

FROM:
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Introduction: Citizenship and Unequal Participation

New Zealand was first—in 1893. Over the next century most of the world's nations followed: Norway in 1913; Brazil in 1932; Japan in 1945; Morocco in 1959; and Switzerland not until 1971. Kuwait has yet to act.¹

Although not at the head of the pack, the United States was in the first wave of nations to enfranchise women on an equal basis with men. In the generations since the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1920, America has been transformed in multiple ways, many of which touch on gender roles. Yet in spite of the profound changes in American society, men continue to be somewhat more active in politics than women are. Although women are more likely to go to the polls, with respect to other forms of political activity, men are more likely to take part.

The disparity in political activity is not enormous. On average, women engage in 1.96, and men in 2.27, political activities as measured by an eight-point scale that includes a variety of political

1. These dates are taken from Barbara J. Nelson and Najma Chowdhury, *Women and Politics Worldwide* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 774–775; and Anne Firor Scott, "Woman Suffrage," *World Book Encyclopedia* (Chicago: World Book, 1986). In fact, the enfranchisement of women was not full in Switzerland's strongly federal system until 1990 when the Swiss Supreme Court ruled that the country's Equal Rights Amendment precluded the canton of Appenzell from restricting women's right to vote in communal and cantonal elections. Regula Stämpfli, "Direct Democracy and Women's Suffrage: Antagonism in Switzerland," in *Women and Politics Worldwide*, ed. Nelson and Chowdhury, p. 697.

acts.² A gender difference of 0.31 of a political act may seem paltry, but when we consider the impact across a large population, the effect mounts quickly. If we make the rough assumptions that there are 200,000,000 voting-age adults in the United States and that they are divided equally between men and women, then the participatory deficit translates each year into

- 2,000,000 fewer phone calls or letters to public officials from women than from men;
- 3,000,000 fewer women than men involved in informal efforts to solve community problems;
- 7,000,000 fewer campaign contributions from women than from men; and
- 9,000,000 fewer women than men affiliated with a political organization.

When translated into actual activity, we are talking about a distinction of potential consequence.

The gender disparity in citizen political participation forms the puzzle at the heart of this inquiry: why, after so many decades of suffrage and a revival of the women's movement in the late 1960s, has the gap not closed fully? This book constitutes an empirical answer to the question of why there is a residual deficit for women when it comes to political participation. We use quantitative data from several sources to shed light on matters that have more often been the subject of fertile speculation than of systematic evidence. The evidence for this investigation derives principally from two surveys, a national study of the attitudes, demographic characteristics, and voluntary commitments of Americans and a follow-up to this survey in which a number of our original respondents and, if married, their spouses were interviewed. Most surveys about citizens in politics lack critical variables—whether measures of various kinds of political participation or items about family life, experiences on the job, or voluntary activity outside politics. In contrast, our surveys were specifically designed to cover not only multiple political attitudes and activities but also multiple aspects

2. The scale is an overall measure of an individual's political activity in the recent past. Its components will be described fully in Chapter 3.

of non-political life that have either direct or indirect consequences for political participation. Thus our data permit us to consider each of the interlocking pieces of a complex puzzle. In short, we are able to conduct the most thorough inquiry ever undertaken into the origins of gender inequality in political participation.

The book is, most fundamentally, about the private roots of public action. Although we focus on gender differences in activity, we are concerned more broadly with the way that political participation is anchored in private life. The gender disparity in citizen participation is the result of inequalities with respect to a large number of factors. These inequalities, in turn, have their origins in a long, cumulative pattern of gender-differentiated experiences in the principal social institutions of everyday life—the family, school, workplace, voluntary associations, and church.³ As we disentangle the multiple causes of the gender gap in participation, we shed light on both the links between the private institutions in which we nurture and are nurtured, learn, toil, play, and pray and the links between these institutions and engagement in public life. In solving our specific puzzle, we thus illumine more generally both the processes by which American citizens come to take part in politics and the role of social institutions in fostering inequalities. Although we consider the specific question of the sources of gender differences in political participation to be unequivocally important on its own, we are able to use it as an entrée to a deeper understanding of the connections between social institutions and public involvement.

Defining the Territory

What exactly do we mean when we say that we are concerned with the gender gap in *voluntary political participation*?⁴ In order both to differentiate voluntary political activity from other forms of hu-

3. Our subject matter often places us on terrain where language is a politically charged issue. We sometimes use the single word "church" to refer to the multiplicity of religious institutions—mosques, temples, ashrams, synagogues, and so on—in our religiously pluralistic nation. We use this shorthand as a matter of style rather than to indicate a preference for Christianity.

4. This discussion draws almost directly from Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman,

man endeavor and to acknowledge the fuzziness of the empirical boundaries that separate political activity from other domains of activity, we need to make clear just what we are studying.

By *political* participation we refer simply to 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. Some critics argue that our conception of politics should be broadened in either of two ways: to include all collective involvements that influence the life of the community, even those charitable and organizational activities that do not touch upon what is traditionally called the “public sector”; or to include all private relationships—for example, bosses and employees or parents and children—in which power is exercised.⁵ As political scientists, we are, of course, sensitive to the impact on public life of voluntary efforts in the non-political domains of civic action, to the uses of power in private institutions, and to the extent to which the inequalities between women and men in the private realms of family, work, and church mirror inequalities in politics and have consequences for their lives. A large part of our inquiry concerns these very matters. Nevertheless, in order to differentiate the state, an institution with special characteristics in modern societies, from other social institutions, we use the term “political” in its conventional and more limited sense.

By *voluntary* activity we mean participation that is not obligatory—no one is forced to volunteer—and that receives, if any pay at all, only token financial compensation. Thus a paid position on a big-city school board or a senator’s re-election campaign staff does not qualify under our definition.⁶ The distinction between

voluntary activity and paid work is not always clear. It is possible to serve private economic purposes through social and political activism: many people seek to do well while doing good. They undertake voluntary activity for which they receive no compensation—in their churches, in charities, in politics—in order to make contacts or otherwise enhance their jobs or careers. Furthermore, for many of those who participate in politics, the policy issues that animate their activity have consequences for their pocketbooks. Conversely, many people get involved in genuinely voluntary activity that is an extension of their paid employment. For example, an accountant may lend his or her professional expertise as part of unpaid service on a hospital or museum board. Those who work for non-profits or political organizations often extend their commitment with additional volunteer work in the name of the objectives pursued through their paid employment. In all these cases, the border between voluntary participation and paid employment is blurry.

Lastly, we focus on *activity*: we are concerned with doing politics, rather than with being attentive to politics. Although we shall have an ongoing concern with the place of politics in men’s and women’s lives—how much they know or care about it, whether they pay attention to it—we exclude from our definition of participation certain activities that might have been embraced by a more encompassing understanding. The umbrella of our definition, therefore, does not extend to following political events in the news or watching public affairs programs on television. We have also excluded communications—political discussions among friends, letters to the editor, calls to radio talk shows—in which the target audience is not a public official.⁷

and Henry Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 38–40.

5. Although historians are more likely than political scientists to call for a radical expansion of the term “political” to arenas of human action and relationship that have ordinarily not entailed government influence or involvement, scholars from both disciplines have made this argument. Among the many examples, see Kay Boals, “The Politics of Male-Female Relations: The Functions of Feminist Scholarship,” *Signs* 1 (1975): 161–174; and Paula Baker, “The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780–1920,” *American Historical Review* 89 (1984): 646–647.

6. Max Weber distinguished between those for whom politics was an avocation and those for whom it was a vocation. The former enter political life as occasional politicians,

who “cast a ballot or consummate a similar expression of intention, such as applauding or protesting in a ‘political’ meeting, or delivering [a] ‘political’ speech, etc.”; the latter make politics their major vocation. Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 83. We are interested in those for whom politics is an avocation. It is, of course, possible that some for whom politics is a vocation do not earn the bulk of their income that way. However, as long as it is their main occupation, they fall outside of our volunteer category. Senators Jay Rockefeller and Edward M. Kennedy are full-time professionals, not volunteers, even though their incomes do not depend on a government salary.

7. In Chapter 4, however, we consider various activities at the border of political participation, including political discussion and following politics in the media.

Why Study Gender Differences in Participation?

Why bother to study the modest, but consistent, gender differences in political activity? One answer to the question focuses on politics. Through their participation, citizens communicate information about their preferences and needs to public officials and generate pressure on them to respond. Those who are inactive risk being ignored when policies are made. Moreover, beyond the possible impact on policy outcomes, participants gain additional benefits from taking part: recognition as full members of the community; education about the social and political world; and information, skills, and contacts that are useful in other social pursuits. Thus we care about group differences in political participation—between men and women, or between Blacks and Whites, or between lawyers and cashiers—because they represent a potential compromise in the democratic norm of equal protection of interests.

Another answer focuses on non-political institutions and the role they play in fostering political participation. Close analysis of the sources of the gender disparity in political activity sheds light on the way that non-political institutions shape political activity and, in particular, create disparities in activity between groups of citizens. We shall see how social inequalities are generated by processes of differential selection into institutions and by different experiences within institutions and how these social inequalities, in turn, result in participatory inequalities.

A third answer focuses on gender. In every society on this planet, gender is among the most important of social organizing principles.⁸ Penetrating the gender gap in citizen political activity fills in part of the immense social canvas upon which differences between females and males figure importantly. As feminist scholars point out—and as the analysis of gender differences in experiences with various institutions confirms—domains of human ac-

tion vary in the extent to which men and women behave, and are treated, differently, and we cannot extrapolate directly from one setting to another.⁹ Our analysis thus casts light on the larger question of the varying social processes that make sex differences matter in America.

The Sources of Unequal Participation: Some Hunches

Over the years, the colleagues, students, and friends to whom we have talked about our inquiry have suggested several possible explanations for the sources of the gender gap in political activity. These proposed solutions to the puzzle of unequal participation derive from several sources—the literature in political science, feminist theory, and, not least, common sense.

What might explain why, three generations after gaining full political citizenship, women continue to lag behind men in political activity?

- One answer that figures prominently in any informal or academic discussion of the gender gap in activity focuses on the many demands on women's *time*. Women, especially those with children at home and full-time jobs, simply do not have the time to take part in politics.
- A corollary to this hypothesis focuses on *psychic space* rather than on time. Raising children so absorbs available mental energy that mothers, especially those with toddlers under foot, are too preoccupied at home to pay attention to politics.
- Another approach emphasizes the role of the *patriarchal family* as a school for democratic citizenship. As long as men function as the undisputed head of household and women are unequal at home, women can never function equally as citizens.
- A different set of concerns points to the disparities between men and women in the *socioeconomic resources* that have long

9. See, for example, Elizabeth Wingrove's discussion of the varying structural and institutional roots of gender in "Interpellating Sex," *Signs* 24 (1999): 869–893.

8. See Sherry Ortner's discussion of twenty-five years of anthropological thought and evidence on this point in *Making Gender* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996). See also the essays in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975).

been known to be associated with political participation. Since women are, on average, disadvantaged with respect to education, income, and occupational status, we would expect them to be less active politically.

- An alternative line of reasoning emphasizes processes of *discrimination* that operate directly to keep women out of politics and indirectly to pose barriers to the acquisition of the resources that facilitate political activity.
- The final suggestion centers on processes of childhood and adult *socialization* that create different environments for men and women and lead them to draw different conclusions about the relevance of politics to their lives. If women inhabit a less political world than men do—one that provides less exposure to informal political chat and other politicizing cues and offers fewer relevant political role models—then women are likely to infer that politics, like football, is not for them.

Each of these explanations for the disparity between men and women in political participation seems plausible. Several of them, however, remain at the level of conjecture—without the benefit of supporting evidence.¹⁰ We are empiricists, and the principal enterprise of this inquiry will be to subject these explanations to the light of data.

What we find is that some of them, however compelling at the level of theory, are just plain wrong, and that no single one suffices to account for the gap in citizen political activity. Instead, the disparity in participation results from several factors. First, men enjoy an advantage when it comes to the single most important resource for political participation, formal education. In addition,

10. In "Women as Political Animals? A Test of Some Explanations for Male-Female Political Participation Differences," *American Journal of Political Science* 21 (1977): 711, Susan Welch made precisely the same point twenty-five years ago: "While many suggestions have been offered to explain why American women tend to participate in political activities slightly less than men, seldom have these explanations been subjected to a rigorous examination." Seventeen years ago, the situation had changed so little that Virginia Sapiro could make a similar observation. She referred to "the melange of hypotheses, findings, myths, and stereotypes commonly presented as descriptions of women's relationship to politics" in *The Political Integration of Women* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p. 79.

the non-political institutions of adult life—in particular, the workplace—function as an important source of the factors that foster participation. Because women are less likely than men to be in the work force, and because, even if employed full time, they are less likely to hold the kinds of jobs that provide these factors, gender differences in work force experiences loom large in our explanation of the disparity in political activity. Finally, women are less likely than men to be psychologically engaged with politics—that is, to be politically interested, informed, or efficacious—a deficit that contributes significantly to participatory inequalities. However, when women are in an environment where women seek and hold visible public offices, they are more politically interested and informed, and disparities in psychological orientations to politics shrink.

The Liberal Tradition and Unequal Citizenship: From Coverture to Enfranchisement

In any political system, matters of citizenship—who qualifies as a citizen and what rights and responsibilities that status confers—inevitably generate political controversy. In America, these issues have been played out against the background of a long tradition of liberal individualism stressing the inalienable rights of citizens. As a prefatory matter to understanding women and men as citizen activists in contemporary American democracy, let us review very briefly the history of women's citizenship status in America.

In the colonial period, the citizenship status of women—or, at least, of married, White women—was defined by the English common law principle of *coverture*.¹¹ Under this doctrine, a married woman became, more or less, a legal non-person:

It appears that the husband's control over the person of his wife is so complete that he may claim her society altogether; that he may reclaim her if she goes away or is detained by others; that he may

11. On *coverture*, see Linda K. Kerber's historical account of women's responsibilities as citizens, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), pp. xxiii–xxiv, 11–15.

use constraint upon her liberty to prevent her going away, or to prevent improper conduct; that he may maintain suits for injuries to her person; that she cannot sue alone . . . In most respects she loses the power of personal independence and altogether that of separate action in legal matters.¹²

The doctrine of coverture would seem to be at odds with the emphasis upon individual rights that informed the political discourse of the Founding, the period during which the colonies became independent from England and established the constitutional order that continues to govern us today.¹³ Given this Lockean liberalism, it is not surprising that at least some people thought to extend its principles to various excluded groups—among them, women. In a famous letter that used language suggestive of that in the soon-to-be-forthcoming Declaration, Abigail Adams wrote to her husband, John, during the spring of 1776 and admonished him to

Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If perticular [*sic*] care and attention is not paid to the Laidies [*sic*] we are determined to foment a Rebellion [*sic*], and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.

Two weeks later, he wrote in reply, “As to your extraordinary Code of Laws, ‘I cannot but laugh.’ ”¹⁴

12. Edward Mansfield, *The Legal Rights, Liabilities, and Duties of Women* (Salem, Mass.: Jewett Co., 1845), p. 273, quoted in Jo Freeman, “The Revolution for Women in Law and Public Policy,” in *Women: A Feminist Perspective*, ed. Jo Freeman, 5th ed. (Mountain View, Calif.: Mayfield Publishing, 1995), p. 366.

13. Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies*, p. 12. The contradiction between a liberal tradition and the denial of rights was what Gunnar Myrdal meant by *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and American Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1944). For an extensive analysis of the way in which the treatment of citizenship issues in America reflects not only traditions of liberalism and republicanism but also the reinforcement of ascriptive hierarchy, see Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

14. Document 2 in Anne Firor Scott and Andrew MacKay Scott, *One Half the People* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), p. 54.

Little had changed with respect to women’s status as citizens by the time of the first Women’s Rights Convention, held in the upstate New York town of Seneca Falls in the summer of 1848.¹⁵ That meeting produced an extraordinary document, one that served as a reminder of the tradition of Enlightenment liberalism so important to the American experience. The preamble to the Declaration of Principles that emerged from the convention appropriated verbatim the words of the Declaration of Independence until making a critical substitution: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal.” What followed was a series of grievances including that “He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead,” and that “He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns.” The manifesto concluded with a set of resolutions, including one asserting that “all laws . . . which place [woman] in a position inferior to that of man . . . [are] of no force or authority” and another calling for “the overthrow of the monopoly of the pulpit, and for securing to woman an equal participation with men in the various trades, professions, and commerce.”¹⁶ The one resolution that was deemed most radical at the time—and the only one that did not receive unanimous approval—was “the sacred right to elective franchise.”

There is strong irony in the fact that the demand for the vote was so controversial, for the social, economic, legal, and religious changes demanded by the resolutions would, if realized, have brought about a much more far-reaching transformation than the enfranchisement of women ever did. During the protracted struggle for women’s rights, the broad agenda for change implicit in the Seneca Falls Declaration grew progressively narrower until the vote became the paramount, if not the only, objective.

Long before women were permitted to go to the polls, however, they took part in politics—most notably in various nineteenth-

15. On the Seneca Falls Convention, see Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), chap. 5. On early attempts to establish rights for women see, in addition, William L. O’Neill, *Everyone Was Brave* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969); and Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965).

16. Document 3 in Scott and Scott, *One Half the People*, pp. 56–59.

century movements for social reform but also in the political parties.¹⁷ Through their activity women developed important political skills—organizing, holding meetings, conducting petition drives, and even speaking in public. Especially through their involvement in the abolition movement, they also absorbed lessons applicable to their own circumstances as partial citizens.

After many years characterized by setback, frustration, and, not infrequently, internal division, woman suffrage was achieved on a national basis in 1920 with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution—nearly a century and a half after both American independence and Abigail Adams's famous missive.¹⁸ Ironically, women were excluded from the meeting at which the secretary of state of Tennessee signed the official papers making it the final state needed to ratify the amendment.¹⁹ When women—or, at least, White women—were finally permitted to vote, their turnout was low and neither the positive outcomes promised by the suffragists nor the negative consequences feared by their antagonists materialized.²⁰

17. On women's pre-suffrage political activity, see Suzanne Lebsack, "Women and American Politics," in *Women, Politics, and Change*, ed. Louise A. Tilly and Patricia Gurin (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1990), chap. 2; Rebecca Edwards, *Angels in the Machinery: Gender in American Party Politics from the Civil War to the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Jo Freeman, *A Room at a Time: How Women Entered Party Politics* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), pp. 33–45.

18. For a discussion that places women's suffrage in the context of the history of enfranchisement in America, see Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), especially chap. 6. Before they were enfranchised on a national basis, women were permitted to vote in various states and localities, including New Jersey for a brief period just after the Revolution (pp. 20, 54, 174) and, beginning with Wyoming, in several states of the West in the late nineteenth century (pp. 183–187).

19. Clifton Daniel, ed., *Chronicle of the 20th Century: Ultimate Records of Our Time* (New York: Dorling Kindersley Publishing, 1995), p. 269.

20. Nevertheless, the stereotype of women as completely politically quiescent during the 1920s is inaccurate. See, for example, Nancy F. Cott, "Across the Great Divide: Women in Politics before and after 1920," Kristi Andersen, "Women and Citizenship in the 1920s," and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "In Politics to Stay: Black Women Leaders and Party Politics in the 1920s," in *Women, Politics, and Change*, ed. Tilly and Gurin, chaps. 7–9; as well as Kristi Andersen, *After Suffrage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); and Anna L. Harvey, *Votes without Leverage: Women in American Electoral Politics, 1920–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). For a particularly compelling discussion of women in party politics after suffrage, see Freeman, *A Room at a Time*. Freeman is especially concerned with what she calls "party women," not with suffragists or reformers.

After Suffrage: The Changing World of Gender Relations

Women's initial low turnout levels were a disappointment to those who had fought so hard for suffrage. Subsequent history, however, has demonstrated over and over that newly enfranchised groups do not immediately go to the polls at high rates. Besides, America was a very different place in 1920 when women won the vote than it is today. That year witnessed the first radio broadcast and the first coast-to-coast airmail service. The average employee earned roughly \$1,200 a year, a figure that translates to approximately \$9,400 in 1995 dollars.²¹ Sinclair Lewis published *Main Street*. Babe Ruth was traded to the Yankees for the unprecedented sum of \$125,000. And hemlines reached nearer to the knees than to the ankles, a daring fashion trend that permitted economizing on fabric.²² Since then, America has changed in many ways, ranging from the ways we commute to work to the ethnic composition of the public. Many of these changes are relevant for addressing the puzzle we have posed: unequal participation between men and women.

Imagine the suffragists who struggled so valiantly to achieve the vote in 1920 returning for a visit and asking us to give them a succinct—if superficial—summary of what has transpired since their victory that would help them to get some purchase on the social processes that leave in their wake the disparity between men and women in political activity. At the outset, we would caution that the substantial changes in gender relations in a variety of domains must be understood in the context of other social trends that have complex, and often contradictory, implications for the place of women and men in economic, social, and political life. We would

21. These figures, which are approximate at best, are calculated from information contained in U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970, Bicentennial Edition* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), p. 164, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1996*, 116th ed. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996), p. 483.

22. The facts in this paragraph are taken from David Brownstone and Irene Franck, *Timelines of the 20th Century* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1990), pp. 91–93; Daniel, *Chronicle of the 20th Century*, p. 268; and Ross Gregory, *Almanacs of American Life: Modern America, 1914 to 1945* (New York: Facts on File, 1995), p. 351.

also note that, while the consequences of these processes have been especially pronounced for women, it is not only women but men as well whose lives have been altered and whose opportunities have been expanded by the relaxation in traditional gender roles. And we would make clear that we were attempting, not to survey all of American society, but rather to concentrate on the domains that are most relevant to our understanding of gender differences in political activity.

We might then begin with politics itself and make clear that the breakthrough of enfranchisement has not been accompanied by equal political power for women. Still, the era since the revival of the women's movement in the late 1960s has witnessed a slow increase in the representation of women among political elites. In 1965, 3 percent of the members of the U.S. House of Representatives were women; by 2001, 14 percent were. At one time the surest route to Congress for a woman was over her husband's dead body; in the last two decades, however, the proportion of congressional widows among women in the House and Senate has diminished substantially. Women have generally fared better in seeking legislative than executive office, and, in a pattern that reflects what we shall see for the economy, the higher the rung on the political ladder, the lower the representation of women among elected or appointed public officials. In 2001, in contrast to their representation in the House, 22 percent of members of the state legislatures are women. Although there are thirteen women among the hundred members of the Senate, in contrast to many nations, including nations whose cultures look less kindly than our own upon the goal of gender equality, we have never had a female president.²³

We might continue by noting the substantial changes in a domain that has always been strongly associated with political participation, educational attainment. Since the early years of the century, the aggregate educational level of the population has climbed substantially. In 1920, only about one teenager in six graduated from high school; today nearly nine out of ten do.²⁴ At the same

time the educational disparity between women and men has narrowed, though not closed completely. In 1920, men earned 66 percent of the bachelor's degrees, 70 percent of the master's degrees, and 85 percent of the doctoral-level degrees. By 1990, these figures had fallen to 47 percent, 47 percent, and 63 percent respectively.²⁵

Since the participatory factors acquired on the job figure importantly in our explanation of political activity, we would next highlight the most obvious and substantial change in American society: the entry of women into the work force. In 1920, labor force participation for women was 23 percent; by 1995, it had risen to 59 percent. Reflecting later school leaving and the institutionalization of retirement, labor force participation for men diminished from 85 percent to 76 percent over the same period.²⁶ Not only has women's work force participation increased steadily over the past several decades, but there has been a transformation in the kinds of women who are likely to have jobs outside the home. At one time, paid work was the domain of young, unmarried women and poor women, especially women of color. These generalizations no longer hold: in recent years, well-educated women are more likely to be in the labor force than women of more limited educational attainment; labor force participation rates of Black and White women are virtually indistinguishable; and married women are likely to be in the work force even if they have preschool children. Moreover, women are showing greater work force attachment, staying with their jobs rather than moving in and out of the work force.

Changes in other aspects of the economic status of women have been less dramatic and—at least on the basis of the expectations held in the heady days of the revival of the women's movement in

Life, p. 301, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract*, p. 191. Although there is a strong association between political activity and educational attainment in any cross-section, rising educational attainment has not been accompanied by commensurate increases in participation. See Norman H. Nie, Jane Junn, and Kenneth Stehlik-Barry, *Education and Democratic Citizenship in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

23. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics*, p. 385, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract*, p. 191.

24. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics*, p. 132; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract*, p. 393.

23. Information in this paragraph is taken from the Web site of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers <<http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~cawp/facts>>.

24. These figures, which are rough, are based on data in Gregory, *Almanacs of American*

the late 1960s—less predictable. Growing numbers of women have entered fields traditionally dominated by men; nevertheless, the sharing of job titles by men and women is still not the norm. At the same time that there are more female lawyers and engineers and more male flight attendants, the enormous expansion of positions in the traditionally female pink-collar ghetto implies that men and women in the labor force continue to do essentially different work.

The persistence of high, though diminishing, levels of gender segregation in job titles is matched by the persistence of high, though diminishing, levels of vertical stratification. That is, although women have begun to penetrate the highest echelons in many fields, in any particular occupation the most prestigious and highly paid positions tend to be held by men, a phenomenon that is often denoted by the metaphor of the “glass ceiling.” Hence there are increasing numbers of women in middle management, but few women CEOs. This pattern obtains even in occupations dominated by women: although the librarian in your town library and the server at your local beanery are likely to be female, the Librarian of Congress and the waitstaff at the Ritz are not.

Coupled with the erosion of men’s wages as the result of de-industrialization and global competition, these trends—women’s greater work force attachment and widened opportunities for non-traditional employment and occupational success—have meant a diminution of the pay gap between the sexes. For decades the earnings of women working full time, year round hovered in the neighborhood of 60 percent of men’s earnings. Since the early 1980s, a slow process of convergence has been at work such that women now earn, on average, just under three-quarters what men do.

The transformation implied by the entry of massive numbers of women into the work force has not been matched by a similar transformation in the private domain of the household, a sphere to which we shall pay ongoing attention throughout our analysis. In spite of a trend toward greater gender equality, women—even married women who are employed full time—continue to do most of the housework, a circumstance that leaves women with children and full-time jobs as the group with the least leisure time. Once

again, we must place our observations in the context of other social processes. Escalating rates of divorce and births out of wedlock imply that growing proportions of children live with only one of their parents, ordinarily their mothers; the result is that, on average, children actually spend less time with their fathers—even though child-care responsibilities in two-parent families may be divided more evenly than in the past. The same trends affecting family structure have economic consequences as well. The growth in the number of single-parent households headed by women, and the erosion of government economic support for the needy, imply that the adult poor are disproportionately likely to be female—a tendency known as “the feminization of poverty.”

In the sphere of religious activity—one that plays an important but complicated part in our analysis—the pattern of overall convergence in gender roles that we have seen for other domains does not obtain. Instead we see a denominationally specific set of changes with substantial progress toward equality between women and men in many denominations, little change in some denominations, and the self-conscious reassertion of traditional gender roles in a few. Although religious institutions long excluded women from clerical leadership and religious doctrine has customarily been invoked to buttress a traditional division of labor, women have consistently been more devout and more religiously active than men.

At the time of the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, only a few denominations—among them the Congregationalists, the Unitarians, and a few holiness sects such as the Nazarenes²⁷—permitted the ordination of women. After World War II, various denominations began to ordain women, and since the 1970s there has been rapid growth in the number of ordained women.²⁸ Orthodox faiths—among them Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Mor-

27. For the dates at which various denominations first permitted the ordination of women, see Catherine Wessinger, “Women’s Religious Leadership in the U.S.” in *Religious Institutions and Women’s Leadership*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), p. 4; and Mark Chaves, *Ordaining Women* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 16–17.

28. Jackson W. Carroll, Barbara Hargrove, and Adair Lummis, *Women of the Cloth* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), p. 3.

mons, Muslims, and Orthodox Jews—have, however, resisted the trend and do not ordain women. Furthermore, in a few denominations, there has been a retreat from the general trend toward equality between men and women. In spite of the centrality of congregational autonomy in the Baptist tradition and the exercise of leadership by women in its early years, in 2000 the Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution declaring that women should not serve as pastors in congregations.²⁹ Thus in the religious domain we see not only a very mixed set of outcomes but, in certain denominations, actual reversal of the dominant trend toward gender equality.

In short, given the opportunity to describe to the suffragists the evolution of gender roles since the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, we would conclude by stressing the obvious: the United States is in many ways—including, but not confined to, matters of gender relations—a very different country from the one that gave women the vote in 1920, and we would underline the extent to which changes in what men and women do and the way they relate to one another are embedded in other social processes. We would also note that the changes do not affect all women—or all men—in the same way. Instead, men and women who differ in terms of their age, their race, and their social class have felt the consequences of these social processes differentially. Moreover, these changes are proceeding very unevenly—more rapidly in some domains than in others, sometimes stalled, occasionally even reversed.

Forced to deliver a bottom-line assessment, we would indicate that the overall trend is toward the reduction of inequalities between women and men. Nevertheless, we would point out that the convergence in roles and statuses has involved more movement by women than by men. In part this asymmetry reflects the fact that men have traditionally commanded a disproportionate share of

29. See Sarah Frances Anders and Marilyn Metcalf Whittaker, "Women as Lay Leaders and Clergy: A Critical Issue," in *Southern Baptists Observed*, ed. Nancy Tatom Ammerman (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993), chap. 11; Carolyn DeArmond Blevins, "Women and the Baptist Experience," in *Religious Institutions and Women's Leadership*, ed. Wessinger, pp. 158–179; and "Southern Baptist Convention Passes Resolution Opposing Women as Pastors," *New York Times*, June 15, 2000, p. A-18.

that which is most valued in society—for example, money, power, status, or education, though not long life. Reducing inequality, therefore, would involve women's seeking more of what men have always enjoyed.³⁰ However, perhaps because whatever men are associated with tends to have higher status, men have been much more reluctant to embrace that which is worthy of emulation or enviable about women's traditional roles and concerns. For example, even when it is available, few men take advantage of paternity leave to care for a new baby or sick child.

Gender Differences in the United States and Elsewhere

While gender is an important, but far from the only, principle of social organization in every human society, the magnitude and pervasiveness of gender differences also vary across societies and cultures. In general, traditional societies tend to maintain more rigid boundaries between the sexes than do developed ones. Even among developed democracies, however, there is substantial variation.

Where do the multiple processes of social change just described leave the United States compared with the other nations it is presumed to resemble? Students of democratic politics often discuss "American exceptionalism" and note that, when developed democracies are arrayed with respect to some aspect of politics—for example, welfare state guarantees or the strength of the parties—the United States is on one end of the continuum. The circumstance is very different when it comes to equality between men and women.

Rank ordering a number of developed democracies with respect to ten measures of equality between the sexes and well-being for women puts the United States in first or last place only twice and shows no consistency across measures. The United States is in the upper ranks of the list with respect to the ratio of women to men in higher education, the share of unpaid housework done by men,

30. We should note that some of the convergence—such as that which is caused by the reduction in men's wages occasioned by the decline in the number of highly skilled industrial jobs—is the result of men's having less rather than women's having more.

the percentage of women in the work force, and the percentage of administrative and managerial workers who are female. The United States is in the middle of the list in terms of the extensiveness of contraceptive use, the ratio of women's to men's wages among non-agricultural workers, and the proportion of women among union members and members of the national legislature. The United States is tied with New Zealand for last place with respect to the provision of paid maternity leave.³¹ In addition, while women everywhere are more likely than men to say that religion is very important to them, the disparity is far wider in the United States than elsewhere.³²

As for our central concern, citizen political participation, the data are less complete: the measures are limited and fewer developed democracies are ranked. Nonetheless, one study shows the United States to compare favorably with other democracies in this domain. The gender gap in participation is narrower here than in other democracies.³³

Thinking about Participation

As we shall discuss in Chapter 2, we cast a broad net in defining political participation and include under that rubric a variety

31. These data are derived from United Nations, *The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics* (New York: United Nations, 1995), tables 6, 7, 8, 10, 14; and Joyce P. Jacobsen, *The Economics of Gender*, 2nd ed. (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), pp. 346–351. See also Naomi Neft and Ann D. Levine, *Where Women Stand* (New York: Random House, 1997). For most of these measures the comparison group is the following twenty countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Although there is little consistency in the ranking of countries across the various measures, the Scandinavian countries tend to be near the top of the list and Japan near the bottom.

32. The World Values Surveys for 1995 and 1996 compare Australia, Finland, Germany, Japan, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States with respect to the proportion of respondents who said that religion is very important. Not only is the difference between women and men most pronounced for the United States, but American women and men are more than twice as likely as their counterparts in any other country to consider religion very important.

33. Carol A. Christy, *Sex Differences in Political Participation* (New York: Praeger, 1987), chap. 2. In addition, on the basis of data collected in the 1960s, Sidney Verba, Norman H. Nie, and Jae-On Kim, *Participation and Political Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 1978), chap. 12, find that the disparity in participation between men and women is narrower in the United States than in Austria, India, Japan, the Netherlands, Nigeria, or the former Yugoslavia.

of forms of activity in which there is the intent or consequence of influencing government action—either directly, by affecting the formulation or implementation of public policy, or indirectly, by affecting the selection of public officials. Citizens in American democracy who have political objectives have many options for making their voices heard. We consider, of course, the most fundamental mechanism for holding public officials accountable, voting. But we also investigate other efforts to influence who will hold public office—either by working in, or making contributions to, electoral campaigns. We examine, in addition, several forms of activity aimed at having a direct impact on what policymakers do: contacting them directly; attending protests, marches, or demonstrations; getting involved in organizations that take stands in politics; taking part in informal efforts to solve community problems; and serving in a voluntary capacity on local governing boards such as school or zoning boards. Our understanding of participation thus encompasses activity at the local as well as the national level; unconventional as well as conventional activity; activity requiring money as well as activity demanding time; and activity undertaken with others as well as activity done alone.

An expansive understanding of what constitutes participation is especially important given our concern with gender differences in political activity. It is sometimes argued that, like traditional approaches in many academic disciplines, mainstream political science tends to overlook women's distinctive choices or contributions. In thinking about political participation, therefore, we should examine not only differences in degree but also differences in kind. By including in our purview non-electoral forms of participation—especially the organizational, protest, and grassroots community activity in which women have always taken part—we are able to subject to empirical scrutiny the claim that the gender gap in political activity has been exaggerated by an emphasis on particular modes of participation.

University Press, 1978), chap. 12, find that the disparity in participation between men and women is narrower in the United States than in Austria, India, Japan, the Netherlands, Nigeria, or the former Yugoslavia.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES PARTICIPATION MAKE?

One theme in recent political discourse is concern about declining civic engagement.³⁴ Discussions about the health of civil society are ordinarily conducted, however, as if the reasons for concern about levels of participation are self-evident. Rather than make such presumptions, it seems appropriate to make explicit why we believe that political participation matters. When we bother to ask, we see that there are three broad categories of reasons for caring about levels of political activity: the creation of community and the cultivation of democratic virtues, the development of the capacities of the individual, and the equal protection of interests in public life.³⁵

First, contemporary concerns about low levels of political activity stem from the consequences of political participation—and voluntary activity more generally—for the community and democracy. When people work together voluntarily—whether for political or non-political ends—democratic orientations and skills are fostered: social trust,³⁶ norms of reciprocity and cooperation, and

34. On the erosion of civic engagement, see Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), as well as the much less compelling argument in Everett Carl Ladd, *The Ladd Report* (New York: Free Press, 1999).

35. This discussion of the various reasons for concern about equality in participation draws heavily upon Kay Lehman Schlozman, Sidney Verba, and Henry E. Brady, "Civic Participation and the Equality Problem," in *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*, ed. Theda Skocpol and Morris Fiorina (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1999), chap. 12. In proposing tripartite benefits from voluntary activity, we make no claims of either novelty or definitiveness. Rather we seek to position our work within an ongoing dialogue.

There are a number of helpful discussions about why we care about civic engagement, among them Jane J. Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), chap. 17; Geraint Parry, George Moyser, and Neil Day, *Political Participation and Democracy in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), chap. 1; Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Theda Skocpol, "Unravelling from Above," *American Prospect*, March/April 1996, pp. 20–25; Kenneth Newton, "Social Capital and Democracy," *American Behavioral Scientist* 40 (1997): 575–586; Bob Edwards and Michael W. Foley, "Social Capital and the Political Economy of Our Discontent," *American Behavioral Scientist* 40 (1997): 669–678; Mark E. Warren, "Democracy and Associations: An Approach to the Contributions of Associations to Democracy" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Western Political Science Association, Los Angeles, 1998); Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, esp. sect. IV. We should make clear that there is variation across authors with respect to the rubrics used to categorize the salutary consequences of civic involvement.

36. This perspective draws from James S. Coleman's (1988) concept of social capital. "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital," *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (1988): 95–120. For a rare empirical test of this hypothesis, see John Brehm and Wendy

the capacity to transcend narrow points of view and conceptualize the common good.³⁷ Thus when there is a vigorous sector of voluntary involvement—and the strong associational foundation that underlies it—it becomes easier for communities, and democratic nations, to engage in joint activity and to produce public goods. Communities characterized by high levels of voluntary activity are in many ways better places to live: the schools are better; crime rates are lower; tax evasion is less common.³⁸ Moreover, a vital arena of voluntary activity between individual and state protects citizens from overweening state power and preserves freedom.

The other two reasons for concern about levels of political participation shift our attention from social to individual benefits. Understanding the individual benefits derived from political participation makes clear the basis for our concern with disparities in activity between individuals and between groups, rather than with levels of activity. Not only does the community gain when citizens take part but individuals grow and learn through their activity. Political participation builds individual capacities in several ways: those who take part learn about community and society; they develop civic skills that can be carried throughout their lives; and they can come to have a greater appreciation of the needs and interests of others and of society as a whole.³⁹

Finally, and most importantly, we care about participation

Rahn, "Individual-Level Evidence for the Causes and Consequences of Social Capital," *American Journal of Political Science* 41 (1997): 999–1023.

37. Many commentators point out that the inevitable result of collective action is not necessarily to foster community and democracy. Some groups—for example, militias—hardly promote democratic values. Moreover, organizations of like-minded individuals begot conflict as well as cooperation. See, for example, the arguments and references contained in Michael W. Foley and Bob Edwards, "Escape from Politics? Social Theory and the Social Capital Debate" *American Behavioral Scientist* 40 (1997): 550–561; Sheri Berman, "Civil Society and Political Institutionalization," *American Behavioral Scientist* 40 (1997): 562–574; and Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, chap. 22. In fact, the evidence suggests that some kinds of trust foster political participation, and some do not. See Nancy Burns and Donald Kinder, "Social Trust and Democratic Politics," Pilot Study Report to the NES Board of Overseers, 2000 <www.umich.edu/~nes>.

38. For elaboration of this theme, see Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, sect. IV.

39. See, for example, Peter Bachrach, *The Theory of Democratic Elitism: A Critique* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967); Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); and Geraint Parry, "The Idea of Political Participation," in *Participation in Politics*, ed. Geraint Parry (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1972).

because of its consequences for equal protection of interests. Through the medium of political participation, citizens communicate information about their preferences and needs for government action and generate pressure on public officials to heed what they hear. We know, of course, that public officials act for many reasons—only one of which is their assessment of what the public wants and needs. And policymakers have ways other than the medium of citizen participation of learning what citizens want and need from the government. Nonetheless, since public officials are likely to be differentially responsive to citizens who exercise their participatory rights and those who do not, disparities in political involvement may compromise the democratic ideal of equal consideration of the wishes and needs of all citizens. The needs and preferences of those who are politically quiescent may get short shrift.

This logic makes clear not only why we care about participatory equality but why concern with women's participatory deficit is not simply another example of, to use a cliché, "adopting the male model." Scholars studying gender differences in a variety of aspects of human behavior converge in making an important point: that the appropriate way to think about gender differences is not necessarily to ask, "Why can't a woman be more like a man?"⁴⁰ We agree fully that, in many respects, women's ways of doing things—such as their greater willingness to make sacrifices on behalf of their children, their lower rates of violent crime, the grades they get in school—set a standard that men would do well to emulate.

The gender gap in political participation, however, puts women in a potential position of disadvantage. Not only are they deprived of the educational benefits that accrue from political participation, but they may lose out when public policy is made. Government policies ranging from the implementation of equal employment opportunity policy to Social Security survivors' benefits to abortion to the handling of domestic violence affect men and

40. Virginia Sapiro (*The Political Integration of Women*, p. 8) also refers to Henry Higgins's question in cautioning against adopting a male model and arguing that participation brings a range of benefits to women and to men (pp. 59, 85–86).

women differently. If public officials hear disproportionately from men, then the political needs and preferences of women may not be given equal weight in the political process. In short, we are concerned about the disparity in participation between men and women, not because we assume that the masculine pattern is the human pattern, but because we are concerned about the democratic norm of equal responsiveness to all.

Thinking about Gender

Because matters of gender constitute contested terrain in contemporary intellectual discourse, we would like to clarify our own stance by making a few initial distinctions.⁴¹ In seeking to understand the roots of political participation and the social processes that create differences between women and men in political activity, we are focusing on *gender* and participation, not on *women* and participation or on *sex* and participation.

Presumably as a reaction to the near invisibility of the female half of the population in traditional academic analysis, contemporary discussions of "gender" are often really discussions of women. We are deeply beholden to feminist historians and theorists who have drawn our attention to long-neglected topics having particular relevance to women's lives—for example, the consequences of family relationships for political participation or the special impact of gender-segregated voluntary associations. This book, however, is about both women and men. And when we train empirical data on these matters, we find they are relevant for men's

41. Our understanding of the origins and meaning of differences between females and males has been shaped by the creative thinking of feminist theorists from several disciplines. Some works that we have found particularly helpful for our consideration of differences in political participation include: Erving Goffman, "The Arrangement between the Sexes," *Theory and Society* 4 (1977): 301–333; Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman, "Doing Gender," *Gender and Society* 1 (1987): 125–151; Carole Pateman, "Equality, Difference, Subordination: The Politics of Motherhood and Women's Citizenship," and Deborah L. Rhode, "The Politics of Paradigms: Gender Difference and Gender Disadvantage," in *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics, and Female Subjectivity*, ed. Gisela Bock and Susan James (London: Routledge, 1992); Mary R. Jackman, *The Velvet Glove* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Roberta S. Sigel, *Ambition and Accommodation: How Women View Gender Relations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), chap. 1.

lives as well for women's. Nevertheless, because women were so long excluded from the world of public affairs, we too sometimes focus especially on women.

As a category of social analysis, the distinction between males and females has some useful properties. In contrast to, for example, social class, sex is dichotomous and, under most circumstances, readily observable at birth. In contrast to age, it is, except under extraordinary circumstances, immutable throughout the life cycle. Thus sex is temporally prior to any social outcomes with which it is associated, which means that the direction of causal relationships is unambiguous: while being female might cause a preference for playing with dolls rather than trucks among children or being a nursery school teacher rather than a professional boxer among adults, it is difficult to imagine the reverse, that playing with dolls or being a nursery school teacher causes one to become female. For these reasons, a great deal of social science analysis has used the dichotomous division on the basis of sex as an explanatory variable.

A concern with gender rather than sex points us in the direction of socially constructed rather than biologically determined differences.⁴² A great deal of scholarship has debated the relative importance of biology and society in producing differences between males and females. We are agnostic as to the overall balance of nature and nurture. However, socially structured experience is undeniably germane to the domain of our concern, voluntary activity. It is impossible to investigate participation in general—or participatory differences between women and men, in particular—without regard to the expectations, opportunities, and life circumstances that operate so powerfully throughout the life cycle to shape who we are.

Thinking in terms of gender rather than sex orients us away from thinking in terms of dichotomous and immutable distinctions. We have already seen that the forces that produce gender differences have varied through history and across societies and

42. For an especially illuminating discussion of the place of sex and gender, biology, and social construction in explanation, see Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, *Deceptive Distinctions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), chaps. 1-3.

cultures. Moreover, they vary across the life cycle and across social contexts. Indeed, the social processes that create gender differences begin at birth—the first question asked about each of us is, usually, “Boy or girl?”—and continue through childhood and adolescence. Moreover, the social construction of differences between men and women does not end with the onset of adulthood but, rather, continues throughout the life cycle. Indeed, a large part of our overall story concerns the impact of adult experiences—especially adult experiences in the family, on the job, in organizations, and at church—on voluntary activity.

In addition, gender differences are contextual, their extent and nature varying across social domains.⁴³ The implications of being female rather than male are different within the sanctum of the family from what they are on a construction site, at a playground, at a supermarket, or in an elementary school classroom; and they are different across groups defined by other social characteristics—for example, social class and race or ethnicity.⁴⁴ Our analytical approach takes account of the contextuality of gender differences. We do not assume that we can extrapolate to politics from what we know about gender differences in church or at school. Moreover, we will explore the interrelationships among these domains, delineating the direct and indirect consequences of what happens in two arenas where gender differences matter profoundly, the home and the workplace, for a domain where they are much less central, citizen politics.

Using gender as a conceptual lens thus calls our attention to the

43. As Virginia Sapiro (*The Political Integration of Women*, p. 37) put it, “No single role is attached to being a man or a woman, rather, a constellation of roles, all revolving around the fact that one was born male or female.”

44. We use the term “race or ethnicity” because African-Americans are usually referred to as a racial group and Latinos as an ethnic group. Where the context demands, we sometimes use the inelegant construction “race/ethnicity” in order to make clear the differentiation of race or ethnicity, on one hand, from gender, on the other.

There is no generally accepted nomenclature for the three groups on which we focus, and what the appropriate designations are is often a politically volatile question. We use the terms “African-Americans” or “Blacks” for one of the minority groups and “Latinos” for the other. We use the term “Anglo-Whites” to denote those who described themselves as White, but not as Latino or Hispanic. The locution is admittedly awkward. Since “White” is often usually juxtaposed to “Black” or “African-American” and “Anglo” to “Latino” or “Hispanic,” however, the conglomerate term for the majority group seems appropriate.

heterogeneity among men and among women. Sometimes the differences among men and among women are greater than the differences between men and women. With respect to most human attributes, even ones with a physiological basis, it is useful to conceptualize the differences between females and males, not in terms of a dichotomy, but rather in terms of overlapping bell curves with different means. With respect to some of these characteristics—for example, vocabulary skill or musical ability—the difference between means is barely detectable and the degree of overlap substantial.⁴⁵ When it comes to other human qualities—for example, upper-body strength or rates of violent crime—the means are much further apart and the degree of overlap is much less.

An intrinsic part of our mode of analysis is, therefore, the recognition of the many ways that women and men differ among themselves that are relevant for political participation—for example, in terms of education, income, family circumstances, other voluntary commitments, and interest in and knowledge about politics. As we proceed we shall be aware of the way that differences among men and among women with respect to these attributes help to explain who takes part and who does not. We shall also be aware of the way that differences between men and women with respect to these attributes help to explain the fact that men are, on average, more politically active than women are. Furthermore, recognizing the diversity among women and among men focuses our attention on the intersections between gender and other social characteristics, most importantly, class and race, both of which are fundamental axes of cleavage in American politics and both of which are also associated with political participation.

As we shall elaborate at length in Chapter 2, our analytic strategy is informed by these understandings. In considering how social experience shapes orientations to politics, we are concerned not only with the crucial formative years of childhood and adolescence but also with adulthood. Moreover, in assessing the constraints and choices that create gender differences, we pay particular attention to variations across contexts and make no assumptions that

45. See the helpful discussion of this subject in Richard Lewontin, *Human Diversity* (New York: Scientific American, 1995), chap. 7.

what is true for one domain must obtain for others. Within each context—home, workplace, church, and so on—we examine the nature and extent of gender differences and investigate how those differences are created and maintained. In addition, we are cognizant that the differences among women and among men may overshadow the differences between them.

Gender as a Political Category in America

Our concern with the implications of unequal participation for the equal protection of interests in politics suggests that we should consider gender as not only a social but a political category and seek to locate gender differences in the terrain of political conflict in America. Group differences tend to become politically relevant and to become continuing fault lines of political conflict when group members are affected in similar ways by governmental policies; when group members are united by distinctive and shared preferences with respect to these policies; and when group identities find expression in the institutions that represent citizen interests in the political process, interest groups and parties. In short, if group members agree strongly with one another and disagree sharply with non-members on matters of deep political import, and if these divisions are embodied in the representative institutions of American democracy, then we expect group identity to become an axis of political cleavage.

It is easy to specify a variety of government policies on which women and men in America would seem to have different objective interests.⁴⁶ Some of these—for example, abortion, contraception, and pregnancy leaves—derive from women's reproductive capacities. Others—for example, the assignment of women to combat roles in the military, veterans' preference in civil service hiring, and the implementation of non-discrimination policies in employment and education—derive from a long tradition of de jure and de facto discrimination on the basis of sex in many realms

46. For a valuable framework for thinking about women's interests, see Virginia Sapiro, "When Are Interests Interesting? The Problem of Political Representation of Women," *American Political Science Review* 75 (1981): 701–716.

of life. And still others—for example, government support for child care, divorce law, and income maintenance for the poor—derive from the consequences of a division of labor in which women have traditionally taken responsibility for the care of home and children.

Although there is a long list of issues on which men and women might be expected to have different interests, their actual preferences reflect these expectations very imperfectly, if at all.⁴⁷ As politically relevant groups, women and men are divided along other fault lines—in particular, along lines of race and class. The result is that the differences in opinion among men and among women are more pronounced than the differences between the two groups. With respect to opinions on many policies that have a different impact on women's and men's lives—abortion, for example—the two groups are virtually indistinguishable.⁴⁸ In contrast to the absence of gender difference in opinions on such “women's issues” is the long-standing gender difference in opinions on a variety of issues involving violence. Compared with women, men are more likely to be willing to use force in international disputes, to support enhanced military expenditures, and to oppose gun control measures. More recently, a disparity between men and women has emerged on issues involving government assistance to the needy, with women more supportive than men of government assistance and services in a variety of areas. Even in the areas in which the

47. On gender differences in political preferences and behaviors, see Kathleen Frankovic, “Sex and Politics—New Alignments, Old Issues,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 15 (1982): 439–448; Daniel Wirls, “Reinterpreting the Gender Gap,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 50 (1986): 316–350; Kristi Andersen, “Gender and Public Opinion,” in *Understanding Public Opinion*, ed. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1997), chap. 2; Carole K. Chaney, R. Michael Alvarez, and Jonathan Nagler, “Explaining the Gender Gap in the U.S. Presidential Elections, 1980–1992,” *Political Research Quarterly* 51 (1998): 211–340; Karen M. Kaufmann and John R. Petrocik, “The Changing Politics of American Men: Understanding the Sources of the Gender Gap,” *American Journal of Political Science* 43 (1999): 864–887; as well as the discussion and bibliographical references in M. Margaret Conway, Gertrude A. Steuarnagel, and David W. Ahern, *Women and Political Participation* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1997), chaps. 1–5.

48. See, for example, Barbara Hinkson Craig and David M. O'Brien, *Abortion and American Politics* (Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House, 1993), chap. 7; and Everett Carl Ladd and Karlyn H. Bowman, *Public Opinion about Abortion* (Washington, D.C.: AEI Press, 1997), p. 13.

differences between masculine and feminine opinion are most pronounced, however, neither men nor women are united in their attitudes; the gap between the two groups is hardly a chasm. In contrast, as a political group, African-Americans are much more distinctive in their opinions, and the distance that separates the opinions of Blacks and Whites is greater than that which separates women and men.

With respect to the extent to which group identities are built into political conflict by institutions, many organizations—ranging from the American Legion to the American Nurses Association—that take part in American politics are dominated by members of one sex or the other. In spite of the fact that most of the organized interests in Washington politics are dominated by men, organizations that self-consciously represent women's interests are more common than organizations that make explicit claims on men's behalf.⁴⁹ In addition to general-purpose organizations such as the National Organization for Women are more than a hundred narrower groups that advocate on behalf of particular issues like domestic violence or pay equity or particular groups of women ranging from Mexican-American women to military widows to women college administrators to older women.⁵⁰ In contrast, men's interests are very well represented in the mainstream corporations, trade associations, unions, and professional associations that make up the overwhelming share of the organized interests in national politics. In short, while gender issues are part of the seemingly endless agenda of issues over which there is conflict in pressure politics, they do not form the core of that agenda.

Although pressure politics in America usually involves narrow constituencies and narrow issues, it is the political parties that or-

49. One issue that has generated advocacy by groups of men self-consciously acting on behalf of men is divorce. Father's groups have lobbied on the state level for reduced financial responsibilities to ex-wives and, especially, joint custody arrangements for children. See Herbert Jacob, *Silent Revolution: The Transformation of Divorce Law in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), chap. 8.

50. On the organizations that represent women in Washington, see Kay Lehman Schlozman, “Representing Women in Washington: Sisterhood and Pressure Politics,” in *Women, Politics, and Change*, ed. Tilly and Gurin, chap. 15; and Joyce Gelb and Marian Lief Palley, *Women and Public Policies* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), chap. 3.

ganize into politics the conflicts between broad publics over the most fundamental issues dividing Americans. With respect to political parties, the gender gap has been widely observed since 1980. When it comes to both partisanship and candidate choice, women are somewhat more Democratic, and men are somewhat more Republican. In parallel fashion, over the last generation, the major parties have offered clearly defined alternatives on an array of policy matters having a special impact on women, including the Equal Rights Amendment, the implementation of civil rights laws, and abortion, with Democrats congenial to, and Republicans hostile to, policies that promote equal rights and changes in traditional gender roles.⁵¹

In spite of the intermittent presence of women's rights issues on the American political agenda over the past century and a half, and in spite of the differentiation between the contemporary parties on such issues, gender does not have the prominence of either class or race as an axis of cleavage in American politics. In terms of opinions, party preferences, and candidate choices, neither men nor women constitute the kind of cohesive group that African-Americans have been since the 1960s. Furthermore, although class groups are less readily identifiable than groups based on gender or race or ethnicity, class issues involving government assistance to working people and the needy and the regulation of business have never been long absent from the center of American politics. Moreover, the New Deal party coalitions that emerged during the 1930s built conflict over class issues into American politics. In contrast, gender issues have been a consistent sub-theme, but rarely if ever the main theme, of political conflict in America.

51. On the differences between Republicans and Democrats on women's rights issues and the way that the parties' current positions constitute a reversal of their historical positions, see Jo Freeman, "Whom You Know versus Whom You Represent: Feminist Influence in the Democratic and Republican Parties," in *The Women's Movements of the United States and Western Europe*, ed. Mary Fainsod Katzenstein and Carol McClurg Mueller (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), chap. 10; and Christina Wolbrecht, *The Politics of Women's Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). On the politics of women's issues at the federal level during the middle of the twentieth century, see Cynthia Harrison, *On Account of Sex: The Politics of Women's Issues, 1945-1968* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

Explaining Gender Disparities in Participation

The specific enterprise of this book, explaining the gender gap in participation, is embedded in a larger enterprise, explaining participation. If we can do the latter successfully, we will be able to do the former.

EXPLAINING PARTICIPATION

In our understanding, political activity is fostered by a variety of characteristics that predispose an individual to take part. We focus on three sets of *participatory factors*: resources, recruitment, and orientations to politics.⁵²

Resources. Individuals will be more likely to take part in politics if they have resources that make it possible to do so: among them are the time to devote to activity; money to make contributions to campaigns and other political causes; and civic skills, those organizational and communications capacities that make it easier to get involved and that enhance an individual's effectiveness as a participant.

Recruitment. Political activity is often triggered by a request—from a relative, a workmate, a fellow organization or church member or, even, a stranger who calls during dinner. Those who have the wherewithal to take part are more likely to do so if they are asked.⁵³

Political Orientations. Several psychological orientations facilitate political activity. Individuals are more likely to participate if they are politically interested, informed, and efficacious, and if they can make connections between their concerns—especially the concerns rooted in group identities—and governmental action.

52. This model of the sources of political participation draws heavily from Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, *Voice and Equality*, part III.

53. We also know that those who have characteristics that make it likely that they would take part and who have a history of past participation are more likely to be targeted by requests for activity. See Henry E. Brady, Kay Lehman Schlozman, Sidney Verba, "Prospecting for Participants: Rational Expectations and the Recruitment of Political Activists," *American Political Science Review* 93 (1999): 153-168.

Earlier we listed a variety of common-sense explanations as to why men are somewhat more active in politics than women are. It is easy to see how these expectations map onto our more systematic model. For example, the suggestion that women—especially women with children and full-time jobs—are too time-deprived to participate would be encompassed by the emphasis upon resources. Or the suggestion that women learn from an early age that politics is a masculine enterprise falls under the rubric of a focus on political orientations.

THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONS

These participatory factors are accumulated throughout the life cycle in non-political institutions.⁵⁴ At home, in school, on the job, and in voluntary association and religious institutions, individuals acquire resources, receive requests for activity, and develop the political orientations that foster participation. In the course of our analysis, we shall examine each of these institutions in sequence. The relative emphasis that we give to each particular institution will be determined both by how central it is to our argument and, frankly, by how fully our data are able to address the relevant concerns.

Let us illustrate beginning with the *families in which we are born*. An individual's earliest political exposures begin at home. All other things equal, those whose parents took part in politics

54. In our concern with social institutions, we build on the foundations laid by many scholars of gender and participation, scholars who have examined whether having jobs, being married, and having children affect women's and men's political participation. See, for example, Kristi Andersen, "Working Women and Political Participation, 1952-1972," *American Journal of Political Science* 19 (1975): 439-453; Welch, "Women as Political Animals?"; M. Kent Jennings and Barbara Farah, "Social Roles and Political Resources," *American Journal of Political Science* 25 (1981): 462-482; Eileen McDonagh, "To Work or Not to Work: The Differential Impact of Achieved and Derived Status upon the Political Participation of Women, 1956-76," *American Journal of Political Science* 26 (1982): 280-297; Kristi Andersen and Elizabeth A. Cook, "Women, Work, and Political Attitudes," *American Journal of Political Science* 29 (1985): 606-625; Karen Beckwith, *American Women and Political Participation: The Impacts of Work, Generation, and Feminism* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986); and Cal Clark and Janet Clark, "Models of Gender and Political Participation in the United States," *Women and Politics* 6 (1986): 5-25. And we take up the challenge, put forward by Andersen and Cook (p. 622), to look more closely at the detailed workings of adult institutions, particularly the workplace.

are more likely to do so themselves. Furthermore, the American dream of equality of opportunity to the contrary, an important legacy of the families into which we are born is that parental socioeconomic status is passed along in the educational opportunities that are made available to the next generation.

It is well known that what happens in *school* is crucial for political participation in adulthood. Formal education cultivates the communications and organizational skills that facilitate political activity and provides opportunities for civic training through participation in school government and other clubs and activities. Moreover, those who have high levels of formal education are in various ways better endowed with participatory factors: they are more likely to have jobs that pay well and provide opportunities for the exercise of civic skills; they are more likely to be involved in voluntary associations; they are more likely to be the targets of requests for political activity; and they are more likely to be politically interested and informed.⁵⁵ Because our data about early experiences in the family and in school are based on adult recall, our treatment of these early institutions will be less thorough than our treatment of the institutions of adulthood, and our conclusions will be tentative.

Our principal focus is on the institutions of adult life. Among them are the *families that we create as adults*. Family life has multiple, and contradictory, consequences for participatory factors. On one hand, especially if there is more than one earner, families generate income that is usually available to all family members. In addition, the household can be the site of political discussion and exposure to other political cues, and married couples often take part together or represent one another in politics. On the other, responsibilities for household maintenance and child care make major claims on the time available for other pursuits, including political activity. The *workplace* is a prime location for acquiring participatory factors. Earnings from work are the primary source of income for most Americans. Moreover, individuals develop civic skills and receive requests for political participation at work.

55. On the multiple effects of education for participation, see Verba, Scholzman, and Brady, *Voice and Equality*, chap. 15.

However, the hours spent on the job represent the single largest commitment of time in most adults' lives. Voluntary activity in *non-political organizations* and *religious institutions* also figures importantly in generating participatory factors. Like the workplace, both non-political organizations and churches function as sites in which civic skills are exercised and social networks generate requests for activity.

In considering the role of institutions in providing participatory factors, we shall distinguish between *selection* into institutions and *treatment* within institutions. Selection refers to the processes that predispose individuals with particular characteristics to end up in a particular institutional setting. Treatment refers to what happens to individuals in an institution—in particular, the processes that influence who among those selected into institutions acquires participatory factors.

ACCOUNTING FOR THE DISPARITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN

Our model not only gives us a template for understanding participatory differences among individuals but guides us in explaining why men are somewhat more active than women. The gender gap in participation grows out of either or both of the following circumstances: where there is a difference between women and men in the level of a particular participatory factor or in the effect on activity of a factor, that is, the process by which it is converted into activity.

We should note that explaining the gender gap in participation is a different enterprise from explaining participation. Even if a particular factor has consequences for participation, it does not help us to understand the gender gap in activity unless there is a gender difference in the level or the effect of that factor. For example, activity in student government and other clubs in high school and affiliation with non-political organizations during adulthood turn out, not surprisingly, to be strongly associated with political activity. Nevertheless, there are no significant gender differences in the level of activity either in high school clubs or in adult organizations or in their effects on political participation. Hence they are useful for explaining participation but not for explaining the gender gap in participation.

Our model, however, tells us where to look for gender differences in the participatory endowments that men and women derive from institutions. Several of the institutions we investigate contribute to and reflect the results of the social construction of differences between men and women.⁵⁶ Family life is, obviously, characterized by a powerful, though diminishing, division of labor on the basis of sex, with women taking a disproportionate share of the responsibility for home and children and men a disproportionate share of the responsibility for financial support. When it comes to participatory factors acquired at work, men are not only more likely than women to be in the work force, they are more likely to hold jobs that pay well and provide opportunities to develop civic skills. Religious institutions present a particularly complicated case. On one hand, in many denominations women were excluded from full participation in religious life until quite recently, and in some denominations they continue to be. On the other, women are more religiously active than men are—even in denominations that restrict their full religious citizenship.

Using evidence from surveys about individuals and couples, we are able to account for women's continuing deficit in political participation. A model that focuses on access to and treatment within the non-political institutions of everyday life—the family, school, workplace, non-political voluntary association, and church—demonstrates a circumstance of cumulative inequalities such that men are better endowed with most of the participatory factors that facilitate activity. That is, with few compensatory inequalities, men—especially Anglo-White men—are advantaged with respect to the resources, recruitment attempts, and political orientations that foster activity. The gender gap in participation can be ex-

56. Roberta Sigel makes a similar point in another way: "The written and unwritten, official and unofficial norms of the gender systems pervade all institutional structures, thereby limiting the options available to women and restricting their capacity to control their own lives" (*Ambition and Accommodation*, p. 16). We would add to Sigel's formulation that these norms shape the options available to men as well. Alice Eagly has developed a compelling model of the situational roots of sex differences, with attention to both women and men in *Sex Differences in Social Behavior* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1987). For an analogous approach to men, see Jack W. Sattel, "Men, Inexpressiveness, and Power," in *The Gender and Psychology Reader*, ed. Blythe McVicker Clinchy and Julie K. Norem (New York: New York University Press, 1998), pp. 498–504.

plained by gender differences in the stockpiles of participatory factors.

The disparity in political activity thus results much less from gender differences in the way that participatory factors are converted into activity than from gender differences in the levels of participatory factors, and not from a big difference in a single factor, but from the accumulated effects of deficits in a variety of factors. This constellation of circumstances implies that a simple question yields no simple answer. However, our complicated solution to the puzzle of unequal participation illuminates the nature of political participation, the institutional domains of adult life, and the social processes that create gender differences in contemporary America.