet women vote at higher rates than men, so other factors must be at work. Most likely, voting is a standing decision or a habit that

individuals develop as they join communities and become integrated into the social and political life of their communities. Voting, in this context, is an act of social participation or civic involvement. In general, voters are connected to the larger society and to their communities in ways that nonvoters are not.²² Women have a history of community-based involvement, and this tradition may help explain why women are more likely to vote than men. In the 2008 presidential election, particularly during the Democratic primaries, there is some evidence that women were drawn to the polls by the prospect of voting for a woman with a strong chance to win the nomination. Likewise, Republican voters had an historic opportunity to vote for a ticket that included a woman vice-presidential candidate for the first time. Candidate Hillary Clinton intentionally targeted

Point of Comparison

Gender and Political Participation: Trends in Voter Turnout

A report issued in 2002 by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), dedicated a chapter to women's electoral power. Although the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which was adopted by the United Nations in 1979 and subsequently signed by 165 nations, emphasizes the importance of equal participation of women with men in public life, women remain far from parity worldwide. Laws restricting women's voting rights remain in only a very few states in the Middle East, and although men and women still differ along a number of political dimensions, women's participation as voters has risen to the point that few differences between men and women at the ballot box exist in many advanced industrialized countries. "Long term secular trends in social norms and in structural lifestyles seem to have contributed towards removing many factors that inhibited women's voting participation."¹

Comparative data on voter turnout that includes a breakdown by sex are difficult to find. Not all nations identify the sex of the voter. Drawing on the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems which is constructed from national election surveys conducted in nineteen countries from 1996–1999, the table below depicts gender difference in turnout in seventeen nations. The percentages in the table represent the proportion of men and women who reported *not voting* in general elections. Note that these data are expressed differently than we are used to seeing them, but the conclusions are the same.

Women reported voting at statistically significantly higher levels than men in only one nation (Norway), in thirteen nations there was no significant gender difference in voting between men and women, and women reported significantly lower levels of turnout in the three newer democracies in Central and Eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary, Romania).

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women and called upon all voters to break the "highest and hardest glass ceiling in America." In a May 2008 letter to the Democratic superdelegates, Clinton wrote, "I am in this race for all the women in their nineties who've told me they were born before women could vote and they want to live to see a woman in the White House. For all the women who are energized for the first time, and voting for the first time. For the little girls . . ." ²³ Nearly a quarter century earlier, the last time a female held a place on a national presidential ticket, Geraldine Ferraro also reported that "women across the country have told me what a huge personal impact my nomination had on their lives." Exit poll data from the 1984 presidential race found that 23 percent of women agreed that Ferraro's candidacy had made them more interested in politics. ²⁴

Nation	Men	Women	Difference (W - M)	Sig.
Norway	15.7	12.2	-3.5	.021*
Britain	17.5	17.1	-0.4	.779
Germany	7.3	7.2	-0.1	.919
Spain	10.3	10.5	+0.2	.909
Taiwan	8.3	8.6	+0.3	.860
Israel	16.9	16.5	-0.4	.868
New Zealand	5.0	5.5	+0.5	.438
Japan	15.8	16.8	+1.0	.611
Australia	3.6	5.5	+1.9	.048
Mexico	23.1	25.0	+1.9	.327
Czech Republic	9.3	11.6	+2.3	.192
Ukraine	21.9	24.2	+2.3	.354
USA	21.8	24.7	+2.9	.180
Netherlands	20.1	23.1	+3.0	.092*
Poland	40.4	44.6	+4.2	.056*
Hungary	23.9	28.7	+4.8	.035*
Romania	7.6	15.6	+8.0	.000*
ALL	13.7	15.5	+1.8	

* The significance of the difference between men and women is measured by Gamma and denotes a statistically significant difference in five cases.

1. Pippa Norris, "Women's Power at the Ballot Box," in *Voter Turnout Since 1945: A Global Report* (International IDEA, 2002), pp. 95-102.

under 30 participated—an increase of 2 million over 2004. Turnout among young people represented an increase of 11 percent over 2000 rates, and represented the largest single election cycle (2004 to 2008) increase for any age group. The gap between female and male young voters was nearly eight percentage points. Individuals with college experience voted at significantly higher rates than those without (62.1 percent compared with 35.9 percent). Youth turnout was highest in Washington, D.C. (76 percent), Minnesota (68 percent), and Iowa (63 percent). In Washington, D.C., young people voted at a higher rate (by three percentage points) than their adult counterparts for the first time anywhere.

THE GENDER GAP

Pick up a daily newspaper during the months preceding an election and you'll find evidence that journalists and politicians alike perceive the gender gap to be a powerful political phenomenon.³⁰ The gender gap is said to exist when women as a group vote significantly different from men. The term originated during the 1980 presidential election when the victor, Republican Ronald Reagan, ran a campaign dominated by his opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment and to abortion, and his support of "traditional family values," which many interpreted as a return to traditional roles for women. The Republican Party's continuing affinity for these themes is presumed to have alienated many women voters throughout the 1990s and into the next century.³¹

The gender gap should be calculated by subtracting the percentage of men who voted for a particular candidate from the percentage of women who voted for the same candidate (or vice versa), not by looking at how one candidate did among either women or men alone. Although after 1980 the gender gap referred to the greater likelihood of women's voting for a Democratic Party candidate, a candidate cannot be said to have lost an election because she or he lost the "women's vote." Conceptually, when a single candidate fares well against her opponent among female voters, for example, her opponent fares equally well among male voters. "By definition, the Republicans' 'problem with women' is exactly the same size as the Democrats' 'problem with men.'"³² Since the size of the gender gap in the 1992 and 1996 presidential contests and in a number of high-profile congressional races was larger than the margin of victory, women have become the target of appeals by both parties. Add to that the fact that more women than men actually cast votes in every election since 1964 and few politicians can afford to ignore the potential of women's electoral power. The Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) at Rutgers University estimates that the gender gap affected thirteen races in the 1998 midterm elections. Five Democratic victors benefited from women's votes, and eight Republican winners owed their victories to men.³³ In 2000, six women were candidates for the U.S. Senate and sizable gender gaps were evident in three of their races, with women providing the margin of victory for

Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), and Maria Cantwell (D-WA). Similarly, the Feminist Majority Foundation estimates that Al Gore received 54 percent of the female vote, but only 42 percent of the male vote, creating a twelve-point gender gap in the 2000 presidential contest. Working women overwhelmingly preferred Gore to Bush (58 percent for Gore and 39 percent for Bush). The Foundation also estimates that women voters delivered all five of the U.S. Senate races in which Democrats picked up seats in 2000. For example, Debbie Stabenow of Michigan won a close race with an eleven-point gender gap. Similarly, Bill Nelson of Florida enjoyed an eleven-point advantage among women voters; Thomas Carper of Delaware won with a twelve-point gender gap; Mark Dayton won the Minnesota Senate seat with a nine-point gap; and Mel Carnahan posthumously won the Missouri Senate seat with a six-point gender gap. In each of these races, the surplus of women's votes made up for less than a majority of men's votes.³⁴

Polling in October prior to the 2008 election found a decided gender gap in five critical presidential battleground states. In Colorado and Florida, for example, Barack Obama benefitted from a 12-point gender gap, while in Nevada, Ohio, and Pennsylvania the gap was single digits (6, 7, and 9 points respectively).³⁵ Analysis by the Feminist Majority identified a decisive gender gap in four states (Colorado, 7 points; Indiana, 5 points; New Hampshire, 12 points; and North Carolina, 12 points), three of which voted overwhelmingly for George W. Bush in 2004 (Colorado, Indiana, and North Carolina). In these four states, Barack Obama won a majority of women, lost a majority of men, yet won the state overall, leading analysts to conclude that women "delivered" these four states to Obama.³⁶ Similar analysis attributes New Hampshire Democrat Jean Shaheen's 2008 U.S. Senate victory over Republican incumbent John Sununu to women voters (60 percent of women voted for Shaheen compared to 45 percent of men). Women also accounted for the margin of votes that ousted North Carolina's incumbent U.S. Senator Elizabeth Dole in favor of Democratic challenger Kay Hagan, with an 8-point gender gap in Hagan's favor.³⁷

The contemporary gender gap generally ranges from 7 to 12 percentage points in congressional elections, and hovered at about 7.7 percentage points on average in presidential contests from 1980 to 2000. President Clinton enjoyed a significantly larger gender gap in both 1992 and 1996. The gap in 2000 was similarly large. Men and women were clearly divided in their preferences for president, with a majority of women (54 percent versus 42 percent of men) voting for Al Gore and a majority of men (54 percent versus 43 percent of women) voting for George W. Bush. In 2004, the gender gap was only 7 percentage points, with 48 percent of women versus 55 percent of men voting for George W. Bush. The gender gap was largest between women and men who were sixty or over (11 percentage points), unmarried (8 points), or college-educated (9 points).³⁸ Despite the gender gap in favor of Democratic candidate John Kerry, President Bush increased his overall share of the women's vote in 2004. Kerry's 51 percent share of the women's vote was down from 2000, when Vice President Gore captured 54 percent of the women's vote. President Bush's ability to attract

48 percent of the women's vote (up from 43 percent in 2000) was a major factor contributing to his margin of victory in the popular vote.³⁹ Democratic pollster Celinda Lake reported that Kerry lost support relative to 2000 levels among white women, working women, and married women. Many political analysts and women's advocates argue that Kerry began to prioritize women's issues too late in the campaign. Susan Carroll, senior scholar at the Center for American Women and Politics, says that Kerry was "so concerned with establishing his commander-in-chief credentials that he failed to address other important issues like job security, retirement benefits and health care." He made women wonder, "Do you really understand the kind of difficulties I'm having?"⁴⁰ Alternatively, Marie Wilson of The White House Project argues that security issues drove women more than anyone anticipated. Still others point to the role moral values presumably played in voters' calculus, arguing that Bush conveyed a message that resonated with mainstream voters, including women.

In 2008 women strongly preferred Barack Obama to John McCain (56 percent for Obama, 43 percent for McCain) while men split their votes about evenly between the two candidates (49 percent for Obama, 48 percent for McCain). Thus, the gender gap in 2008 was about 7 percentage points, identical to the gap in 2004. Senator Obama, however, drew more female voters in 2008 than Senator John Kerry did in 2004. Obama enjoyed support from a clear majority of female voters (56 percent), while Kerry attracted only a bare majority of women (51 percent) in 2004. By contrast, Senator John McCain did worse with women voters, attracting only 43 percent of their votes compared to George W. Bush's 48 percent in 2004. Obama's share of white and Latina voters represent gender gaps as well. He pulled 46 percent of white women compared with 41 percent of white men, and among Latino voters, 68 percent of women versus 64 percent of men. There was no gap for African American voters—both sexes overwhelmingly supported Barack Obama (96 percent, women; 95 percent, men).

The impact of the gender gap, therefore, depends wholly on the proportion of men and women voting in any single election. As noted earlier, women have been turning out in both higher proportions and larger numbers than men have in recent elections, making a gender gap favoring women a determining force in the outcome of these elections. The 1996 presidential contest attracted attention in this regard since the gender gap was estimated at 14 percentage points—the largest since World War II—and increased by 40 percent compared to the 1992 vote. Similarly, when it looked like the direction of the gender gap among women had changed in favor of Republican candidate George W. Bush in late September of the 2004 contest, both political parties scrambled to get ahead of the dynamic.⁴¹ Media pundits in 2008 quickly labeled John McCain's choice of Alaska Governor Sarah Palin as his running mate as an overture to women voters—perhaps even women who had supported Hillary Clinton in the Democratic primaries but were slow to transfer their support to Barack Obama. It is important to remember, though, that gender differences do not make up the largest gap within the electorate. The gaps in voting behavior

created by race (consistently 50 points between whites and blacks) and economic differences (12 points between the rich and poor in 2004) surpass gender in size, if not in significance. Likewise, gender does not act in a vacuum. We do not yet fully understand, for example, the ways that gender affects political attitudes and behavior across lines of race, class, ethnicity, and country of origin. Thus, a new area of gender research involves "intersectionality."⁴² The gender gap attracts media attention because a political "war of the sexes" is more socially acceptable than competition between the races or economic classes.

The Source of the Gender Gap

The definitive source of the gender gap continues to elude scholars, but evidence supports a number of theories. Some attribute the gap to the changing employment circumstances and attitudes of women,⁴³ while others attribute it to the changing politics of men.⁴⁴ More broadly, scholars explain the different candidate preferences of men and women as differences in policy preferences, most especially those regarding government social welfare spending and the importance of a government "safety net." Additionally, "women's issues," such as abortion and women's rights, along with "men's issues," such as the use of force and military expansion, have been investigated as root causes of the gender gap. Perceptions of the economy, either in general (most important to women) or in regard to an individual's personal finances (most salient to men), have been shown to differ by gender.⁴⁵ The Feminist Majority Foundation surmises that the gender gap in the 2000 election was fueled by issues such as abortion rights, gun control, military spending, women's rights, and human services.⁴⁶ In 2004, although much has been made of the influence of moral values in determining vote choice, careful analysis suggests that jobs and the economy were the top issue for 23 percent, followed by homeland security and terrorism (19 percent), Iraq (13 percent), and moral values (10 percent). These issues did take precedence, however, over issues traditionally defined as "women's concerns." Among voters polled, only 8 percent said that their top concern was health care and prescription drug coverage, and a mere 4 percent reported education as their top issue. Indeed, a majority of women voters believe not enough attention was given to issues such as equal pay for women (60 percent), prevention of violence against women (58 percent), women's equality under the law (61 percent), appointing women to leadership positions in the administration (54 percent), and education (46 percent). Although younger and older women; Democrat, Republican, and independent women; and married and unmarried women varied by degree in their perceptions of candidate attention, all women were more likely than men to believe that not enough attention was paid to these issues.⁴⁷

Similar issues were prominent throughout the 2008 campaign, but by the time people went to the polls in November, the economy and energy were considered the top issue priorities by nearly all voters.⁴⁸ Women were significantly

more pessimistic than men in their outlook on their economic future. Women were more likely to say they were falling behind economically with a majority (60 percent) reporting that their income was falling behind the cost of living. Fifty-nine percent of women versus 46 percent of men were concerned about "achieving their economic and financial goals over the next five years" as the fall campaign got underway. When asked about equality of opportunity relative to employment and the economy, an overwhelming majority of men believed that they compete with women on a level playing field, with only about half of women saying the same. Not surprisingly then, women supported a larger role for government in solving problems and meeting the needs of people—most especially in providing families with economic security, enforcing equal pay and equal opportunities, ensuring universal access to health care, expanding access to contraceptives and sex education to avoid unintended pregnancies, and ensuring that parents have access to affordable quality child care.⁴⁹

Even when men and women hold the same policy positions, the levels of salience may differ to the extent that a single issue may determine the vote for one gender while being relatively unimportant to the other gender's final decision. This is most evident in the issue of abortion. While men and women do not differ significantly in their relative positions on abortion policy, the salience of the issue acts as a political mobilizing force for women, but not for men.⁵⁰ Further, although men and women may encounter the same set of issues in the same political context, they react differently to the political environment. Women and men experience changes in society, politics, and the economy differently and therefore exhibit different political responses to these changes. For example, as the percentage of women who head households increases, the gender gap increases, leading researchers to conclude that economic vulnerability as the result of social and economic changes increases women's Democratic partisanship.⁵¹ Simultaneously, the generality of partisan differences between men and women shapes the political context outside of elections. "They [partisan differences] affect the kinds of issues on the political agenda, the nature of ensuing policy debates and the nomination process, as well as elections themselves."⁵² In this respect, the gender gap is both persistent and dynamic. The size of the gender gap likely depends on the behavior of strategic politicians, trends in the nature of families, and economic conditions.

The issue of homeland security and terrorism added a new dimension to the 2004 presidential contest and was immediately interpreted within the context of the gender gap. "Security moms" and "NASCAR dads" joined the "waitress moms" and "soccer moms" of past elections. The media defined "security moms" as married women with children under 18 concerned about security and likely Bush voters as a result. The label's origins have been traced to a Celinda Lake poll reporting that while only 17 percent of men were personally concerned that a member of their family would be the victim of a terrorist attack, 43 percent of women and 53 percent of mothers with children under 18 expressed the same concern. When front-page stories in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* (September 22 and 23, respectively), alleging

the importance of the "security mom," claimed that women were moving away from Kerry and toward Bush, women's organizations reacted swiftly to debunk the myth of the security mom.⁵³ Anna Greenberg's memo, "The Security Mom Myth," demonstrates that while Kerry was underperforming among women relative to previous Democratic candidates, this could not be attributed to security issues. Sixty-four percent of women voters in 2004 were married, but only 43 percent had children under eighteen years of age, meaning that only 26 percent of all women voters could be characterized as "security moms." Of these women, only one in four listed terrorism as the top reason to vote for President Bush. Women tend to worry more than men about their personal and economic security largely because they are more likely to be victims of crime at home and they are more likely to live on the economic margins. According to Greenberg, this concern about personal security does not necessarily translate into political preferences in the national security realm.⁵⁴ In fact, men were more likely than women to make the war on terrorism and security a part of their voting calculus. The economic downturn in 2008 eclipsed the Iraq war and the "war on terrorism" for both men and women, but women consistently expressed a deeper sense of economic vulnerability that likely translated into greater issue saliency for the economy in their vote choice.

Implicit but often hidden in the labels like "security moms" and "NASCAR dads" is the status of "parent" and the assumption that mothers and fathers have political interests that are distinct from voters without children. Researchers Laurel Elder and Steven Greene have investigated the impact of being a parent on political views.⁵⁵ Although in the aftermath of the 2004 election, pundits attributed President Bush's reelection to his improved performance among women and his ability to attract "security moms" to the Republican ticket and the Democrat's failure to win back "NASCAR dads," Elder and Greene find little empirical support for the claims. Both of these labels implied that political forces and parenthood moved voters in a more conservative direction that benefitted Republicans. In fact, data from the 2004 election demonstrate that there was no "mother gap" on issues concerning security—in other words, women with children were no different than women without children. However, there was a gender gap on the majority of defense- and war-related issues. In 2004, women were significantly less likely than men to support increases in defense spending and spending on the "war on terror." Women were also less likely than men to think the Iraq War and the war in Afghanistan were "worth it," and less likely to think that the Bush Administration had made the country more secure. Thus, Elder and Greene conclude, "the 'Security Mom' label was not only inaccurate, but misrepresented the position of mothers to some extent. Mothers, like women overall, were distinctive in being less supportive than men on most defense- and war-related issues in 2004."⁵⁶ The only issue on which mothers were substantively distinctive from other women was on issues of social welfare; mothers favored greater access to health care and government support for jobs. The researchers found no evidence in support of a 'NASCAR dad' label. Fathers did not differ on any issue from nonfathers,

leading researchers to conclude that "it seems almost pointless to talk about 'dads' as a distinct political entity at all. . . ." ⁵⁷ Thus, we must approach media frames organized around gender "difference" with some skepticism. While there is indeed evidence of a gender gap in American elections, its source is multifaceted and complex, and its impact is highly contextual in any single election cycle. Rarely can the voting behavior of men and women be so simply labeled and explained.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION BEYOND THE BALLOT

One unique feature of the U.S. political system is the sheer number of opportunities to engage in political activity apart from elections. For our purposes, we can define political participation as "activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action—either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies." ⁵⁸ For example, an individual might work on a campaign, contribute funds to candidates or an important cause, serve on a local board or commission, contact public officials, join political or interest-based organizations, or volunteer for a community-based organization. Some forms of participation require resources, whereas others ask for nothing more than interest. Passionate interest sometimes results in protests or other unconventional forms of participation. Women who petitioned for suffrage rights engaged in protests to attract attention in the absence of power and access to other important political resources. Political participation is not equally distributed throughout the population. Ironically, those who stand to benefit the most from working on a cause or for a candidate (e.g., the poor, minorities, women) often participate less frequently than others. Conventional wisdom holds that women participate beyond the ballot box at lower rates than men do. However, a closer examination reveals that if demographic characteristics are held constant, men and women participate at roughly equal levels across many, but not all, forms of political activity.

Do Men and Women Specialize in Forms of Political Participation?

In the largest study of its kind, political scientists Sidney Verba, Kay Schlozman, and Henry Brady surveyed more than fifteen thousand Americans by telephone and then interviewed more than twenty-five hundred in person to understand voluntary civic participation. ⁵⁹ The researchers used the data to compare men's

and women's behavior in traditional political activity and other forms of volunteerism to test the hypothesis that men and women specialize in different types of political engagement. In examining political participation,⁶⁰ they found that women engaged in an average of 2.0 political acts, while men undertook 2.3, a minor but statistically significant difference.⁶¹ In other words, men are generally slightly more actively involved than women in traditional forms of political engagement. More substantively important differences appear in specific acts. The largest differences appear in making a campaign contribution, contacting a government official, and affiliating with a political organization. In each case, men are more likely than women to have engaged in these political activities.⁶²

The picture is slightly different for nonpolitical voluntary activities, but perhaps not as different as we might have expected. For nearly two centuries, women have participated at the periphery of politics through community and religious organizations. However, the data here show that men and women engage in about the same number of nonpolitical activities, with a few notable exceptions. Women are more likely than men to attend church and donate their time and money to the church. However, once men and women get involved, the amount of time and money they give is significantly different. Men give more hours to the church than women do, whereas women give more hours to politics than men do. When it comes to money though, men contribute more frequently and are likely to contribute larger sums of money to both the church and to political causes and candidates. This raises the resource question.

Access to Monetary and Political Resources

Do men have access to more monetary resources and do they use those resources to greater political effect than women? Political scientists do not have a complete answer to this question. Research has shown that the propensity to give and the amount contributed depend on both the total family income and the portion of family income derived from the respondent's income. Women's mean family income is lower than men's, and women's personal share of the family income is lower even in cases where both spouses work outside the home. Most often clustered in lower-paying jobs, women have less money to give to the candidates and causes they support. Not only do women give in smaller amounts, they give less consistently and for ideological reasons (to support a cause) rather than for economic reasons.⁶³ Money is only one type of resource though; others include time and civic skills. Men and women in the Verba, Schlozman, and Brady civic-participation study had roughly the same number of free hours per week, although among full-time workers and full-time workers with preschool children, men had an average of twenty-four more free minutes per week than women did. Essentially, this suggests that life and family circumstances, not gender, determine the time available for civic activity. With respect to skills, the researchers included civic skills acquired on

the job, through organizational affiliation, and through church membership. Among those working outside the home and those affiliated with an organization or church, men have significantly more opportunity to practice civic skills on the job than women do. In other settings, there are no differences between men and women. "[M]en's advantage with respect to civic skills exercised on the job results from a process by which men have differential access to jobs that require education and training and not from differential access to skill opportunities in these jobs."⁶⁴

In translating the role that resources play in laying a path to political participation, the researchers found that by and large men and women do not significantly differ in how they engage in politics. Voluntary organizational involvement is an important avenue for women, particularly for women who do not work outside the home. This finding confirms the historical role voluntary associations have played for women in politics. The most striking finding, however, has to do with monetary resources. Women have less money than men do, and less control over the money in their households, disadvantaging them in an increasingly important form of political activity: making political contributions. The wage gap between men and women is well known; but less well known is the way in which the household economic gap exacerbates inequalities in political activity.⁶⁵ With respect to campaign contributions, men give more often than women and in substantially larger amounts. Once active in politics, women are more likely than men to give their time, while men are more likely than women to give money. Three-fourths of those who give \$200 or more are men.⁶⁶ The emergence of women's political action committees (PACs) dedicated to soliciting funds from women in favor of electing women have given women a new and highly instrumental way to channel their campaign contributions. For example, EMILY's List (Early Money Is Like Yeast, it makes the dough rise) was founded in 1985 to recruit, fund, and elect Democratic pro-choice women to federal office. Ninety-four percent of EMILY's List contributors are women. In the 2004 election cycle, EMILY's List ranked tenth on the overall top-contributors list, having contributed over \$2,288,619 to the candidates on its list.⁶⁷ In 2004, there were forty-five campaign PACs and donor networks that were primarily oriented to women candidates or had a predominantly female donor base. Fourteen were national women's PACs and thirty-one were state or local networks spread throughout nineteen states.⁶⁸ These developments suggest that as women gain access to more financial resources, they may choose to dedicate them to supporting women in politics.

The Internet Expands Women's Political Donations and Outreach

The Women's Campaign Fund Forum (WCF) released a report on women's political giving in 2008. Their report, titled "Vote with Your Purse 2.0: Women's Online Giving, Offline Power," focuses on the ways in which women can

increase their political engagement and voice through online giving to political candidates.⁶⁹ Although women command more than half of U.S. wealth, they accounted for less than one-third (27 percent) of the individual hard-money contributions to federal candidates, party committees, and political action committees—the same share they held in 2006. However, women contributed substantially more in the 2008 presidential contests than in previous races, giving in excess of \$109 million as of September 2, 2008, compared with only \$37 million during the entire 2000 presidential election cycle. Although the data for 2008 is incomplete, women's giving between 2000 and 2004 nearly tripled, leading analysts to expect a sizable increase when all of the contributions for the 2008 election have been recorded. Data show that women contributed \$60 million to Senator Hillary Clinton's primary campaign, accounting for half (49.6 percent) of her total donations. Likewise, the Center for Responsive Politics reports that women represented nearly half of Barack Obama's donors (47 percent) and contributed about \$75 million to his campaign (as of September, 2008). The "Vote with Your Purse" study also found that women are more likely to donate to issue-based charitable causes in an effort to produce social change, with single women identified as the "most generous donors." WCF's overall initiative was designed to explore whether female charitable donors could become equally generous political donors in an effort to expand women's political power and voice. They found that the Internet enhances the values that motivate women to give political money (impact, inspiration, information, inclusion, interaction) and that female online donors actively research politics using online sources almost exclusively. Female online donors are heavily engaged in social networking and nearly eighty percent forwarded political information or stories to friends and family along with a request to get engaged with the campaign or to donate money to the campaign. Thus, while women may have been slow to join the online revolution and slow to dedicate their financial resources to politics, the opportunities afforded by online giving may open new doors for women's influence in politics and enhance women's appeal to candidates of both parties.

Do Men and Women Speak in Different Political Voices?

From the same citizen participation data set described above, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady investigated whether men and women speak "in a different voice" when it comes to politics.⁷⁰ Do men and women follow their respective *voices* by undertaking particularized political action? The researchers also investigated the type of rewards men and women received from their political participation. This research is significant because it connects attitudes with action. Previous studies have only examined this connection among political elites, such as officeholders or political-party officials. We know, for example, that female legislators' distinctive attitudes are reflected in their choice of legislative

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priorities and roll-call voting behavior, most notably in sponsoring and promoting legislation dealing with women, children, and the family.⁷¹

Among the citizenry at large, however, the researchers found that men and women are more similar than dissimilar. Again, conventional generalizations can be misleading in this regard. Gender exercised little direct pressure on defining political voice, rewards gained through participation, or issues that mobilized participation. Rather, race and ethnicity, level of education, and family circumstances—like the presence of school-aged children—were most powerful for both men and women. The differences that exist between men and women are not always predictable. For example, women have historically engaged most directly in grassroots, organizational, and local activities, but researchers were surprised to learn that, at least in 1990 (the year in which this survey was conducted), women were often less locally and organizationally focused than men. Men and women gained similar gratifications from political participation. While voting was motivated by civic gratifications, activities involving campaigns were more likely driven by social motivations. In short, researchers found that the nature of the act rather than the gender of the actor determined the type of gratification experienced. Finally, researchers hypothesized that men and women would be moved by different issues. From a list of eleven issues mentioned by respondents as important in motivating their participation, men and women differed substantially on only two: education and abortion. For women, concern about education motivated 20 percent of their issue-based activity, compared to 13 percent for men. The issue of abortion motivated 14 percent of women's activity, compared to 8 percent of men's activity. Gaps between the advantaged and disadvantaged, and among racial and ethnic groups surpassed gender gaps in almost every case. With regard to children and family issues, previous findings led researchers to hypothesize that women would be moved more directly than men by issues related to children. However, for both men and women action was prompted by having school-aged children in the home rather than by gender. In short, this research cautions that expectations about citizen participation based on gender can best be understood by looking at the complex relational webs that define people's lives. Race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and family circumstances are greater predictors of motivation, gratification, and issue interests than gender alone.

Researchers Marc Hooghe and Dietlind Stolle investigated gender differences in anticipated political behavior among fourteen-year-olds.⁷² While there is little difference in the level of participation anticipated at this age (girls mention 4.55 political acts, boys mention 4.0), the type of participation varies by gender. Girls intend to participate in various forms of activism, but less so in political parties or in running for office, while boys more often indicated a wish to become party members and/or seek political office. Boys were also nearly twice as likely to mention engaging in some form of radical behavior involving confrontational participation (e.g., spraying slogans, blocking traffic). Explanations for the type of activity indicated included the number of years an individual expected to be in school (correlates positively with conventional political

acts and negatively with radical political actions), membership in associations (correlates positively with conventional forms of participation, but bears no relationship to anticipated unconventional actions), and the breadth of formal civics education (corresponds positively with conventional- and social-movement participation and negatively with radical participation). There is no way to tell, of course, whether these findings are predictive of adult behavior. The analysis cannot tell how the political action repertoires of boys and girls will develop over time. This research poses an important reformulation of the basic question "Why do women participate less?" to "Why do adult women fail to do the things they intended to do when they were adolescent girls?"⁷³

Levels of Political Interest Among Men and Women

Researchers have long believed that interest motivates political activity.⁷⁴ Women in previous generations were conditioned to believe that politics was a "man's world" and therefore beyond the scope of their interest. Perhaps this legacy continues even today. Significant gaps in interest and attentiveness to politics remain between men and women. In analysis based on the 1989 American National Election Study, for example, 61 percent of men, as opposed to only 45 percent of women, reported that they followed politics some or most of the time. In 1996, 74 percent of women, compared to 59 percent of men, said they sometimes did not feel competent to understand public affairs. Interestingly, statistically controlling for differences in level of education between men and women does not eliminate this gap in perceived political competence. Actually, the gap is greatest among college-educated people! Sixty-one percent of college-educated women but only 36 percent of similarly educated men find politics too complicated to understand, according to a March 2000 study conducted by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center.⁷⁵

At the root of this gender difference may lie a political knowledge gap. Researchers remain puzzled as to why fewer questions on political knowledge are correctly answered by women than men. Using a national sample of adults, researchers at the Annenberg Center asked thirteen questions about the major presidential candidates' backgrounds and their positions on issues to test political knowledge during the 2000 primary campaign. In addition to analyzing the number of correct answers, researchers also paid attention to how often respondents answered incorrectly or stated that they did not know an answer. Previous research on political knowledge found that women were more likely than men to answer that they did not know an answer, while men more often answered questions correctly. In the Annenberg survey, men were more likely to answer correctly, whereas women were more likely to answer incorrectly *and* to state that they did not know an answer. The knowledge deficit for women persisted even when several sociodemographic variables, such as level of education, age, race, income, marital status, party identification, and media

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exposure, were statistically controlled. Simply being male added one correct answer out of the thirteen knowledge items in the scale.⁷⁶

A recent study tested a slightly different question related to political knowledge, political interest, and political behavior.⁷⁷ Rather than test actual knowledge, Mary Christine Banwart analyzed how informed young men and women *perceive* they are about politics. Since previous studies have found that self-assessment of how much one has learned about a candidate predicts knowledge levels, and in turn, knowledge predicts participatory behavior, this study hypothesizes that a person's perceived level of information or knowledge will also influence his or her perspective on politicians and politics, as well as serve as a political motivator for action. A national survey of college students conducted one week prior to the November 2004 elections found that males perceived themselves more informed about the 2004 election, but that interest levels between men and women did not significantly differ and both groups reported a high interest in the upcoming election. However, young women reported higher levels of political cynicism, defined as a "sense of powerlessness" and as the "feeling that government in general and political leaders in particular do not care about the public's opinions and are not acting in the best interest of the people."⁷⁸ Though this skepticism did not impact the vote in 2004 (more young women voted than did men), Banwart notes that it still raises concerns regarding women's confidence in their role in other areas of politics such as running for office and more actively seeking leadership roles. Interestingly, when the perceived level of knowledge is held constant between men and women, the difference in political cynicism disappears. Similarly, differences in political cynicism are erased when political interest is held constant between men and women. The study concludes, "Continuing to ask questions about why women and men differ in their perceptions of politics can lead us to a better understanding of the types of messages and information that work to generate an overall more informed, interested, confident, and engaged electorate."⁷⁹

This gap in political knowledge is not a feature unique to American politics. Analyzing election studies in the United States, Great Britain, and Canada, Emily Guyman finds a consistent gap, with men having more political knowledge than women.⁸⁰ The size of the gap varies by country, ranging between 3 percent and 10 percent. Guyman attributes the gap to a variety of factors, but primarily to the different concerns that men and women face in their daily lives. Women are the primary caregivers of children, and analysis indicates that having children under the age of eighteen has a negative effect on political knowledge. Men and women have different social networks and affiliate with different types of associations. As a result, "political knowledge is not equally distributed."⁸¹

The consequences of the knowledge gap are varied. Differences in knowledge may result in different criteria for choosing candidates. Men may use pocketbook considerations while women may rely on character or social policies as determinants.⁸² Other studies find that women discuss politics less often with family and friends and are less likely to try to convince others how to vote.

The ability to discuss politics and persuade others to act is based, to some degree, on political knowledge. If women do not take part in the flow of private and public political dialogue, their opportunity to exert influence over candidates, issues, and agendas will be reduced.⁸³

EXPLAINING THE PATTERNS OF PARTICIPATION

The patterns of political participation present us with a puzzle: Women vote at higher rates than men do, but men exhibit more interest in, attentiveness to, and knowledge of politics than women. Among other forms of political participation, gender does not appear to exert a more significant influence than other factors related to a person's life circumstances. There are a variety of plausible explanations for the lingering gender differences in politics, including the power of socialization, real and perceived structural barriers to participation, and cultural counterpressures.

Socialization

The role of socialization is best characterized by Simone de Beauvoir's claim that "Women are made and not born."⁸⁴ Socialization is the process by which we, first as children and later as adults, learn and internalize the values, norms, and expectations of the culture and society around us. Gender socialization is the process by which girls and boys learn to differentiate between the sexes and act according to the norms and expectations appropriate to their sex. As early as five years old, most children understand gender differentiation. Along with understanding that boys/men differ from girls/women biologically, children internalize the images of power and the sense of importance that separate the genders. Very quickly they describe the sexual hierarchy they see around them as natural or normal.⁸⁵ Thus when boys show a stronger preference for "boys" toys and same-sex playmates, researchers link their preference to the effects of this gender stratification.⁸⁶ Further, girls are more likely to wish that they were boys than the reverse. Researcher Ann Beuf asked sixty-three children, ages three to six, what they would do if they grew up as the opposite sex. More girls had answers, meaning that they had already thought about the possibility. The boys didn't even want to answer the question. "That's a weird question, you know," one replied. When another boy was pressed, he said, "If I were a girl, I'd have to grow up to be nothing."⁸⁷ In similar research conducted by Myra Sadker and David Sadker, 42 percent of girls saw positive outcomes in becoming a boy, whereas 95 percent of the boys saw no advantage whatsoever in becoming a girl. In fact, for 16 percent of the boys interviewed, becoming a girl was so unacceptable that they fantasized about committing suicide. In the words of one boy, "I would stab myself in the heart fifty times with a dull butter

knife.”⁸⁸ At a very young age, children have already learned about the gendered world, including which gender is more valued by society. How do they learn the rules of gender hierarchy so quickly?

Gendered norms and expectations are communicated in a variety of ways. According to socialization research, *agents of socialization*, such as the family, school, peers, religion, and the media, play a role in shaping children’s attitudes toward, knowledge of, and behavior in both gender and political roles. Early research on children and political learning found that the family transmitted the earliest messages about authority. In two-parent households, more prevalent in the 1950s and early 1960s when this research was conducted, the father was labeled the authority figure, and he was assumed to transmit political information to his children. It was further assumed that if a father was absent, children’s political sophistication would suffer. A study of college students in the 1980s, however, examined the impact of family structure and found that it exerted little independent influence on students’ political attitudes and voting predilections.⁸⁹ Experiences in school reinforce the norms of democratic society. By high school, civics classes transmit specific political information to adolescents. Studies of textbooks have consistently found males depicted as the primary figures in political life, while females are rarely mentioned. When Ann Richards, former governor of Texas, was asked about the historical significance of her governorship, she replied that beyond any policy change she might facilitate, her picture would appear in textbooks and offer a role model for girls to emulate.⁹⁰

Gendered behavior is further encouraged through play with “appropriate” toys. Toy stores are shockingly clear in color-coding “boy” and “girl” aisles (in pink and blue, of course) and choosing displays (“hands-on” versus “look, don’t touch”). Social psychologists confirm that children are equally serious about maintaining the separation: “One fourth-grade male reported that if he saw a boy playing with a doll, ‘I’d yell at him first, but if he didn’t stop, I’d punch him in the nose and call the police.’”⁹¹

Recent cross-national research involving adolescents in six Indonesian provinces explored gender differences on political attitudes, skills, and engagement. Contrary to other studies, they found that girls were slightly more interested in politics, had participated more, and were more politically tolerant than boys. Most importantly, the researchers found that formal civics instruction increased girls’ participation more robustly than boys’. Very few comparative gender studies of political socialization exist, particularly in emerging democracies where the potential gains in girls’ and women’s participation are arguably the greatest.⁹²

Governments are interested in learning about political socialization because of its power to maintain stable political systems. Socialization processes may also reinforce and maintain patriarchal gender relations. Research done in the 1960s is now criticized for the way in which it interpreted differences between boys and girls on measures of political interest, knowledge, and awareness. Researchers, presumably viewing the data through their own gendered

expectations, overestimated the size and significance of differences between primary-school boys and girls.⁹³ Additionally, the main body of political socialization research suggested that adult political behavior was a direct result of early childhood experiences, overlooking the possibility of change later in life. Only recently have researchers lengthened the time of observation to include adult experiences, such as those in the workplace, as well as the power of social, political, and economic events to reshape attitudes and behaviors.

Since politics in its traditional forms is limited to adults, how might gender socialization translate to political activity? Children learn through imitation, modeling, and apprenticeship opportunities. The previously cited study by The White House Project Education Fund found that the young men and women who are most engaged in politics are also involved and invested in their communities. They come from families in which their parents model civic behavior by voting. These young people are more likely to be registered to vote than those who are least involved in their communities. The men and women in this study who indicate an interest in someday seeking political office themselves are those who have gained leadership experience through school or other apprenticeship organizations, have been encouraged to run by adults or peers, are the most likely to believe that they can make a positive difference, and the least likely to find politics too complicated.⁹⁴ The research suggests that providing girls with role models, mentors, and opportunities to practice politics before they reach adulthood makes a positive difference in women's interest and political ambition. One initiative in this regard that draws ridicule from some quarters and praise from others is the Barbie for President doll, first released in April 2000 and rereleased in 2004 and 2008 by Mattel in conjunction with The White House Project and Girls, Inc.⁹⁵ The doll is a part of The White House Project's "Go Vote. Go Run. Go Lead. Go Girl" initiative. Marie Wilson, founder and president of The White House Project, characterizes the Barbie as "a case of invading the culture rather than fighting it, and using the tools of the culture to teach valuable lessons about democracy."⁹⁶ The White House Project's "Girl Power" Web page provides girls with a number of activities related to women in politics and leadership. In partnership with the Girl Scouts, girls between the ages of five and eleven can work on projects leading to a White House Project leadership patch, known as the "Ms. President" badge.⁹⁷ In anticipation of the 2008 election, The White House Project and the Take our Daughters and Sons to Work Day Foundation launched a national campaign to encourage political participation among girls, entitled "Take our Daughters to the Polls." The campaign encouraged parents, grandparents, and other adults to pledge to take a young girl to the polls on Election Day and released a viral video emphasizing the political power of girls across the country. "Children model their own dreams on what adults and society show them to be possible. By taking girls to the polls on Election Day, we teach them that they are a valuable part of the political process, and that their voice and their vote can make a difference," said Marie Wilson.⁹⁸

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Structural Barriers to Women's Participation

Political scientists have long confirmed that certain characteristics make some citizens more likely to participate in politics than others. For example, education, income, and certain occupations are good relative predictors of the frequency and types of citizen participation. Since women lag behind men on several economic indicators and have only recently matched men on years of formal education, lingering barriers to women's full participation remain, reinforcing the gaps found between male and female participation. One additional factor distinguishes women from one another: gender consciousness, or a feminist identity.

A group consciousness that ties an individual woman's interests to those of other women and provides an outlet for her discontent over gender inequities has been found to facilitate women's participation and to set those women apart from others.⁹⁹ Feminist consciousness may be shaped by generational forces. Those who come of age during eras of active public feminism—for example, those who turned eighteen during the early 1970s (the start of the second wave of feminism) or during the Clinton administration in the 1990s—are more likely not only to develop feminist consciousness, but also to act on it by supporting collective action advocating feminist policies. Those who come of age in more conservative periods (e.g., the Reagan administration) may also support feminist policies, but are less likely to develop a feminist consciousness leading to support for and engagement in collective action.¹⁰⁰

Additional research examining the relationship of feminist identity and group consciousness to political attitudes and policy positions finds that feminists differ significantly from nonfeminists. Analysis based on the 1992 National Election Study revealed that women categorized as feminists were more likely than other women to support increased federal spending for child care, unemployment benefits, environmental and welfare programs, and programs to address homelessness, public schools, and urban problems.¹⁰¹ Nonfeminists were significantly more likely to support additional spending on the military to maintain the United States as a military power. Differences also exist with respect to women's positions on abortion and sexual harassment, with the majority of feminists supporting choice positions and nonfeminists opposing abortion. The 1992 study also found that significantly more feminists than nonfeminists believed that sexual harassment in the workplace is a serious problem for women. A majority of all the women believed that too little was being done to protect women from harassment. Fifty-three percent of nonfeminists and 68 percent of feminists reported that they would be more likely to believe the woman in a case of conflicting stories about sexual harassment.

Feminist consciousness also appears to motivate some types of political participation. For example, feminists are more likely to vote than nonfeminists. During the 1992 presidential election, 41 percent of feminists and only 33 percent of nonfeminists reported that they were very interested in the campaign.



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Interest led feminists to participate in campaigns at higher rates than nonfeminists and to exhibit a higher level of interest in politics overall. The data are not yet available to allow us to explore the relationship between a feminist identity and participation in the 2008 election.¹⁰²

Cultural Messages: Counterpressures to Political Activity

Among the many potential barriers to women's participation are the daily messages present in popular culture and directed at shaping women's identity, expectations, ambitions, and habits. As we learned above, women remain less interested in politics and less knowledgeable about politics than men even today, nearly ninety years since winning the vote. Powerful socialization forces in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries led women to believe that politics was better left to men.¹⁰³ However, contemporary media images of women in politics may be sending the message that women are "damned if they do, and damned if they don't." In October 1992, Deborah Tannen, best known for her work on gender differences in communication styles, wrote an article for the op-ed page of the *New York Times* in which she addressed the "Hillary Factor."

The term was coined by Rodham Clinton when she won the presidency. It represented the fit the stereotype for example, the image of her from the cans thought that that misconception. As Tannen described you are a Mother. If you are paying She goes on: "a president's wife intelligent, knowledgeable. The hope who do not corner Sarah Palin the vice president children.

Women face their physical the same expectations political implications men a man is But woman's century ago, co 1990 alone, wo and more than cultures and var current standards handsome, con beautiful, which terminology lea women are orn if not for their study entitled "dents to rate ph who were judge gent, flexible, in and successful t harshly than m dates seeking p and voters.

The term was originally coined to refer to the question of whether Hillary Rodham Clinton would help or hurt her husband Bill Clinton's chances to win the presidency. Tannen, however, took the term one step further, saying it represented the double bind that affects accomplished women who do not fit the stereotype of femininity and the expectations of motherhood. When, for example, the Clintons acted to protect their daughter's privacy by shielding her from the press, they were surprised to learn that a majority of Americans thought they were childless and held Hillary Clinton responsible for that misconception. The "Motherhood Bind" has an impact on all women. As Tannen describes it, "If you're not a Mother, you're a Failed Woman. If you are a Mother, you can't have enough attention to pay to serious work. If you are paying attention to serious work, you must be a Bad Mother."¹⁰⁴ She goes on: "By what logic could it be scary rather than comforting for a president's wife, who everyone knows will have his ear, to be unusually intelligent, knowledgeable and accomplished? And to answer: by no logic at all. The hope was to incite emotions—fear and anger—that confront women who do not conform to the old molds." In the 2008 election, Alaska Governor Sarah Palin faced many of the same questions about her suitability for the vice presidency based on her status as a mother of five relatively young children.

Women face a variety of cultural expectations that may vary depending on their physical appearance, race, or ethnicity. In each case, men do not have the same expectations placed on them, and in each case there are significant political implications for women as a result. Ambrose Bierce once wrote, "To men a man is but a mind. Who cares what face he carries or what he wears? But woman's body is the woman."¹⁰⁵ Although Bierce was writing nearly a century ago, consumer-spending statistics suggest his words still ring true. In 1990 alone, women spent well over \$1.2 billion on elective cosmetic surgery, and more than \$20 billion on cosmetics. The standards of beauty differ across cultures and vary over time, but women are universally expected to aspire to the current standards of beauty in ways that men are not. Men are referred to as *handsome*, connoting achievement and strength. Such terms do not accompany *beautiful*, which is applied only to females, scenes, or objects. This common terminology leads one set of researchers to conclude, "Men are instrumental; women are ornamental."¹⁰⁶ These observations and statistics would be trivial if not for their consequences on how individuals are judged. In a classic 1972 study entitled "What Is Beautiful Is Good," psychologists asked college students to rate photographs of strangers on a variety of personal qualities. Those who were judged attractive were also more likely to be characterized as intelligent, flexible, interesting, confident, assertive, strong, outgoing, friendly, poised, and successful than those considered unattractive. Women were judged more harshly than men.¹⁰⁷ The same attributions are made when considering candidates seeking public office, with important implications for women candidates and voters.

Judging Competence by Appearance: Implications for Women

In a 2005 *Science* article, researchers were able to postdict the outcomes of over 65 percent of the U.S. Senate and House races in 2002 and 2004, using inferences of competence based solely on candidate facial appearance.¹⁰⁸ Faces are a major source of information about other people. From a psychological perspective, researchers have found that rapid automatic inference from the facial appearance of political candidates can influence the way people process subsequent information about the candidates. When naïve study participants were presented with pairs of black-and-white head-shot photographs of the winners and the runners-up from actual U.S. Senate and House races, the candidate who was perceived as more competent won in 71.6 percent of the Senate races and 66.8 percent of the House races (note: if the subject recognized any of the faces, the pair was removed from analysis). To be sure that subjects were identifying competence rather than likeability or some other trait dimension, the researchers conducted a secondary analysis that asked subjects to evaluate candidates across seven traits. They found that the judgments rendered on the basis of a one-second exposure to the pairs of candidate photographs clustered into three distinct factors: competence (competence, intelligence, leadership), trust (honesty, trustworthiness), and likability (charisma, likability). Importantly, only the competence judgments predicted the outcomes of elections.

Further exploring the gender implications arising from this study, researchers at Oklahoma State University reasoned that since candidate facial appearance affects voters' preferences and sex affects facial appearance, perhaps facial appearance and voter inferences have an impact on the electability of women.¹⁰⁹ Previous research has linked the "baby-face/maturity" facial dimension to perceptions of competence. Baby-faced individuals are perceived to be less competent than others because people overgeneralize and attribute other babylike characteristics to them.¹¹⁰ The study found that male faces are judged more mature, candidates with faces judged mature are perceived as more competent, and the perception of candidate competency affects vote choice. Female candidates are expected, based on gender stereotypes, to possess female traits (compassionate, honest, task-oriented, and focused on issues related to education, poverty, health care, the environment, and social welfare), while men are expected to possess male traits (dominant, tough, decisive, imbued with technical expertise, and focused on issues related to crime and punishment, the economy, trade, taxes, the military, foreign policy, and national security). Voters in national elections prefer candidates they perceive as competent and in possession of masculine traits.¹¹¹ Thus, how will voters react when presented with candidates of both sexes, varying appearance along the baby-face/maturity dimension? Subjects were again presented with pairs of candidates to evaluate on the basis of facial appearance. Researchers found that male candidates and

mature-faced candidates. Additionally, researchers found that subjects were likely to rate mature-faced candidates more highly than baby-faced candidates. Overall, candidates with mature faces were judged more competent than those with baby faces. Both simulated and actual election results showed that mature-faced candidates won more often than baby-faced candidates. Researchers attribute this to the fact that people prefer women, but only if they are perceived as competent. In the national elections, female candidates who were perceived as competent won, even if they cannot present themselves as competent candidates and

The media often focuses on the appearance of female candidates. In the 2004 election, for example, a female candidate was described as "too young" and "frivolous." If you are a woman of laboring over your appearance, it looks good gets the attention. Josie Heath, a 19-year-old candidate, claimed that she was "too young" for the press clippings. Florida's secret ballot law, which prohibits discussions affecting the election, was ridiculed based on a candidate's lipstick was of a dark shade and smudges on her face. She was compared to a baby-faced candidate for the Democratic nomination. She was ridiculed in the press for her laugh ("son of a b***h" Morris), her pre-election statement (in July 2007, she said she was "low on her chest" for the Senate or a national site dedicated to her). She has thousands of hits a

Michelle Obama's striking set of germs. She has never been a First Lady. She is rated from Princeton University. She has a resume of professional experience from her Chicago firm (Sullivan, Kohn, and Obama); work

mature-faced candidates were perceived as more competent than their counterparts. Additionally, sex conditions the perceptions—male subjects were more likely to rate mature-faced and male candidates competent than female subjects. Overall, candidates perceived as competent had a higher probability of winning both simulated and real elections. However, even female candidates judged mature-faced were not perceived as more competent than baby-faced men. Researchers attribute this finding to what we know about gender stereotypes—we prefer women, whether they are candidates or not, to appear feminine, but in the national electoral context, masculine traits are preferred. Therefore, a female candidate presenting a mature face may send voters conflicting cues that they cannot process—effectively creating yet another double-bind for women candidates and officeholders.

The media facilitate the public's attention to appearance by focusing on female candidates' hairstyles and the color or design of their clothes, rather than on the content of their messages. Bush campaign operative Mary Matalin described it this way, "Women in politics who look chic are perceived as frivolous. If you're pulled together that means you've been shopping . . . instead of laboring over papers . . . fifteen hours a day. . . . Besides, every woman who looks good gets hit on, and after a while they just don't want to be hassled."¹¹² Josie Heath, a 1990 and 1992 Democratic senatorial candidate from Colorado, claimed that she could describe her wardrobe during that period by reading her press clippings.¹¹³ Following the 2000 presidential election, Katherine Harris, Florida's secretary of state, who was responsible for several significant decisions affecting the state's presidential ballot count, became the object of public ridicule based on her appearance. The *Washington Post* noted that Harris's lipstick was of "the creamy sort that smears all over a coffee cup and leaves smudges on shirt collars" and that she "applied her makeup with a trowel," and compared the texture of her skin to that of a plastered wall.¹¹⁴ As a candidate for the Democratic nomination for president, Hillary Clinton was ridiculed in the press for her "thick ankles" (noted by biographer Carl Bernstein), her laugh ("somewhere between a cackle and a screech," according to Dick Morris), her preference for suits with pants instead of a skirt, and her cleavage (in July 2007, the *Washington Post* noted an outfit in which the "neckline sat low on her chest").¹¹⁵ In 1996, long before she was a candidate for the U.S. Senate or a national candidate for the presidential party nomination, a Web site dedicated to Hillary Clinton's changing hairstyles received more than forty thousand hits a day.

Michelle Obama presents the media and the American public with an interesting set of gender and cultural puzzles. Prior to Hillary Clinton, there had never been a First Lady with a postgraduate degree. Michelle Obama graduated from Princeton and earned her law degree at Harvard. She presents a resume of professional accomplishments that include practicing law at the Chicago firm Sidley Austin (where she mentored a summer associate, Barack Obama); work with the city of Chicago in launching the youth mentorship

program, Public Allies; and most recently a community relations position with the University of Chicago. During the campaign, she took a leave of absence from her position as vice president for community and external affairs for the University of Chicago Hospitals. Becoming First Lady has effectively ended Michelle Obama's professional career, raising lots of questions among feminist columnists about what that means for her personally and what it means for women more generally.

Katha Pollitt, writing for the *Nation*, chronicles the media transformation of Michelle Obama from "fist-bumping radical to Mom-in-Chief," references to the two predominant frames used in coverage of Obama.¹¹⁶ "Her bluntly spoken rejection of a simpleminded, Panglossian vision of America riled conservatives, from high-profile pundits to anonymous bloggers. The *National Review* featured a scowling picture of her on its April cover and characterized her as Mrs. Grievance and a 'peculiar mix of privilege and victimology.' A Fox News commentator famously characterized the Obama's joyful fist tap the night Barack clinched the nomination as a 'terrorist fist jab,' while a satirical *New Yorker* cover depicted her with an Angela Davis 'fro and an AK-47," writes Geraldine Brooks.¹¹⁷ Rebecca Traister decries the "momification" of Michelle Obama. "The situation is not entirely unique. The battle to conform to wifely expectations was previously fought by Hillary Clinton, a woman who recently made a hell-bent run for exactly the same job her husband held in the years that she was forced to choke on her health plan and write books about the White House cat. . . . But Michelle Obama is in an even tighter bind, in part because of the legacy of left to her by Hillary and her detractors. Powerful couples must now tread as far as possible from the 'two for one' talk, lest the female half get smacked with a nutcracker. But Michelle's power is potentially scarier than Hillary's could ever have been. She is not simply a smart and powerful woman, but a smart and powerful black woman."¹¹⁸ Yet nothing sparked more blogosphere commentary than David Samuels' March 15, 2009 essay in *New York Magazine*:

There are clear limits to Michelle's ambition. She went to excellent schools, got decent grades, and stayed away from too much intellectual heavy lifting, and held a series of practical, modestly salaried jobs while accommodating her husband's wilder dreams and raising two lovely daughters. In this she is a more practical role model for young women than Hillary Clinton, blending her calculations about family and career with an expectation of normal personal happiness.

"That Samuels, like a 1950s home ec teacher, advises 'young women' to keep their ambitions 'practical' if they want to be happy shows just how disturbing Hillary Clinton—or rather the nightmare fantasy of Hillary Clinton—has been to certain male psyches," writes Katha Pollitt. The need to "understand" Michelle Obama and to fit her into existing cultural frames of what it means to be a woman in the new century demonstrates again that the issues associated with gender equality are far from over.

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Similarly to attractiveness, race and ethnicity modify expectations as well. Scholar Patricia Hill Collins writes that "portraying African American women as stereotypical mammies, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and hot mommas has been essential to the political economy of domination fostering Black women's oppression. Challenging these controlling images has long been a core theme in Black feminist thought."¹¹⁹ Leaders in the women's movement were relatively silent during the congressional debate over welfare reform even when the tone and content became a thinly veiled racist attack on poor, single mothers. African American women lag behind white women in winning legislative seats at both the state and the federal level.¹²⁰ Part of the reason is the lingering belief that black women are not serious and credible candidates.¹²¹ To overcome this hurdle, more women of color need to seek and hold office, but the obstacles to public office are substantial. Money constitutes a barrier for many women, but particularly for women of color. Beyond money, many minority women have little public exposure beyond their immediate communities, yet they face resistance even within their own communities. As Shirley Chisholm said, "Black males feel that the political seats are owed to them because of historical circumstances; therefore, opportunities should redound to them first of all."¹²² The Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers recently partnered with the National Organization of Black Elected Legislative Women (NOBEL) to develop a leadership and training program for African American women interested in pursuing elected and appointive office.¹²³

Asian American women, Latina women, and Native American women have also been slow to ascend to public life. Besides having to overcome the previously described barriers, women in these groups (especially Asian and Latina women) face cultural expectations that limit their role to the home and family. Native American women, although historically active in tribal politics and fully integrated in many tribal systems of governance, have only recently explored public life beyond their community of origin. Without role models to give voice to their concerns, women of color are also less likely to be involved in electoral politics as voters.

An Alternative Answer to the Puzzle: Equal Participation, Different Paths

Conventional explanations of voter turnout would lead us to believe that men would consistently vote at higher rates than women because of their greater expressed interest in and knowledge about politics; greater command of resources including time, money, and civic skills; and their current overrepresentation in elective office. Although we have just reviewed a number of plausible explanations for the male advantage in various forms of participation, it may

also be that researchers have overlooked an important ingredient in predicting the key political act of voting. New research by Allison Harell identifies the distinct importance of social capital in explaining female voter turnout.¹²⁴ Social capital has been defined as "social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trust that facilitate collective action . . . social capital is embedded in all sorts of formal and informal social networks from rotary clubs and parent-teacher association (PTA) meetings to bowling leagues, card parties, and socializing with neighbors."¹²⁵ In this sense then, social networks become resources that individuals can access. This is particularly important in considering women's participation since too often the variety of ways that women engage with others in their community has been rendered invisible in the private sphere while "politics" takes place in the public sphere. Harell argues that women's informal and formal networks tend to be nonhierarchically organized, located at the local community level, and centered on care work, making them harder to recognize and measure in political participation studies. Using data from the Canadian National Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating (NSGVP), Harell is able to demonstrate that membership in an association (social or political) and informal volunteering (care work done on one's own) increase the odds of voting among women but not men. When all of the other traditional predictors of voting are held constant, and only the interaction between sex and informal volunteering is examined, women's likelihood of voting increases by 4 percentage points while men's likelihood of voting remains unchanged. This study is important because of what it says about the way in which political acts and the resources assumed to predict or explain those political acts are studied. First, social capital has been treated as a gender-neutral variable, when in fact this research demonstrates important gender differences in both the source of social capital and the ways in which it is linked to explicit acts of political participation. Second, in overlooking social capital as a unique resource for women, standard voting models are also not gender neutral and need to be reexamined. Finally, viewing social capital as acquired by women as a resource directly related to women's political participation effectively incorporates private sphere activities into explanations of political activity in ways previously ignored.

MOBILIZING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

As this chapter has shown, men and women approach politics similarly and from different perspectives depending on the activity and on life circumstances. While women vote at higher rates than men do, women remain less likely to donate money to a candidate, participate in political organizations, or seek elective office themselves. This chapter concludes by examining four factors that may increase women's political participation: events and issues, high-profile female candidates, organizations that target women, and the role of political parties.

Political Events and Gender Cooperation

Although many women in politics have been overlooked, Thomas Sufrin's 2002, *COD: The Women's Justice Movement in Iraq*. The organization alerts donors to known for its preceding the event to mobilize administrative. On April 2, 2002, 2 million people participated in a public demonstration staged every year directed at

On July 1, 2002, a vacancy occurred in the Committee on the Senate for Radio and Television. Anita Hill's nomination to the Supreme Court was a policy. On July 1, 2002, the Senate's decision was the Senate's decision. The female vote in the House was nearly two thousand. A larger number were out of the condescension. "He did a prime. After the time, the positive photo single shot

Political Events and Issues Stimulate Interest and Raise Gender Consciousness

Although many factors combined to make 1992 an especially good year for women in politics, two distinctly mobilizing events stand out: the Clarence Thomas Supreme Court confirmation hearings and the Tailhook scandal. In 2002, CODEPINK emerged as a woman-initiated grassroots peace and social justice movement in reaction to the Bush administration's intention to invade Iraq. The organization's name is a play on the color-coded homeland security alerts designed to indicate the danger of a terrorist threat. CODEPINK is known for its creative protest tactics and nonviolent direct action campaigns. Preceding the 2004 election, several women's organizations tried to create an event to mobilize women voters in November by calling attention to the Bush administration's record on reproductive choice, justice, and women's health. On April 25, 2004, the March for Women's Lives attracted an estimated 1.15 million people to Washington, D.C., for what organizers called the largest public demonstration in U.S. history. We will examine how spontaneous and staged events serve to mobilize women's political action apart from the activity directed at women as voters during electoral campaigns.

On July 1, 1991, President Bush nominated Clarence Thomas to fill a vacancy on the U.S. Supreme Court. By October 6, 1991, the Senate Judiciary Committee had already voted to forward Thomas's nomination to the full Senate for a vote. On that date, however, Nina Totenberg of National Public Radio alleged that the committee had suppressed allegations of sexual harassment against Thomas brought by a University of Oklahoma law professor, Anita Hill. Hill had worked for Thomas at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the federal agency that enforces antidiscrimination policy. On October 8, Democratic congresswomen marched from the House to the Senate to demand an investigation. The Senate relented, and new hearings were called with Anita Hill as the primary witness. Her testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee was televised, giving many voters, particularly female voters, their first glimpse at the all-male, all-white committee. Interest in the hearings was incredibly intense. Senator Paul Simon reported receiving nearly twenty thousand letters on the subject, compared to fewer than sixteen thousand on the Gulf War. Millions watched the televised hearings, which had a larger audience than the NFL games that were on at the same time.¹²⁶ Women were outraged at what they saw and what many perceived as the unfair and condescending treatment of Hill. T-shirts proclaiming "I Believe Anita Hill," "He did it," and "She Lied" sprang up across the country. A full episode of a prime-time sitcom, *Designing Women*, was dedicated to the controversy. After the show's airing, CBS received more than fifteen hundred mostly positive phone calls—the largest number in the network's history in response to a single show.¹²⁷

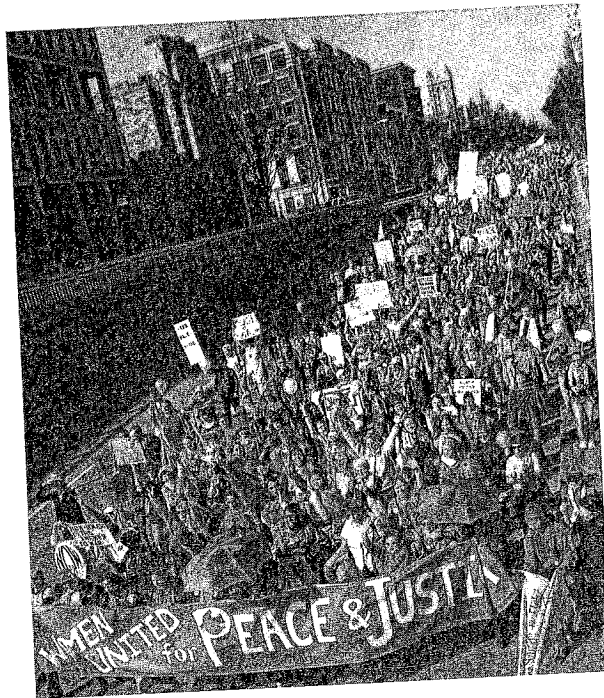
Sexual harassment as an issue separated men from women in many ways. Women, regardless of race or class, shared experiences similar in nature, if not in severity, to those described by Anita Hill. It appeared clear to even those most uneducated in fair-trial norms that the deck was stacked against Hill. Senator Arlen Specter stated that Professor Hill's testimony "was flat-out perjury,"¹²⁸ and senators speculated openly on national television about various psychological disorders Hill might be suffering. The phrase "men just don't get it" was born.

One of the first political victims of the Hill-Thomas hearings was Senator Alan Dixon, who lost his seat in the Illinois primary to political newcomer Carol Mosely Braun. Ms. Braun went on to win Dixon's Senate seat and ultimately a seat on the Judiciary Committee. Braun was one of several women moved by the Hill-Thomas debacle to seek public office themselves. An unusually large number of seats opened up in Congress as a result of retirements and reapportionment, which further encouraged women to announce their candidacies. In all, twenty-two women sought Senate seats in 1992, compared to just eight in the previous election. A record four new women entered the Senate, raising the total to six in 1992,¹²⁹ including Braun, who was the first African American woman to be elected to the Senate. In the House of Representatives, forty-eight women were elected, nearly doubling the number of female members. Facilitating this increase were a number of grassroots women's organizations whose membership also rose after the Hill-Thomas event. Membership in EMILY's (Early Money Is Like Yeast) List, an organization supporting prochoice, Democratic female candidates, went from 3,000 to 23,000 in just one year. EMILY's List contributed more than \$6 million to candidates in the 1992 elections, a fourfold increase over the elections of 1990.¹³⁰ The National Organization for Women (NOW) reported that anger over the Senate's handling of Hill's charges "has translated into 13,000 new members in the final months of 1991," and the Feminist Majority reported receiving an unsolicited contribution of \$10,000 after the hearings and a 30 percent rise in contributions overall.¹³¹ Clearly, a single event can have powerful organizational implications in mobilizing women to attend to and participate in politics.

In September 1991, naval aviators belonging to the Tailhook Association held their annual convention in Las Vegas. The revelry became assaultive, alleged Lt. Paula Coughlin, as male aviators "formed a gauntlet down a narrow hallway and tore at her clothes, grabbed at her breasts, and seized her buttocks with such force she was hoisted airborne."¹³² Other women reported that they were thrown to the ground, had their clothes torn off, and were molested by drunken airmen. In all, 119 Navy and 21 Marine Corps officers were referred by Pentagon investigators for possible disciplinary actions. None of these 140 cases ever went to trial, however, and nearly half were dropped for lack of evidence. Twenty-eight junior officers were eventually disciplined for "indecent exposure" and "conduct unbecoming an officer." None of the aviators were charged with sexual assault, and Coughlin's charges against a specific Marine captain for sexual molestation were dropped for lack of evidence. The investigation and disciplinary hearings stretched on for more than three years,

culminating in the resignation of Secretary of the Navy Lawrence Garrett III and the early retirement of Admiral Frank Kelso, the navy's top officer, who was found to have witnessed several incidents, but failed to intervene. Women following the progress of the investigation were introduced to the dark side of military culture. Outraged that sexual assault charges were dismissed as "high jinks" and dismayed to learn that the "gauntlet" had been a fixture at every Tailhook Convention since 1986 without any intervention by navy officials, civilian women's groups rallied to Coughlin's cause. The fallout resulted in new sexual harassment policies and training for personnel, along with the slogan "Not in Our Navy."¹³³ Women in and outside the military service are more aware of policies and procedures designed to ensure a safe and productive workplace as a result of this incident. Congress now regularly monitors sexual harassment and incidents of assault reported by students in the service academies, and provides oversight of the Department of Defense's initiatives to enforce sexual harassment policies and prosecute assault cases (see chapter 7 for more information on women in the military).

On April 25, 2004, an estimated 1.15 million people converged on Washington, D.C., for the March for Women's Lives. Seven groups collaborated in organizing the march: American Civil Liberties Union, Black Women's Health Imperative, Feminist Majority, NARAL Pro-Choice America, National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, National Organization for Women, and Planned Parenthood Federation of America. The demonstration was in protest of the Bush administration's actions limiting women's rights, particularly in the area of reproductive choice. Upon taking office in 2001, President Bush issued an executive memorandum reinstating the global gag rule on international family planning assistance. Bush timed his action to coincide with the twenty-eighth anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision. Under the global gag rule, foreign family planning agencies may not receive U.S. assistance if they provide abortion services, including counseling on abortion or referrals to other clinics, or lobby to make or keep abortion legal in their own country.¹³⁴ On November 5, 2003, Bush signed the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act into law. This federal law is the first to ban a specific kind of abortion procedure known as dilation and extraction. The very rare procedure is almost always performed only when the mother's life or health is endangered by the pregnancy, and no alternative methods are considered safer. Similar state legislation in Nebraska has already been ruled unconstitutional (*Stenberg v. Carhart*, 2000; see chapter 8 for more information). Three separate constitutional challenges were filed almost immediately. More broadly, on April 8, 2004, the National Women's Law Center released the report *Slip-Sliding Away: The Erosion of Hard-Won Gains for Women Under the Bush Administration and an Agenda for Moving Forward*.¹³⁵ The report focuses on ten key areas: women at work; girls at school; child care and other supports women need to work; tax and budget policies; retirement security; health and reproductive rights; violence against women; women in the military; judicial nominations; and government offices charged with safeguarding women's interests. The NWLC charged that the Bush



CodePink Women's Peace Vigil has several thousand marching down 16th Street near Scott Circle Saturday, March 8, 2003 in Washington to protest the Bush administration's war plan on Iraq. © Lisa Nipp/AP Photo.

administration rolled back women's progress by closing key offices and ending initiatives designed to promote it (e.g., the administration ended the Equal Pay Initiative and removed all materials on narrowing the wage gap from the Department of Labor's website), by refusing to enforce existing law (e.g., the Department of Justice dropped cases challenging sex discrimination in employment), and by advancing economic policies that will disproportionately harm women (e.g., the plan to restructure Medicaid will result in more women without health insurance).

March organizers believed that by calling attention to the Bush administrations' actions, particularly the strong measures undertaken to criminalize abortion and restrict access to information and women's health services, they could motivate women to channel their anger through electoral politics in November and vote Bush out of office. They also hoped that the march would energize young women to fight to protect rights won by previous generations of feminists. Senator Clinton told the crowd, "All the people are here today not only to march on behalf of women's lives but to take that energy into the election in November."¹³⁶ Although the march organizers labeled the event an overwhelming success, and the sheer size of the turnout sent a powerful message about women's political potential, it is difficult to identify the event an

awareness."¹³⁹ If the influence of female candidates on the ballot is contextual, the presidential election of 2008 offers an entirely new context to investigate. Further, it may be the case that the power of female candidates is much like the power of more women visible in public office in that the symbolic benefits are derived not from the one-on-one relationship of constituent or voter to officeholder or candidate, but something more generalized.¹⁴⁰ The presence of Clinton as a viable candidate for the Democratic nomination for president and Palin's spot on the Republican ticket in the general election increased the media's focus on the overall lack of women in politics and shed light on the fact that the United States lags behind other nations in electing a woman head of state/government, as well as in the overall representation of women at the legislative level. The gap between representative ideals and the gendered reality may have drawn women's attention to politics in a new way. Whether the presence of viable female candidates affects women's political participation specifically or more generally will therefore remain a rich area for new research.

Organizations

In both the Hill-Thomas hearings and the Tailhook incident, women's organizations rallied to the cause. Groups such as NOW and the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC), as well as conservative organizations such as the Independent Women's Forum and Second Amendment Sisters, enjoy membership surges when highly publicized events remind women that the controversies of equality are not yet settled. A "women's organization" should not be construed to mean a "feminist organization," although many explicitly political organizations dedicated to women share some feminist aims. NOW, for example, is an organization in the liberal feminist tradition. It was founded in 1966 in response to concern that the discrimination provisions of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and Title VII were not being properly enforced. NOW focuses on eliminating sexism in American society through legislation and court action. The NWPC, founded in 1971, is a bipartisan organization with the explicit goal of bringing more women, Republicans and Democrats alike, into office. Both organizations' activities are most consistent with the goals of the legal equality doctrine.

There is tremendous variety in organizations for women, and groups have been organized around every point along the ideological spectrum. Organizational involvement is intimately tied to participation in larger political arenas.¹⁴¹ Organizations do this in a number of ways. First, a member's contact with the organization extends her social network to include political activists and introduces political newcomers to the efficacy of political action in solving public problems. Further, in local chapters, members gain valuable political and leadership skills that allow them to access politics at all levels. In this way, associations may act as a feeder network to political-party activity. Organizations may also facilitate citizen contact with public officials by encouraging

Republican, compared with 31 percent in 2004. Meanwhile, the share of men calling themselves independents has moved from 34 percent to 42 percent, a record high. There has been virtually no change in the proportion of men calling themselves Democrats. The trend among women is different. While there has been a similar decline in Republican identification (from 28 percent in 2004 to 22 percent in 2009), the share of women who identify themselves as Democrats has risen three points to 41 percent, and the share of women identifying themselves as independents has risen from 27 percent to 31 percent over the same time period. These shifts in how men and women identify themselves with political parties has meant that the gender differences among Republican identifiers has nearly disappeared (24 percent men, 22 percent women), while the 13-point gender difference among Democratic identifiers (28 percent men, 41 percent women) is the largest in twenty years. These shifts pose tremendous challenges and opportunities for the political parties and we can expect both parties to continue to court women as candidates, voters, and party activists.

CONCLUSION

Women constitute a substantial political force in the abstract. However, a variety of historical and contemporary forces work to minimize the chances that women will act together as a unified group in politics. Despite the gender gap, a "women's bloc" did not materialize immediately following ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment nor has it since materialized in American politics. Most likely, even the possibility of a women's voting bloc was the stuff of political mythmaking or propaganda, depending on one's perspective. The evidence suggests that men and women, for the most part, participate in politics at about the same rates and in about the same ways, with some variation on issue priorities. Women are divided by race, class, family status, and education in the same ways that men are politically stratified. Where men and women differ in their rates or modes of participation, resources are most likely at issue rather than gender. Women still lag behind men in their wages. As a result, women lag behind men in their ability to spend precious capital on politics. It remains to be seen whether political organizations, high visibility female candidates, parties, or episodic events and issues can help women overcome the remaining barriers to full political participation and mobilize women's involvement. Achieving gender equality, even if merely political equality, depends not only on women's ability to vote but also on their ability to express their collective will and interests effectively through other forms of political participation. So far, women have been unable to coordinate their goals in a way that easily translates into a unified women's agenda and perhaps that remains an unrealistic expectation. Gender equality does not easily translate into policy platforms or campaign promises, particularly considering the complexities introduced by

the paradox and the two different paths to the realization of gender equality. The 2004 presidential election was unique because of the unprecedented effort to mobilize women voters. Advocacy groups of all political and ideological persuasions worked to get women registered and to the polls. As a result, sixty-two million women voted, a marked increase over the fifty-nine million who voted in 2000. The 2008 presidential election was unique due to the historic presence and success of Hillary Clinton's candidacy for the Democratic nomination for president and Sarah Palin's nomination as vice president on the Republican presidential ticket. As a candidate, Hillary Clinton attracted over 18 million votes in the primaries from both men and women. There is some preliminary evidence that having female high-profile viable national candidates mobilized women's political engagement in new ways, but it is far from definitive. Similarly the Internet has made access to political information on issues and candidates more available, and evidence suggests that women are heavy consumers of political websites and social networking tools. Access to the Internet may also increase the likelihood that women donate money to political candidates, parties, and PACs, thereby raising the volume of their collective political voice. Although women did not all vote for the same candidates or even in completely predictable patterns, the interest shown in attracting women voters is an important indication that women matter in politics. That so many of the registration and mobilization efforts were undertaken by women's advocacy organizations suggests that the women's movement is enjoying a resurgence as well.

The fact remains that women make up 53 percent of the U.S. population, women constitute the majority of registered voters, and consistently vote at higher rates than men. In this sense, women's votes are key to winning elections for both male and female candidates. Empirical studies caution that female candidates and Democratic candidates should not take women's votes for granted, any more than male candidates or Republican candidates should write them off. The next chapter examines another form of political participation that could translate into the power to more directly set the political agenda: women as candidates for public office.

Suggested Readings, Web Resources, and Films

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