

WHY WON'T SHE RUN? A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF THE GENDER GAP IN
POLITICS

by

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ABSTRACT

Based on a review of the current social science literature, this exploration of women's lack of equitable representation in political office in the United States seeks to understand the breadth of, and factors behind, the current "gender gap" in US politics. Citing recent literature which points to the problem being that of a lack of eligible female candidates emerging, the author utilizes an intersectional feminist framework for understanding the gender gap in women's political ambitions. Drawing from feminist authors bell hooks, Kimberle Crenshaw, Valerie Bryson, and Audre Lorde, the viability and intersectionality of social science research--including studies from political science, sociology, psychology, women and gender studies, law, and economics--and theories about women's lack of representation are critiqued. The author offers conclusions about key factors involved in decisions to run for office for women, and particularly for women of color, in hopes of shedding light on some important institutional, social, and cultural shifts that must occur in order for more women to achieve positions of political leadership. This thesis argues that lingering manifestations of patriarchal ideology within society and politics contribute to a disparate level of political access for U.S. women when compared with their male counterparts, and that access to successful political runs are markedly hampered by women's socialization into traditional gender roles and by a compound effect of race-gender discrimination for women of color.

The form and content of this abstract are approved. I recommend its publication.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCING THE GENDER GAP

In the 2016 Presidential Election, generations of feminists, women young and old, and progressives alike clamored with anticipation at the prospect on the horizon: Hillary Clinton, the first woman candidate to ever get so far, was poised to become the first Female President of the United States. After previous unsuccessful attempts, “this time,” we thought, “this is our time to shatter the world’s highest glass ceiling.” Alas, complex sociopolitical factors played out in such a way that to millions of Americans’ dismay, it became clear on November 8, 2016 that feminists old and new would have to keep waiting for “Madame President.” Speculations of campaign strategies and political shortfalls aside, the United States’ persistent failure to elect a female to its highest leadership office is at once confounding, exasperating, and, for some, unsurprising. While Hillary may or may not have been the best woman for the job, her years of experience in foreign policy, law, and governance made her arguably one of the more qualified women to ever get so far in a presidential race (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2017). Yet America was not ready for her--*why?* If taken as a measure of gender equity in this nation, the unbroken streak of male presidents elected in the U.S. can point to its continued upholding of patriarchy and gender inequality, despite significant gains in recent years. This chapter will detail the problem of the gender gap in U.S. politics, specifically the lack of women’s representation and representation for women of color.

It’s not just in the oval office: nationwide, women still comprise only a fraction of political leadership. At the time of this writing, women comprise 19.4% of seats in Congress and 24.9% of state legislative seats. Only 5 women serve as Governors, and 20% of city

mayors are women (Center on American Women and Politics, 2017). These statistics become highly problematized when weighed against the percentage of the U.S. population made up of women: 50.8% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). On the global scale, the U.S. falls at the middle of the pack in terms of percentage of women national legislators, ranking in at 100th out of 193 nations. With these numbers, the United States is comparable to the likes of Indonesia, Kenya, and Kyrgyzstan--even falling behind Saudi Arabia (United Nations Population Fund, 2017). This begs the question: For a nation so allegedly committed to equality, why do we have so few women in positions of political power?

Women's rights movements have achieved significant victories, and long gone are the days of womanhood's conflation with the domestic sphere. While American women are now competing with men in many professions and income brackets, several important battles remain to be fought on the field of gender equality--and much of the power to wage these fights lies squarely in the hand of legislative bodies that are, to this day, largely comprised of men. Women can vote, drive, work outside the home, and own property, but still face obstacles and threats to the integrity of their own bodies, their reproductive health, about whether or not to be a parent, or receive adequate parental leave.

One problem is that for more women to work their way up to Congressional and executive level positions, more women have to gain entry into local and state level offices. State government is often a springboard to Congress--which is, traditionally, the springboard to executive office. Some evidence suggests that local and state level races offer a more successful avenue to improving representation for women, especially minority women, due to the stakes being relatively lower and women of color's relative level of success at gaining seats in these bodies (Swain & Lien, 2016). In local and state level races, fundraising

amounts are only a fraction of what is the norm nationally. Campaigning in one's own state does not require a candidate to spend time traveling across country, and thus, working women, especially those with families, may encounter fewer barriers in a race to the state house or school board than she would on the way to the White House. Generally, state legislative sessions are shorter and campaign competition is less fierce. Interestingly, women's participation in state legislatures varies widely in accordance with location. Colorado fares considerably well at #3 nationwide with 39% of its state house made up of women, where others rank dismally low in terms of gender parity, like Wyoming, with only 11% of women legislators (Center on American Women and Politics, 2017).

At all levels of government, the numbers for women of color are substantially worse, despite the fact that only 61% of the U.S. currently identifies as white. Based on 2016 estimates, roughly 12% of the U.S. population is black, 18% is Hispanic, 6% is Asian, 1% are American Indian/Alaska Native, and 2% identify as "two or more races" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Added together, that's about 40% of the population that identifies as being at least partially in an ethnic minority. Of the 104 women serving in the 115th U.S. Congress, 38, or 36.5%, are women of color. Of the 75 women serving in statewide elective executive offices, 7, or 9.3%, are women of color, and women of color constitute 5.9% of the total 7,383 state legislators. Seven out of the 100 most populous cities in the U.S. have mayors that are women of color. In all, 271 black women, 37 Asian Pacific Islander women, and only 20 Native American women serve on state legislatures. Three states, North Dakota, Nebraska, and South Dakota, have zero women of color on their legislatures (CAWP, 2017).

In the growing body of research that has posed questions similar to these, several key scholars have analyzed elections over the past decade to conclude that when women run, they

statistically tend to win and raise funds at rates comparable to men (Dolan, 2004; Hogan, 2010; Pearson & McGhee, 2013). Other studies on the topic have demonstrated that voters generally demonstrate a willingness to vote for qualified women candidates, and that women are just as politically involved and actually vote more than men (Sanbonmatsu, Carroll, & Walsh, 2009; Lawless & Fox, 2010; Sanbonmatsu, 2013; Hayes & Lawless, 2014). So if women who run have about the same odds of winning as men, but women still do not hold as many seats as men, not enough women are running. This turns the question in a new direction: why do so few women run, and what factors affect their political ambition? Existing literature in political science, sociology, psychology, and women and gender studies offer several hypotheses about the ways that societal or individual factors operate in tandem with institutional factors to keep women--especially underprivileged women or women of minority groups--from aspiring to or ultimately having the resources necessary to emerge and compete as a candidate.

While women have arguably made substantial strides in terms of gender equality in the U.S., there is still much work to be done before we can say we have achieved gender *equity*. That is, gender *equality* objectively allows men and women to have access to the same basic rights, such as voting, property ownership, and job opportunities without regard to their sex. Gender *equity* goes farther than simply equal opportunities and entails fairness of treatment respective of men's and women's differing needs and positionalities. This can include treatment that "is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities." (ILO, 2000, p.48). In other words, equity balances outcomes more than opportunities. Where *equality* falls short of doing women justice is the failure to recognize and compensate them for the social and historical disadvantages that prevent

women and men from operating on a level playing field (United Nations Population Fund, 2005). A woman may ostensibly have the same ability to apply for upper-level positions as a man, yet though the opportunity is purportedly open to her, her chances of being hired may still be hampered by sexism and a business culture that devalues her as a potential future mother.

Further complicating the issue is the multifaceted oppression faced by women of color and any women who are not a part of the dominant class. Women of color face the additional challenge of confronting the combined effects of intertwined historical sexism *and* racism, the effect of which contributes to many more significant barriers to their potential emergence as a candidate (Scola, 2013). Mainstream liberal feminist movements for gender equality have generally glossed over intragroup differences between women of differing socioeconomic and race/ethnicity status, which is problematic from an intersectional feminist standpoint. For this reason, some of those barriers must be confronted and addressed uniquely. To achieve equity, “society and its institutions must take an affirmative approach to ensure that decision making and access to resources are no longer weighted in men’s favor,” or rather, in wealthy white men’s favor (United Nations Population Fund, 2005). This topic will be discussed at length in Chapter 2.

Women considering running for office consistently confront double standards in the form of gendered stereotypes and expectations about women political leaders’ performance. Manifestations of patriarchal attitudes in interpersonal relationships and public evaluations of candidates can have a crippling effect on women’s latent ambitions toward political leadership. Women who enter politics tend to face closer scrutiny and are forced to reconcile their familial and professional lives in a way men are not (Dolan & Lynch, 2014). Consistent

with feminist social theory, women are traditionally expected to be the caretakers of their families, especially if they have young children. For example, a woman who chooses to seek office that may take her away from her family for an extended period of time may be seen as selfish, whereas a man who does the same may be seen as making a sacrifice (Campus, 2013).

Why do we need more women in office? Upon examination of current literature from key scholars in political science, sociology, and women and gender studies, several important implications have emerged in regard to women's candidacy and officeholding. Not only do women constitute over half the U.S. population, their presence in political leadership can have a tangible impact on public policy in governance in ways that could improve the standard of living for many groups of women. Dovi (2002) presents a summary of four key arguments for expanding representation for all women. The first, the "role model argument," states that members of historically disadvantaged groups may benefit from seeing members of their own group in positions of power, leading them to feel more empowered or inspired to see themselves in a similar position someday. Having a woman in office, especially if she is a member of another historically disadvantaged group, can increase self-esteem for women in that group and can bolster their capacity to assume leadership roles themselves. Second, women's representation, and especially minority women's representation, is important in the effort to compensate for past injustices inflicted upon those groups.

As patriarchal and/or racist ideologies have shaped policies in the past centuries which have placed women and particularly minority women at the bottom of the power structure, increasing their representation in government is the institutionalized voice they may need to combat patterns of inequality (Dovi, p. 730). This has also been referred to as the "justice

argument.” Third is the suggestion that has been referenced in previous paragraphs, that of “overlooked interests” which may be given their due weight under more proportional representation. And finally, Dovi presents the “revitalized democracy” argument, which states that diversity is a necessary condition of increasing political participation, civic engagement, and strengthening the legitimacy of democratic institutions (Dovi, 2002, p. 730).

One study supported existing literature on gender stereotypes and found that increased women’s representation in legislatures is linked with decreased conflict behavior and defense spending (Koch & Fulton, 2011). As the research shows, when women are better supported by their communities to eventually fulfill ambitions of officeholding, they may enrich the perspectives of legislative bodies such that a state or nation may be less likely to engage in war or international conflict. Women in Congress have also been shown to be more effective at securing congressional funding for their prioritized policies (Anzia & Berry, 2011), which bodes well for “women’s interest” policies like family leave and affordable childcare. Women legislators are more likely to sponsor bills, and when they are in the minority party, they keep their bills alive longer, due in part to their willingness to “reach across the aisle” and collaborate or compromise with officials in the opposite party (Volden et al., 2013). The policy reforms referred to herein as “women’s interest” are, in actuality, policies that from a feminist perspective would offer benefit for both men *and* women, but as these are generally referred to as such in the political science literature, the author will continue to utilize that term for clarity’s sake.

Governmental bodies which do not include a diversity of representation may be hampered by a skewed balance of power and a disproportional focus on priorities of the

dominant group. Research also indicates that women tend to be more oriented around cooperation, and not hierarchy, which could present a valuable shift in terms of how bodies negotiate with each other and with foreign entities (Koch & Fulton, 2011). On the policy side, a critical justification for increasing the number of women in elective office is that women will promote policies that improve women's equality and autonomy. Kittilson (2008) determined that women's legislative or Congressional presence significantly influences the adoption and scope of maternity and childcare leave policies. This effect, interestingly, is measurable regardless of the ideology of the dominant party in power--that is, it does not matter if the body leans more liberal or conservative: women's presence will increase support for women-oriented policies regardless of party ideology (Kittilson, 2008). Women legislators are, unsurprisingly, much more likely to prioritize "women's issues" that are largely minimized in male-dominated legislative bodies: issues like healthcare access and reproductive health, early childhood education, and paid family leave (Carroll, 2001), each of which is, ironically, necessary to improve women's opportunities to enter the political world in the first place. These factors will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

Mann and Cain (2005) further support the notion of revitalized democracy and justice in representation, writing that democracy cannot function as intended--to represent the people--if politically interested citizens do not exhibit a sincere interest in holding office (Mann & Cain, 2005). That is, if the electoral system is inaccessible for some portion of its citizens who would potentially aspire to take part in it, it is not functionally democratic. Further, as Squire (2000) notes, greater competition within electoral politics is essential to producing politicians who must necessarily be held to a higher degree of accountability to his or her constituents. Until the 1990s, about 1/3 of state legislative seats went uncontested by white

male incumbents (Squire, 2000). The more diverse women candidates that challenge them, the harder the winner will have to fight to earn and retain votes, and thus, is to be held accountable by their voting base, which would theoretically lead to more honest and effective politicians. All in all, it is evident that until we have more women in legislative seats, our lawmaking bodies will continue to make decisions that largely leave women's voices and experiences out of the equation. This thesis will attempt to support this assertion through an intersectional feminist analysis of the social science literature by exploring the following research questions.

Research Questions

1. What factors discourage women, and especially minority women, from seeking office?
2. What does existing literature suggest in terms of strategies for increasing women's representation?
3. To what extent does the academic literature on gender and politics reflect an intersectional perspective?

Methods

The author takes an interpretive approach to existing social science research through a framework of intersectional feminist theory to distill arguments about women in politics: why women in political roles are important, what obstacles they face, and how to change the status quo in political representation. An intersectional feminist perspective will be applied to the political science research to make arguments about how strategies can be made more effective so as to benefit a broader range of women, and to craft claims about factors that bolster or weaken women's likelihood to cultivate and act upon political ambition.

Thesis Organization

This thesis will review and analyze current research on women's political participation and the gender gap in politics to form conclusions about what factors play a role in facilitating or discouraging female political leadership and women's candidacy. Literature from various disciplines in social science, namely political science, sociology, women and gender studies, psychology, and economics, will be critiqued using an *intersectional feminist framework* to draw conclusions about barriers to women's political representation. Chapter 2 will introduce an intersectional Feminist framework through which this analysis will operate and provide reasons for which such an analysis is necessary for this project. Chapter 3 will present a bi-fold analysis of some of the barriers which exist to women's political representation and ambition at both the individual and institutional level: societal factors relating to socialization and patriarchal gender norms that operate at the individual level, and institutional factors relating to the structure of the American electoral and economic systems. Chapter 4 will present a number of possible strategies to help mitigate the gender gap in political ambition as based in current social science literature, which will then be held up against an intersectional feminist analysis. Chapter 5 will conclude the thesis by summarizing literature about what barriers exist and possible strategies to improve women's representation to be followed by a critique of the existing data and an exploration of the limits under which the current analysis operates.

CHAPTER II

INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST THEORY

Throughout the history of feminist movements, mainstream or upper-middle class proponents of feminism have been critiqued for seeking gains for only certain groups of women, while leaving out the needs and lived experiences of others. Feminism, as many have argued, will only be just if it takes an *intersectional* approach that acknowledges and lifts up the life experiences of differently positioned groups of women (Freedman, 2002). This chapter will discuss modern iterations of feminist theory and movements, outline the need for an intersectional perspective in the social science literature, and describe what that might look like.

Western political theory has tended to ignore women (Jacobs, 2011). This thesis seeks to engage a *feminist* political theory, one which sees women as central to political analysis and, as such, women's participation or lack thereof as a glaring injustice in U.S. democracy. Feminist political theory would seek to understand society in order to challenge and change it, not through abstract knowledge, but through knowledge of practices and strategies that can be used to guide and inform feminist political practice (Bryson, 1992). The term *feminism* originated as a name for the ideology which espoused the need for women having equal rights with men. It has since occupied many movements and seen many iterations. More generally, "feminism" is defined as "a collection of movements and ideologies that share a common goal: to define, establish, and achieve equal political, economic, cultural, personal, and social rights for women" (Hawkesworth, 2006, p. 25). At its core, any feminist theory would assume the relationship between the sexes to be one of "inequality, subordination, or

oppression,” and that this inequality is not a fact of nature but an institutionalized problem of political power (Bryson, 1992, p. 1).

Feminist theorists that deal in political subject matter argue for incorporating gender as an analytic category and to expand existing definitions of politics. Political feminists look at the way that women have been excluded from the political sphere and the cultural institutions and constructs that impact ways that men and women interact within a power structure (Driscoll & Krook, 2012). Feminist social theory also focuses on the construction and socialization of gender identities, and the ways that the development, expression of and diversion from them interplay with individuals’ differing experiences of the world. A basic assumption is that women have been socialized to strive for “perfection” and to exemplify certain idealized traits of femininity and reproductive/caring roles.

bell hooks defined feminism as “a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression” (hooks, 2000, viii). She explains that in contrast to the way it is sometimes misinterpreted, feminism is not about being angry or hating men; it is about hating sexism and the patriarchal system that is set up in such a way as to provide men with the power and privilege to the detriment of women. All of us, she explains, are “socialized from birth on to accept sexist thought and action” (hooks, viii). Women, then, are often just as sexist as men-- or are, at least, often complicit in the system that presents them with an unequal set of opportunities. Men, too, are victims of the system of patriarchy and must be liberated from it (hooks, viii). Thus, meaningful change in the direction of combating patriarchy can come about only when *everyone* participates. But the men will resist, writes hooks, when they feel that they will lose the world they are comfortable with, the one in which they receive unearned benefits on the backs of women, even if they did not “ask” for them (ix).

Liberal Feminism and Intersectionality

Each “wave” of feminism has faced various critiques about the ways that their platforms did not include space for women who did not belong to the dominant class. First wave feminism developed mostly out of the effort to gain voting rights for women and was largely relevant to the concerns of white, middle-class women, such as a push to allow more women into higher education, property rights, and suffrage (Buchanan, 2010; Harris, 2001). Black women’s clubs and suffrage movements also surfaced and began to organize at this time, but they placed a greater focus on combating the rampant racial discrimination of the day (National Women’s History Museum, n.d.). Second-wave feminism in the 1960s was made up of two major branches: liberal feminism, which sought reforms to enable women to gain legal equality with men, and radical/socialist feminism, which sought to transform the systems of capitalism and patriarchy to achieve change. Liberal feminism, an individualistic brand of feminism that seeks the achievement of equality with men through legal and political reform (Tong, 1989) has been decried by many women of color as an unjust platform under which white women sought to advance their own status while trampling on the backs of poor, black, gay, and Latina women (Georgetown Law Library, 2017).

Indeed, the causes advocated by liberal feminist movements were mostly to the benefit of middle class white women (Freedman, 2002). While middle class white women fought for their vision of liberal feminism, women of color were turning to a more radical new branches of feminism, like black feminism. Lorde was one of the eminent voices to call for a new Black feminism. She was not asking for an identity-based separatism within the movement, but a movement which could acknowledge and embrace the differences between women as a class that could work together in solidarity: "Certainly there are very real differences between

us of race, age, and sex. But it is not those differences between us that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those differences, and to examine the distortions which result from our misnaming them and their effects upon human behavior and expectation” (Lorde, 1984, p. 115). So what does it mean for feminism to be intersectional? It means that any effort which elevates one group of women over and above or at the expense of others *fails to be feminist*. Within intersectional feminism, one must consider the different “axes of difference” including age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and more.

Within popular culture today, most nods to feminism fall under a category of “mainstream” or “lifestyle” feminism—a watered-down version of feminism that often is less challenging and more accessible to those who would adopt it; such that it may be “picked up” whenever convenient or comfortable for the advocate. These iterations of feminism have roots in popular *liberal feminism*, which has been historically critiqued by many for a failure to be *intersectional*. That is, as authors Kimberle Crenshaw, Audre Lorde and bell hooks would claim, for a movement to be feminist, it must aim to lift up the experiences of *all* women. This “mainstream” brand of feminism, and its predecessor liberal feminism, have encountered heavy opposition from Black and radical feminists for being too individualistic and for being historically racist, classist, and heterosexist (Tong, 1989). Modern renditions of liberal “lifestyle” or mainstream feminism, according to critics, can allow more comfortably positioned women to advocate issues of personal freedom such as body and sex positivity without confronting the root issues of sexism at a societal and institutional level.

The focus on this otherwise-privileged group within mainstream feminism, according to Crenshaw, distorts the interaction between race and gender—a problem which cannot be solved by simply adding in multiply subordinated (black, Latina, LGBTQ, disabled) women

into the established structure, because “the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140). Crenshaw, like Lorde before, saw the need for such an expanded definition of feminism and coined the term *intersectional*. Crenshaw wrote about the flaws of a “single-axis analysis” that distorted and erased the experience of Black women, as well as other women of color and poor women (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 139). Intersectional approaches to feminism, she asserted, were necessary to demarginalize women who were not the most privileged (white, middle class, heterosexual, educated) in the group (p. 140).

For Crenshaw, multiple identities inform political activity: women of color are not “women” or “minorities”, but both simultaneously. Audre Lorde wrote on this before Crenshaw, stating that a feminist creed that benefits some while ignoring or at the expense of others is not wholly feminist (Lorde, 1984). As white women “ignore their built-in privilege of whiteness and define woman in terms of their own experience alone,” Lorde writes, “then women of color become 'other', the outsider whose experience and tradition is too ‘alien’ to comprehend.” (Lorde, 1984, p. 117). Privilege, in this case, is a mainstream feminist movement that can comfortably ignore, leave out, or erase the lived experience, history, and struggles of women who are not a part of the dominant class: middle class, heterosexual, cisgender white women.

A common critique from black feminism, Latina feminism, and branches of radical feminism in regards to the mainstream feminism commonly espoused by privileged white women is their failure to continue entertaining radical visions once they have begun to gain economic power for themselves within the existing social structure (hooks, 2000, p. 4; hooks, 2015; Davis, 1981; Collins, 2000; Lugones, 2003; Anzaldúa, 1987). This privileged

positionality of many liberal feminists is where intersectionality becomes an essential part of the feminist conversation, for if feminist movements fail to acknowledge the axes of differences within themselves and stop when only those most privileged of the group have attained power, they become privileged discourses which are “available only to those among us who are highly literate, well educated, and usually materially privileged” (hooks, 2000, p. 5). To take such a narrow view of feminism is, at best, self-serving for the most privileged of women, and, at worst, a step backward for those women who are oppressed on multiple axes.

Non-intersectional feminism may, in fact, do more harm than good by accepting and colluding with the subordination of working-class, poor, and women of color. To examine only the experiences of “well-positioned” middle class white women would be to “ally with the existing patriarchy and its concomitant sexism, which is essentially to lead a double life” (hooks, 2000, p. 5). For example, while many women of privilege may rally around the cause of reproductive “choice” and abortion rights, a more equitable and intersectional feminist movement would advocate for reproductive *justice*. As it stands now, women with less class privilege generally lack adequate resources to make autonomous decisions about parenthood or to provide for children comfortably, should they have them. Reproductive justice would mean creating the socioeconomic conditions to enable all women to raise children if they want to, and to access quality, affordable contraceptives and abortion services if they don’t.

In the early women’s liberation movements and still today, class differences between women arguably have constituted the most glaring divisions between different groups of women along any axis. Race, gender identity, physical ability, and sexual orientation all go hand in hand with tangible barriers for the women in the minority of any of those identity

groups. But class is bound up with each of them. For example, a gay woman with working class roots and little to no secondary education is going to face far slimmer opportunities in politics than a gay woman of middle or upper middle class status, regardless if she is white or nonwhite. hooks wrote that to be a feminist is to focus on the class struggle, which means recognizing that some concerns are only relevant to smaller groups of women, and that other groups may need a push for different types of resources and rights to enable them to get ahead (hooks, 2000).

Socialist feminism is particularly keen on this point, espousing that women's liberation is inextricably tied to their economic liberation from men, who wield the majority of the power and ability to cultivate wealth (Bryson, 1992). The main argument in socialist feminism is that women's subjugation is a result of not only patriarchy, but class oppression and capital exploitation, and that the division of labor in capitalist societies relies on women supporting men's position in the labor market, thus making them financially reliant on men. (Castree, 2013). In other words, reform of the capitalist economic system is a necessary component of women's liberation. For many white women, as hooks notes, it is more difficult to divest from their class elitism than of their white supremacist thinking (hooks, 2000, p. 41), because it is often ultimately their class that affords them much of their privilege. For this reason, any feminist political analysis of the gender gap in U.S. politics must undertake this intersectional work, rather than homogenizing women into a uniform group. Valerie Bryson suggests that above all, "modern feminist theory must understand that the problems of gender inequality have no simple explanation or easy solution. It must recognize the multiplicity and interconnectedness of the forces that maintain present

inequalities, the inadequacy of any one-dimensional attempt at change and the impossibility of isolating gender issues from other structured inequalities.” (Bryson, 1992, p. 266).

Poor women, and women of color especially, encounter a marginalization that is twofold (or more), and are protected only to the extent that their experience coincides with one of the other groups (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 143). This means that as we explore strategies to improve women’s representation in the U.S., it is especially important that the research and proposed practices can allow for more women representatives that are part of multiple groups along the various axes of identity; for it is only when a wider variety of women wield political power that the subjectivities of more women can be better represented in policymaking decisions. As I will explain in the next chapter, much of the existing work on U.S. women in politics and the strategies presented within, could stand to benefit from a much more intersectional approach--and must do so before we can really consider them to be in the name of women’s rights/feminism.

Women who do enter electoral politics will undoubtedly experience more strict scrutiny stemming from patriarchal attitudes. It is well known in feminist circles that society tends to maintain “double standards” in its evaluations of “male” and “female” traits. In the context of elections and campaigns, women’s communications and expressions are analyzed by different criteria than are men’s (Dolan, 2004). For example, traits associated with leadership are often gendered. When women display characteristics traditionally associated with male political success, such as assertiveness, fearlessness, and toughness, they are perceived negatively. Specifically, women candidates are seen as better suited for caring or communal tasks and less suited to war and foreign policy decision making. Voters have demonstrated a bias against women’s emotional capacity to deal with security and financial

matters in times of war or economic crisis (Dolan, 2004). In a word, patriarchy continues to shape the way we think about “men’s work” and “women’s work”. In accordance with feminist theory, the chapters to follow will attempt to shore up hypotheses that institutionalization of patriarchal values limit women’s political opportunities.

So what would it mean for feminist-minded political scholarship to reject a privileged discourse? It means that authors must seek out the voices, narratives, and data which is reflective of not just the women who are the most readily poised to achieve success in the political sphere—educated, middle/upper middle class, straight, cis, white women—or, as Lorde writes, those that do not represent the *mythical norm* of white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure (Lorde, p. 116). It must call into question whether the research we have is telling the whole story of what is keeping women out of positions of political power, and account for the multitude of different positionalities that put women in vastly different places along a wide spectrum of opportunities and barriers to officeholding.

A Reformist Approach

Beginning in the 1970s, “radical” branches of feminism began to emerge that critiqued capitalism and American politics as part and parcel of the issue of women’s oppression. These feminists, such as the Radicalesbians and many since, have called for a complete dismantling of a system that they claim commodifies women as female bodies to be used only as a means of reproduction, and denies them the right to make autonomous choices (Bryson, 1992, p. 181). In radical feminism, male interests are seen as being completely at odds with female interests, and thus, there is no need to compromise within existing political structures (Bryson, p. 181). Since 1970s and 1980s, the original visions of radical/socialist

feminism--those systemic transformation--have receded, and these ideals have in large part been left out of discussions of electoral politics (Gordon, 2013). As to be discussed further in Chapter 3, much of the U.S. social structure--including and especially systems of government--are still organized in a way that uphold patriarchy. For feminists, this is because men created and shaped the system; men continue to hold the lion's share of the power in the system, and thus, it is primarily the interest of men whom the system serves. As such, the author must acknowledge the position taken by many modern feminist theorists: that American electoral democracy is a system which is fundamentally flawed by nature of its deep rootedness within a system of patriarchal hegemony. Hawkesworth writes about Congress as a "raced-gendered institution" that "produces raced and gendered hierarchies that structure interactions among members as well as institutional practices." (Hawkesworth, 2003, p. 529). Many feminists would agree with Hawkesworth that even women who are able to break into institutions like Congress or state legislatures will face the challenge of being placed at the bottom of the race-gender hierarchy within that institution.

The author acknowledges that much of the feminist body of work from which this paper draws would call for a shattering of the U.S. democratic electoral system due to its lack of potential to break from its origins as a patriarchal institution. Thinkers like hooks and Lorde would likely suggest the need for a revolutionary approach to U.S. politics altogether in favor of a reshaped societal structure in which those exploited on every axis (race, class, gender) could be equally served by its institutions. The author recognizes this criticism as one that rings true and highly valuable. However, for the purposes of this thesis, the author takes a more pragmatic, *reformist* approach to increasing opportunities for women within U.S. politics.

hooks describes this reformist feminism as thinking which focuses on incremental change within the system--in this case, within the political institution. This reformist thinking differs from more radical or even Marxist feminist theory which would call for "reform and overall restructuring of society so that the nation could be fundamentally anti-sexist" (hooks, 2000, p. 4) and so that women can move away from being economically exploited (Mackinnon, 1989, p. 67). Reformist feminism is not an end-all holistic approach to women's liberation, and does not seek to deny the current rule of law, but to extend more equitable rights to women within the existing structure (Bryson, 1992, p. 36). For Mackinnon, women's dependence upon men for money or the gendered wage system keeps women in a position of subordination by denying them the power of capital for work done in the home (Mackinnon, 1989, p. 67). Within feminism, for some, "the patriarchal domination of women by men is the central and defining feature of state power; for others however the concept of patriarchy allows scope both for conventional political struggle and for an analysis of related structures of class and race oppression" (Bryson, 1992, p. 196). This thesis adopts the latter view.

Many feminist theorists espouse the idea that the system in place may be one which is fundamentally flawed, designed as one that may only ever serve the men who rule it; that philosophy is too broad to be encompassed in the body of this thesis and no doubt will require extensive future work. According to hooks, this reformist approach may not end sexism entirely--nor does the author purport to attempt to do so--but it may allow women to begin to maximize their freedom within the existing system (hooks, 2000, p. 5). In the context of this thesis, the author acknowledges that the current electoral system, flawed as it may be from an intersectional feminist perspective, is the one in which American women

find themselves currently situated in. As such, this is the place from which we must start to reclaim it. This thesis will call for an examination of better strategies for reform within the U.S. electoral system and patriarchal social structure, such that a wider range of American women can have the opportunity to gain a voice within it; or, perhaps, eventually begin to reconstruct it.

CHAPTER III

BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

In the U.S., where women have obtained many of the same basic human rights as men, the political arena is one in which women's participation and leadership are visibly lacking when compared with men's. Given the absence of women in executive positions and the relative lack of women in almost all state and legislative offices, political scientists have pointed to the fact that more women in state-level politics may be one of the key factors involved in boosting women's opportunities for executive or national-level positions (Lawless & Fox, 2010). A growing body of research has brought to light several important findings on women's candidacy. Based on much of the recent work on women in politics, we now know that when women run, they obtain votes at rates comparable to their male counterparts; and that the public is generally willing to vote for female candidates (Hayes & Lawless, 2014).

Thus, putting aside voter bias as a possible explanation for low numbers of women in office, the focus of this thesis turns to other side of the question: how and why women decide to run, what barriers exist to women's political participation, and what might necessary conditions be to support more women in emerging as candidates. This chapter will explore existing research within social science research to identify some of the key obstacles and barriers to women's political ambition and engagement. In the U.S., women experience the effects of patriarchy in a number of ways; some more damaging than others. The first section will explore what the author has identified as *individual factors* involved in the gender gap in political ambition, all of which have to do with socialization within patriarchal

society and sexist attitudes. Other *institutional factors*, including economic and political systems that hold up patriarchy, will be discussed in the second section.

Individual Barriers: Socialization in a Patriarchal Society

Perhaps the most obvious and all-encompassing obstacle to U.S. women's political empowerment is the patriarchal social structure that Americans inhabit. Patriarchy is defined as a system of social organization in which males hold the primary power and the majority of positions of power, moral authority, social privilege and control of property (Malti-Douglas, 2007). Within each unit in a patriarchal society, including the family and public institutions, men and fathers hold authority over the women and their children, and lineage is generally patrilineal. Patriarchal attitudes manifest in ways that are economic, legal, political, and religious within a given society (Malti-Douglas, 2007). Most modern nation-states are not explicitly defined as patriarchal in their constitutions, but most are in fact operating under a system of patriarchy in culture and practice (Lockard, 2007, p. 111). This means that even in the absence of laws and policies which are overtly sexist, patriarchal ideologies are so deeply ingrained within the social psyche that manifestations of these ideologies are continually replicated within the family unit, communities, and institutions.

The U.S. is a prime example of a post-industrialized, wealthy democracy in which patriarchy and sexism are no longer explicitly held up in law or government as the prevailing structure; however the effects of such ideologies remain prevalent in every corner of society, public and private. Within a patriarchal society, the structures and institutions of the state have been established, ruled and governed by men, and as such, embody their interests rather than those of women (Bryson, 1992, p. 194). Thankfully, women are no longer denied the right to vote and hold office--and yet, it is clear that something is keeping women from

developing political ambitions and acting on them at similar rates to men. This chapter will attempt to explore a few of the major barriers that women experience as a result of persistent patriarchal attitudes both in U.S. society and within its political institutions.

According to Bryson, patriarchy grew out of a desire by men to wield power and control over civilization, and as such, has been seen as basic to the functioning of a society (Bryson, p.185). This extends beyond the formal institutions of government and manifests in the private lives of citizens in a number of ways, such as patriarchal family structure, gender socialization and traditional gender roles, sexism that is overt or subtle, the denial of women's equality and autonomy, and gendered interpersonal dynamics. The system of patriarchy is maintained, Bryson writes, by a conditioning process that begins early on with the family during childhood socialization. This socialization is reinforced to an extent that both boys and girls internalize patriarchal values. For both men and women, this leads to a view of the world that is colored by patriarchy, misogyny and sexism, and often a tacit acceptance of the societal and institutional practices which are unjust and stem from patriarchal attitudes (Bryson, p.185). As the following sections will discuss, this conditioning into a system of patriarchy often leads to girls experiencing limitations, such as increased aversion to risk and decreased political ambition.

Lawless and Fox wrote extensively on this topic in as a major obstacle to most women's early development of ideas about themselves and their place in the world as potential leaders (2010). Data collected by Fox and Lawless in two phases, one in 2001 and one in 2008, make up the Citizen Political Ambition Panel Study--the first of its kind to systematically gather and analyze nationwide empirical self-report data about political proximity, engagement, and ambition. The authors collected survey data from nearly 3,800 potential

candidates. Through anecdotal self-reports by well-qualified, “eligible” candidates nationwide, the authors noticed a sharp divide between seemingly equally qualified male and female would-be candidates in their willingness to consider candidacy and public office. Time after time, the authors were astounded by the hesitancy of highly educated, professionally successful women to express any desire to move into the political arena--while their male counterparts consistently asserted their confidence in their abilities to hold office one day. In sum, men and women who are equally interested in politics and who are equally well-positioned for office holding consistently exhibited a huge gap in assertions of political ambition (Fox & Lawless, 2005; 2010).

Interestingly, despite anecdotal accounts of women’s increasing political success in the last decade, the authors find that despite having similar levels of activism and political interest, qualified women are still far less likely to emerge as candidates--and the gap has not changed since the original study in 2001. This suggests a deeply entrenched issue of gender disparity that casts a shadow on women’s prospects for equitable representation. Despite similar levels of political knowledge and exposure, women *still* exhibit far less interest in office holding than do men. It stands to reason, then, that something about the way men and women are socialized has a gripping and longstanding effect on men’s and women’s political ambition. Lawless and Fox (2010) suggest that women’s underrepresentation is likely due to a combination of three major factors: discrimination or sociocultural perceptions, incumbency or lack of available seats for women, and the “pipeline problem” or lack of women that are perceived as qualified and available. Each of these will be discussed in the following sections.

One key area in which patriarchal attitudes manifest most visibly in relation to political ambition is the role which is played by early socialization into traditional gender roles within a family. Based on data from the Citizen Political Ambition Panel Study, the authors conclude that this pervasive disparate impact of gender socialization likely has its roots in “traditional” family structures that complicate women’s abilities to envision themselves in office or winning a campaign. The data reflects a consistent gap in gender ambition across generations, which implies, interestingly, that phases of life such as childbearing and post-childrearing age did not have a significant bearing on women’s political ambition. That is, if she did not initially grow up envisioning herself in public office, it is unlikely that she will later in life.

Perhaps one of the most significant findings from the Citizen Political Ambition Panel Study is the impact of women’s self-evaluations, much of which likely goes back to traditionally gendered socialization. When examining self-reports of the women interviewed in the survey, the authors found that, time and again, women who are on paper extremely well qualified, successful, and eligible for candidacy are much more likely to underestimate their own fitness for office. Even the most highly accomplished women were found to doubt their possession of the skills and qualities necessary to run for office and win elections. This “gendered psyche” may play one of the strongest roles in women’s own self-doubt stifling any would-be political ambitions (Lawless & Fox, 2010). If the authors are correct in this assertion, several important implications emerge about ways that women continue to struggle to gain equal footing in policy decisions, as well as the ways that we raise our girls to think about leadership.

Gender socialization has a huge impact in the way that girls and women think about themselves and their fitness for office early on. Fox and Lawless have found that early discussions with parents about politics, familial encouragement and parent political participation play an important role in political ambition (Lawless & Fox, 2010, p. 65). In the survey, women were 15% less likely than men to have been encouraged by parents to run, and were 20% less likely to have discussed politics with their fathers (p. 67). Political discussions and exposure in childhood greatly increase the chances of running for office as an adult, and politicized upbringing nearly doubles both women's and men's chances of running (p. 68). A woman whose parents never suggested that she run has only a .36 probability of considering a candidacy (p. 68). This data points to a seemingly basic and simple solution to the gender gap in political ambition: parents, teachers, and family members must make the effort to bring girls and young women into their political conversations and encourage them to consider candidacy, or at least a leadership role, one day.

Scholarship in psychology like that of Croft et al. (2014) tell us that when we are presented with models of ideology and behavior early in life, we inevitably internalize these messages and incorporate them into our own psyche and way of being to some degree (Croft et al., 2014). It can be expected that women and girls who grow up within a patriarchal family structure will, to varying degrees, internalize certain messages about her place in the world, what is expected of her in order to be a good woman or person, and whether or not she can or will someday embody the role of a leader. hooks identifies this phenomenon as "the enemy within" or what feminists might call *internalized misogyny* (hooks, 2000, p. 14). This

means that a girl or woman has deeply absorbed the misogynist messages around her such that she begins to consciously or subconsciously believe them herself.

Girls grow up with the attitudes of autonomy and independence in direct correlation with the ways that they are taught and spoken to by parents and other adults from the beginning. If girls grow up with the knowledge that their father is the “man of the house” whose word goes no matter what and who carries the ultimate authority; if she sees her brothers being conditioned to aspire to roles that do not seem attainable or “right” for her; if her mother’s role is confined to care work and the domestic sphere; then until she receives education and exposure to the contrary, she may continue to believe these things. If, however, she grows up with a parent or parents who share in care work, who both provide for the family, who communicate as equals, and who encourage her to assert her agency and independence from a young age, her chances of emerging as a leader are much higher (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008). Croft et al. (2014) found that in children aged 7 to 13, the mothers’ explicit beliefs about domestic gender roles nearly predicted the similar beliefs of her children; and that fathers’ implicit gender role associations uniquely predicted daughters’ occupational preferences. In this study, mothers that identified and enacted “traditional” roles at home were more likely to raise daughters who envisioned themselves in similar roles in the future; and fathers who exhibited more egalitarian ideas about gender roles had girls who were likely to focus more equally on work and family (Croft et al., 2014).

Another manifestation of internalized patriarchy and gender socialization is the way that girls and women view and approach risky situations. Kanthak and Woon (2015) demonstrated findings consistent with much of the psychological literature that indicates women may exhibit greater levels of *risk aversion* as a result of the way that girls are

socialized. The authors set up an experiment in which they controlled features of the electoral environment and tested participants on their feelings about becoming a candidate. Under different control conditions, they found that women may be “election averse” and tend to be less likely to volunteer as candidate when elections are involved as opposed to in nomination or volunteer-only conditions. Women’s candidate emergence appeared to be hindered when there were private costs involved in running for office and when there was a capacity for exaggeration or untruthfulness during a campaign. This is linked with risk aversion, a trait that women have been shown to possess at higher rates than men (Kanthak & Woon, 2015).

While greater openness to risk may contribute positively to a woman’s likelihood to enter the campaign arena, feminism would problematize the notion that attributes such as risk taking behavior and assertiveness are “male-oriented” attributes that women must be inculcated with in order to compete and succeed. While voters have shown a tendency to associate “agentic” traits like independence and autonomy with male candidates (Dolan, 2004; Rudman & Glick, 2001; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993), feminist theory would critique the gendering of traits that generally associates agentic traits with maleness and communal or “caring” traits with femaleness. To devalue communal traits as “feminine” and thus undesirable is in and of itself a manifestation of patriarchy. Further discussions to this end must be left to feminist scholars; however, the author proposes that raising girls with a balance of both agentic and communal traits is a valuable effort, and yet, the presence of caring attributes should be encouraged and valued just as much in boys and in girls. After all, independence and autonomy are neither inherently male nor are they necessarily more worthwhile traits to cultivate than traits like emotional intelligence or kindness.

Interpersonal relationships are also dictated by internalized patriarchal norms, which may hinder a woman from acting on any latent political ambitions. Within her personal and professional relationships, any woman can experience some degree of sexism aimed at keeping her “in her place.” For women with more privilege, this likely takes more subtle or benevolent forms, such as sexist microaggressions. Microaggressions are defined as casual statements that are “sexist, racist, or otherwise offensive to a marginalized social group” (Campbell & Manning, 2014, p. 693). These can include less overt expressions of sexism that are “benign” enough so as to be considered socially acceptable, but which over time can add up to a potentially damaging effect on a woman’s psyche or perception of her agency.

For example, a sexist microaggression could include a male coworker telling a woman that she’s being “too emotional” or acting surprised when a female colleague is “so successful.” These forms of sexism are harder to combat, because they are so frequently used and dismissed within our cultural language. Women of color especially experience this, a discussion of which will be at the end of this section. In a more obvious expression of sexism, the objectification of women which reduces them to a body to be gazed at by men and which places a woman’s value in her physical appearance, is another factor that may deter women from seeking a position in the public eye.

In keeping with an intersectional feminist perspective, it must be acknowledged that not all women experience these societal obstacles to political ambition and achievement in the same way. In fact, no two women in any racial, ethnic, or class group do, because individual experience and circumstances are influenced by such a multitude of factors. Within the boundaries of this thesis, it would be impossible to even begin to fully do justice to the many complex social and institutional oppressions that women in marginalized group’s experience.

But to fail to address these discrepancies would fail as an intersectional feminist project. Multiply-marginalized women fall on a number of different axes (gender identification, sexuality, ability, etc.), but for the purposes of this thesis the author focuses on women of color as a group which are positioned differently and thus experience different barriers than do white women when it comes to political participation.

Not only do women of color experience all the societal obstacles described above, they experience them in a way that is exponentially more severe than do their white counterparts. Women of color have to confront a history of exclusion from politics as one that is not just gendered, but racial as well (Swain & Lien, 2017). As Hughes (2011) notes, minority women are likely limited due to issues of both “supply” and “demand” for candidates to represent them. That is, if white majorities and political parties do not advocate for or contribute to *demand* for candidates of color, it is less that they will emerge or attempt to compete; and on the *supply* side, the supply of women of color able to compete successfully for political office may be hampered by intertwining socioeconomic and structural factors related to institutionalized racism and sexism (Hughes, 2011, p. 607). Complex interrelated obstacles place women of color at a historical disadvantage as a result of a lasting legacy of racist policies in the U.S., and include *de jure* and *de facto* ways that women of color are limited in their access to education, reproductive autonomy, housing, economic self-sufficiency and professional achievement.

The majority of U.S. women who make it into elective offices are white, only 61% of the population identifying as white and a growing number--roughly 40%--of the population identifying with at least one minority group (US Census Bureau, 2016). As of 2017, of the 105 women serving in Congress, only 38 Congresspeople are women of color, or 36.5

percent of Congresswomen. Currently, there are 1,840 women serving in state legislatures, 437 of which (23.8 percent of women state legislators) are minorities. In total, women of color constitute only 5 percent of all U.S. state legislators. A mere seven women serve as mayors of the 100 largest US cities; only two are women of color. The partisan gap among female legislators of color is pronounced: 407 Democrat state legislators are women of color, and only 28 are Republicans (Center on American Women and Politics, 2017). Candidates of color are also likely to lose against white competitors, so the degree to which they face competition from white opponents plays a major role. Population of a district, according to Swain and Lien (2017), plays perhaps the most important role for women of color in office--with districts with the highest concentrations of people of color being districts with higher rates of minority representatives.

From an interpersonal standpoint, the everyday challenges of inhabiting a racialized society can stifle any latent ambitions that a woman of color may hold. When speaking out about the experience of being marginalized on the basis of sex and race, women of color are often dismissed or decried as “troublemakers” (Remedios et al., 2016). This *compound discrimination* or “twofold discrimination” predicated on the basis of both race and gender can cause women of color to be stigmatized attacked on the grounds of their personal credibility if they claim to be experiencing injustice as a result of it. Compound discrimination subjects women of color to a unique plight in which they may have a hard time claiming discrimination on the grounds of either race--if a black male colleague is promoted--or sex--if a white woman colleague is promoted (Remedios et. al, 2016). As potential victims of stigmatization, marginalized women can become hesitant to report their

experiences of discrimination for fear of being accused of “stirring the pot” or worse, “reverse racism.”

Society’s lingering perceptions of people of color as inherently dispositioned differently than whites--and women as inherently differently wired to certain strengths and weaknesses--combine to an exponential effect for women of color, who may face some of the harshest criticism and scrutiny from the public and their opponents. This “double jeopardy” of having one’s credibility undermined and one’s actions being held to stricter levels of scrutiny may contribute to heightened *risk aversion* for women of color who may have otherwise considered running for office but ultimately decide it is not worth the risk. According to feminist theory, as benefactors of a system of white privilege, the impetus is on white women to confront these obstacles faced by women of color as well. As such, strategies for change at individual and institutional levels for potentially mitigating the gap for women as a whole and women of color specifically will be addressed in Chapter 4.

Institutional Barriers

Economic Barriers—The Pipeline Problem

Within U.S. society, disparities between men and women exist not only on a social-intrapersonal level but at the economic level as well. These economic gender disparities include the devaluing of women’s work or the gender pay gap, occupational segregation by gender, the “second shift” or unpaid care work for women, and the relative inaccessibility of childcare and education for mothers which may push them to become dependent on a partner or to remain in situations of poverty. As with the individual social and attitudinal barriers discussed in the previous section, patriarchy is at work at the institutional level. Generally, the aforementioned economic disparities that exist between men and women stem from policymaking decisions based upon attitudes of male dominance, and social and legal

systems which primarily value the male experience. For much of the country's history until relatively recently, upper class women were financially dependent upon their husbands and had little means of carving out a life for themselves independently. For women of color and working class women, lack of access to quality education and income inequality have presented larger obstacles. Times have changed and single mothers are no longer so stigmatized as they once were--yet, the economic realities of unequal pay and job opportunities, combined with sexism in the workforce and the demands of second shift care work that many women experience keep many women from obtaining the education and/or job skills they need to excel, let alone to consider running for office.

While the gender pay gap has narrowed slowly since the 1980's, women still have to work an extra 44 days to earn what men do, and earn only 83 percent of what men earn (Pew Research Center, 2017). Black women earn only 65 percent of what white men earn, and Hispanic women bring in only 58 percent of a white man's earnings (Pew Research Center, 2017). Women constitute 59 percent of the low-wage workforce, and single woman households had the lowest total annual income of all households at an average of \$27,000 per household (International Labor Organization, 2017). Childcare costs have been rising in recent years to the level that makes full-time childcare unaffordable for many dual-wage earning families, let alone single mothers. The average cost of childcare varies widely among states: Colorado ranks in at the 7th most expensive state, costing parents about \$15,000 annually. With some exceptions, averages in most other states fall around the \$10-14,000 range (Child Care Aware, 2016). Cohen (2017) calls the gender division of labor, by which women are chiefly responsible for different tasks of men, the central feature of gender inequality which undergirds patriarchy (Cohen, p. 239). This gender division of labor can be

seen not only in the home, where women do the most unpaid labor, but in the labor market, where women work at “women’s jobs” (Cohen, p. 240).

Since women have entered the workforce in huge numbers in past decades, the gender division of labor manifests in a new way, in which women move between occupations that are “more or less female dominated” through “revolving doors” (p. 241). This means that they may enter and exit a given profession without any real prospect for advancement. Per a 2011 report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, approximately 53% of women in the U.S. labor force are concentrated in three industries: education and health services, trade, transportation, and utilities, and local government (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). This gender division in the labor market constitutes what Lawless and Fox (2005, 2010) dubbed “the Pipeline Problem”. Not only are women overrepresented in the caring and service professions, they are significantly underrepresented at the higher rungs of career paths that traditionally lead most often to political careers: business and law (Lawless & Fox, 2010). In 2009, only 24% of U.S. CEOs were women, and those women earned an average of 74.5% of what their male counterparts earned (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). As of 2017, women receive 47.3% of J.D.s, but make up only 36% of the legal profession (American Bar Association, 2017), likely due to any number of factors such as dropouts, family or care work demands, or sex discrimination within the field.

This gender discrepancy in careers that are male and female dominated affects women in other ways, including the ways that career women inhabit and experience their lives in the private versus the public sphere. As noted by Lawless and Fox (2010), successful women are constantly judged by both their careers and how well they manage as a wife and mother. Men are not subject to the same level of scrutiny and demonization for putting their careers

and professional lives first--in fact, key political officers that are men are often praised for their selflessness and sacrifice in willing to give up time with family to serve their country. Outside the workplace, the gendered division of labor has most modern women working double or triple time by coming home from their jobs to take on the bulk of the care work for children and other family members as well as domestic responsibilities around the home. These disparities in men's and women's public-private life balance may have a crushing effect on many women's would-be political ambition if the prospect of running a campaign, holding office, caring for family members *and* keeping up with the demands of home life is too daunting (Lawless & Fox, 2010; Dolan & Lynch, 2014).

Another area in which women have been and continue to be overly oppressed is within their reproductive rights and autonomy. A large volume of work has been published on this topic from feminists, political scientists and other scholars, and that discussion will not be taken up at length in this thesis. The author simply acknowledges that women, and particularly minority women, are still largely oppressed in terms of state and federal policies that dictate a woman's right to choose whether and when to be a parent. Access to safe, legal abortions, contraceptives, and education on safe sex are still widely limited in the U.S. The extent to which women have access to these resources varies widely from state to state, but many states continue to attempt to pass laws that severely restrict abortion access, and most states have less than one clinic per county (Guttmacher Institute, 2017).

Women who do parent face enormous obstacles of finding ways to provide for herself and her children, especially if she works or attends school and needs childcare. Many women in blue-collar or service jobs are underpaid and overworked, which when coupled with the rising costs of quality childcare, present a real barrier to women who are not upper-

middle class. The U.S. political institutions are undeniably biased more toward women of greater economic means, and “those who participate are more likely to have the resources that facilitate participation: time, money, skills, and knowledge-and to have positive attitudes and beliefs” (Conway et al., p. 78). To possess such resources means to benefit from a certain level of privilege that simply does not apply to most women. For many women, especially women from low income backgrounds and women of color, work does not lead to economic self-sufficiency, let alone provide enough for her children. Shockingly, the U.S. is currently the only one out of 41 developed countries that does not have a national paid maternity leave law, and only four states have paid family leave laws (*New Jersey Law Journal*, 2017). If she does not have a partner or husband to help with the housework and childrearing as well as to help provide financial stability, it can be nearly impossible for single mothers to find ways to improve their situations.

In addition to lack of quality, affordable childcare and lack of parental leave, many U.S. women and especially women of color lack access to healthcare. For anyone to aspire to run for office and run a campaign, it can be reasonably assumed that that person would need to maintain at least an average level of physical health in order to keep up with the demands of the campaign trail and eventually holding office. Rising costs of healthcare in the U.S. have made it so that women and single parents on the lower end of the income bracket have a difficult time affording health insurance, causing them to either rely on Medicaid or to opt-out of health coverage altogether. Since the Affordable Care Act’s passage in 2010, the population’s insured rate has remained above 90% (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2015). However, 34% are on Medicaid or Medicare. Only 49% percent of families receive health coverage from their employer, and the average premium for a family of four has reached over

\$18,000 a year (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2017). Women of color are particularly hard-hit by the skyrocketing costs of health insurance. A third of Black women and 37% of Hispanic women lack health insurance, compared with about one tenth of white women (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2013).

Costs and benefits play a significant role in the decision to run for office. For those who are able to achieve success in local or statewide elections, the demographics tend to be skewed largely in accordance with class-based factors: elections are tremendously expensive, and it helps to be super-wealthy before entering a race. A 2009 study revealed that nearly half of the members of Congress that year--268--were millionaires, despite the Congressional salary being only \$174,000 annually (Center for Responsive Politics, 2009; House Press Gallery, 2015). The average Senate campaign in 2010 cost \$8,002,726 (Campaign Finance Institute, 2015), and the average state legislative campaign costs about \$20,000 (Ripley, 2017). State legislative salaries vary widely. New Mexico's legislators do not get an annual salary, and in seven states, legislators receive \$10,000 or less. Lawmakers in Mississippi, Nevada, Texas, Alabama and Wyoming all take home less than five figures (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2017). In Colorado, the salary for state legislators is \$30,000, which falls around the middle of the pack comparatively. Legislative sessions can last anywhere from a few months to a full year--California is the only state with a year-round legislature--but typically state legislators work less than half a year. Numbers at the local level are even smaller: only 2% of city councilmembers from small cities (population of 25,000-70,000) and 7% of those from medium-sized cities (70,000-200,000) receive \$20,000 or more in salary (National League of Cities, 2017).

This means that women who are well positioned to enter state politics must either be able to survive on that salary (most cannot), be married to a spouse that has a stable enough income, or have another source of income or job with enough flexibility that enables her to work part time or remotely and only for a short time in the year, e.g., a family business or law firm. This is not realistic for many women. The potential advantage held by women that choose to marry speaks to the feminist issue of women's economic dependence on men, too: since marriage in the U.S. still entails a number of social and economic benefits, women with less means may feel pressure to marry even if it is not what she would otherwise choose (Choi & Bird, 2003). Given the financial stakes of campaigning and running for office, politics may thus be out of reach for women who are not independently wealthy, especially single women and mothers.

If the woman has children or is the caretaker for another family member, it's even less likely that she will be able to devote the time and money to running a campaign. While the story is a little different at the federal level, where Congresspeople earn \$174,000 annually (U.S. House of Representatives Press Gallery, 2015), the barriers to office at the local and state level are the most significant because women do not often reach federal office without having first held office at the local or state level. Taken together, economic disadvantages for women based in patriarchy including the gender division of labor, the pipeline problem, and lack of reproductive choice and support for mothers, in combination with the costs of running for office, create significant disincentives for women to declare candidacy.

Political Barriers

Institutional barriers exist for women not only as a function of economics, but within the electoral systems themselves. While the U.S. patriarchal society and the socialization of

traditional gender roles clearly has a pervasive impact on women's political ambition and participation, we must also examine the ways in which political institutions themselves are, at best, not conducive to, and at worst, is actively hostile toward women's political participation—particularly for women who are members of other oppressed groups.

Democratic institutions, as argued by most feminist scholars, are inherently patriarchal, having been constructed by and for men. While women have made significant inroads into the political system in past decades, as this thesis has argued, there remains a huge gender gap within the political system. Much of this is due to societal norms, but there are a few factors directly related to the electoral system itself which must be addressed before we can work toward greater political agency for American women. These include the ways that parties and political organizations recruit and support women, differences in districts that make the more or less “woman-friendly”, and the electoral structure itself that seems to advantage incumbents over new candidates.

Political Parties

One more obvious factor at work in political gender disparities is the two major U.S. political parties' failure to be welcoming to women, at least until very recently. Currently, women chair 8 of 50 state Republican Party organizations, and 11 of 50 state Democratic Party organizations (Political Parity, 2017). This is important because political party leader beliefs and choices can have a huge bearing on candidate recruitment (Crowder-Meyer, 2011). Parties have generally been less than welcoming to women, and political actors on both sides of the political spectrum have been less than proactive about recruiting, engaging, and welcoming women to join their ranks (Fox, 2013). This shortcoming can be seen as self-

defeating, considering that women are more likely to register and vote than men: In 2012, 7.8 million more women than men cast ballots in the election (Fox, 2013).

The tendency for women to gravitate more toward one party than the other is also significant, at least since the post-Reagan 1980s in which party platforms became much more polarized (Abramowitz & Saunders, 1998). In 2016, 54% of women identified as Democrats, compared to 38% Republicans (Pew Research Center, 2016). This gap persists among female legislators along party lines; that is, women are more likely to run as Democrats than as Republicans. As Elder (2012) notes, Democratic women continue to gain more seats on state legislatures, while the number of Republican women state legislatures has actually decreased in past decades. Considering that Republican women perform as well as Democratic women in elections, (Dolan, 2004) this points to something happening within the parties that leads one party to be more “woman-friendly” in terms of candidate support than the other. The differences between the two that may contribute to women-friendliness, the author argues, have only become more polarized in the last decade.

Differences include ideologies, presence or absence of traditional religious influence, and recruiting practices. For example, Democratic women may have different views on their roles in the public versus private sphere than Conservative Republican women, and also tend to be better represented in the “pipeline” of careers that more often lead to political leadership (Lawless & Fox, 2005). It must also be acknowledged that since the 1970s, Republicans have for the most part been more vocally opposed to abortion and women’s access to reproductive healthcare, and have as of recently been the major opponents of funding for clinics like Planned Parenthood as well as greater accessibility of contraceptives (Williams, 2011).

Republicans as of late have also more opposed to the retention and/or expansion of welfare programs and government subsidies for things like early childhood education and childcare stipends for working mothers--all programs which could potentially make a world of difference for women politically by allowing them to get an education and work outside the home. Currently, Democrats also attract the majority of educated citizens: in 2016, of all college graduates, 53% identified as Democrat, 41% Republican (Pew Research Center, 2016). These differentials in party identification are important for feminists to consider if we want to improve numbers of women across the board, since one party is doing a better job of supporting and fostering women's development as candidates better than the other. Suggestions for how this might be addressed will be introduced in the next chapter.

Recruitment

Another important finding offered by the work of Pyeatt & Yanus (2016) and Palmer and Simon (2008) is the enormous impact of community support and candidate recruitment in candidate emergence. Political parties appear to play a vital role as gatekeepers in the candidate emergence process. In both parties, the authors found, highly qualified women were much less likely to be recruited intensely by party leadership. Women are also less likely than men to be recruited by multiple sources (Fox and Lawless, 2010). The barrier of recruitment, or lack thereof, will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter as a strategy to improve women's political engagement.

Incumbency

Incumbency has been cited as a major detriment to women's opportunities to win legislative seats, because incumbents often win and are men (Hayes & Lawless, 2015). Conversely, term limits have a measurable benefit for women candidates, particularly

Democrats, if they free up seats traditionally held by men (Elder, 2012). This idea will be discussed in the following chapter. Incumbents also tend to receive certain benefits which place them at an advantage over new candidates. Incumbents typically gather 20-25% more in campaign donations, and tend to be backed by access-oriented interest groups that can have great influence on the public (Hall & Fournaies, 2014, p. 1). Incumbents enjoy the effect of having had years to form relationships and build name recognition with their constituents, an effect which likely “scares off” many high quality challengers. They receive more media attention than newcomers and can rely on messages about their past experience and political achievements (Eckles et al., 2014). Given that women are significantly less risk tolerant than men, advantages held by incumbents, which are mostly men, may pose substantial threats to women considering running for office.

District Friendliness

Noticing that women candidates tend to have greater success in certain areas, Mitchell and Monroe (2014) looked more closely at the specifics of what makes a “women-friendly district” and found that certain characteristics lead to a city or district being more supportive of female candidate emergence, including higher income, more professionals, and a higher population. Religiosity of a district also plays a significant role, especially those with higher concentrations of certain more Conservative denominations (Setzler, 2013). Setzler studied this topic in-depth and concluded that religiosity has a direct influence on how progressive a person’s stances are on a wide range of issues—particularly, their beliefs about the capabilities of female leaders and their desire or lack thereof to pursue policies that are motivated toward greater racial and gender equality.

Surveys from the Pew Research Center confirm that female politicians in districts with more religious populations--populations with a higher rate of citizens who are members of Evangelical Protestant or Catholic denominations and which attend church services regularly--tend to confront a voting base that disproportionately advocate for women's returning to traditional social roles and who hold biases about women's capacity for leadership (Setzler, 2013). In a 2008 survey, Pew Research Center asked respondents whether women "should return to their traditional roles," to which 27% of religiously active respondents agreed. Pew researchers also asked whether the underrepresentation of women in national political offices was because "[g]enerally speaking, women don't make as good leaders as men." Half the religiously affiliated respondents agreed with this statement, whereas only 30% of religiously unaffiliated respondents agreed. Religious respondents also were much more likely than nonreligious individuals to tell researchers that female politicians are "not tough enough" to hold national political office (Setzler, 2013).

Gerrymandering, or the practice of drawing or redrawing "the boundaries of electoral districts in a way that gives one party an unfair advantage over its rivals" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2017), though technically declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1964, continues to be practiced by majority parties in state legislatures without regard to local boundaries. Originally purported to help minorities gain representation in the wake of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, current partisan gerrymandering practices actually often end up skewing districts such that the majority of Congressional seats go disproportionately to white Republican men (Waymer & Heath, 2016). Gerrymandering or redistricting is often used by state legislatures that are dominated by one party--usually Republicans--to give themselves a numeric advantage over their opposition in Congress (Ingraham, 2016). This

can happen because gerrymandering often creates “super” majority-minority districts based on racial or linguistic criteria, often diluting or concentrating the votes of minority populations and reducing the chance of more than one representative being elected from that group (Waymer & Heath, 2016). That is, for example, if all black voters in a region are concentrated into one district, that gives them less voting power in surrounding districts. While districts need to be periodically redrawn to reflect population growth, this process is generally rife with potential for bias or abuse by politicians as they are “choosing their voters” (*Represent.Us*, 2016). Congressional elections in highly gerrymandered districts have historically been characterized by uncompetitive races which result in disproportionately low representation for women and minorities (Richie & Spencer, 2013).

Pyeatt and Yanus (2016) and Palmer and Simon (2008) constructed and tested a “woman-friendliness index” for electoral districts at the federal and state level based upon geographic, socioeconomic, and ethnic variables. Both sets of research found that the index was a good predictor of women’s candidate entry and electoral success within a district. The following trends were found:

In almost every case, districts that elected a female representative are both more Democratic and more liberal than those that did not. Geographically, these districts are also more compact, more urban, and less likely to be southern. While these districts are no different in terms of their African-American populations, districts electing women have higher Hispanic and foreign-born populations. Socioeconomically, districts electing women are wealthier, more educated, and less blue collar than districts that only elected men. Multimember districts increase both the frequency of female candidacies and their success. (Pyeatt & Yanus, p. 1108)

Clearly, certain districts may be more conducive to increasing women’s representation than others. Multimember districts and those that are more urban and diverse, wealthy, and educated, may offer a more hospitable environment for female candidates. A discussion of

how these district differentials may play into greater women's representation will follow in Chapter 4.

This chapter has discussed factors that operate at the individual level to hinder women's political ambitions, mostly including the effects of gender socialization under patriarchy; and factors that operate at the institutional or policy level which are influenced by patriarchal attitudes, including economic disadvantages faced by women, lack of reproductive autonomy and affordable childcare, underrepresentation of women in certain careers, and flaws in the political/electoral system that discourage women's candidacy. The next chapter will present some possible strategies for increasing women's representation in response to this chapter's discussion.

CHAPTER IV

INCREASING WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION

Following the previous discussions of what barriers women confront in the political sphere, this chapter will present an overview of some of the strategies presented in current social and political science literature as methods for potentially improving women's access to candidacy. The recommendations presented will then be held up against an intersectional feminist framework. Consistent with the previous chapter, the author presents two avenues of change through which women's political ambition and participation may be improved: through *individual* and *institutional* change, and ways which both types of strategies may or may not be intersectional.

Empowering Individual Women

If patriarchy lies at the root of gender inequality in U.S. society, then taking steps to dismantle it and its ideological influence in society will be the most important and perhaps the most difficult project for feminists and feminist allies seeking to improve women's political representation. The complex web of sexist ideologies are so deeply ingrained and widespread within every aspect of American society that this is a project which this thesis cannot begin to undertake. The project of dismantling patriarchy is too vast to be encompassed here. In the sections to follow, the author presents a few starting points for preliminary steps that could be taken to help chip away at the hegemony of patriarchy in relation to women's political engagement.

The first area which must be examined, as discussed in the previous chapter, is the way in which American children are socialized around traditional gender norms. Women tend to be less interested in politics or engage in political discussions as men (Conway et. al, p. 21).

Why is that? Perhaps it is due to early life experiences in which girls are not invited to the table to listen and participate in political discussions with the family. To circumvent powerful cultural forces at work which send girls messages about politics being a “man’s thing,” we can start with the family. Parents who are actively involved in political protests and events tend to raise children who inherit their parents’ inclination to political engagement (Conway et al, p. 22). Regardless of individual family structure—whether there are two parents, one, or another caregiver, the adults in a girl’s life can make a difference by striving to be open and transparent with her about their political experiences; to bring her into discussions about what is going on in the world and the role that politicians play in it; and by encouraging her that voting and representation matter.

Outside the political context, parents, teachers, and other community members involved in a girl’s life can strive to model patterns of speech and behavior that reflect her validity and potential as being no different than her male siblings or classmates. Parents and community leaders should also strive to raise girls in a way that could chip away at the potential development of high levels of risk aversion. As discussed in Chapter 3, women much more than men tend to exhibit an aversion to situations which they perceive to be risky and/or dangerous or which threaten them (Kanthak & Woon, 2015). Girls who are modeled an outlook on challenge which is positive, and who are encouraged that they have the skills and strength to overcome challenges and are pushed to face their fears, may come to develop a resiliency and courage earlier on which may mitigate the cultural tendency toward risk aversion. Rombough and Keithly (2017) note that increased participation in sports, leadership, drama and other campus activities may affect women’s’ abilities to see themselves as *actors*, rather than passive subjects (p. 179). In their study of seven local

elected Latina officials, they found that each interviewee had experience of “success in risk-taking behaviors,” indicated by experience in high school or college sports, performance in music or theater, and running for office in high school or college (Rombough & Keithly, 2017, p. 182). These early risk taking experiences, the authors suggest, can build “the ego strength to surmount personal attacks in the media” that women may fear encountering on the campaign trail (p. 182).

Not only do we need to focus on the ways that we can raise our girls to think outside patriarchal norms, hooks and many other feminists have written on the need to change *men* to create more feminists, too. There is a societal misconception on the part of many men who have a misguided interpretation of feminism as being “man-hating” or anti-male; this could not be further from the truth. Effective feminism, as hooks wrote, is not anti-man but *anti*-sexist, and is actually just as necessary for men as for women, because men, too, experience the negative manifestations that patriarchy has upon their lives (hooks, 2000, p. 12). For example, as a result of patriarchal gender socialization, men and boys often suffer the violence of having been denied the right to express their emotions as softness or vulnerability, and are encouraged to “man up” and express emotions only in a way that is domineering and often aggressive. For this reason, we need to teach feminist thought and theory to everyone—including men. This would also involve a re-examination of the way that society genders various personality traits and values their presence or absence along gendered lines. While we can and should work to encourage girls to cultivate a strong sense of self, agency, and autonomy; equally important would be an effort to help boys cultivate communal traits which have been traditionally devalued as feminine, like effective communication and caring for others.

hooks writes that we must create an educational movement to teach everyone about feminism, because to fail to do so is to allow “patriarchal mass media to remain the primary place where folks learn about feminism, and most of what they learn is negative.” (hooks, 2000, p. 23). When boys and men are given exposure to education which enlightens them about the hegemony of patriarchy, they can begin to recognize the ways that they benefit from and contribute to the maintenance of a patriarchal society. Once men have acknowledged this, they can begin the next necessary step: to divest of their male privilege and embrace feminist politics. It is then that they can become an ally to women and feminists (hooks, 2000, p. 12).

Outside of socialization and family-based factors, perhaps the most significant way to empower women is through education. As women become more educated, they are “more likely to be interested in and to participate in politics, and to have a greater sense of their own political efficacy” (Conway et al, p. 24). If a woman is denied the basic right to a quality education, she will not be equipped with the skills she would need to become a political agent, and her time is likely used simply fulfilling her own basic needs for survival. Education is a vital component in building capacity for political agency, because it provides the type of abstract critical thought that lays the groundwork for an awareness of the world and one’s positionality in it. It is with this awareness that one may form ideas about ways that the world is unjust and ways that it can be improved—this is why citizens vote: to express their ideas about ways to make the society they inhabit a better one. Higher levels of education are vital for preparing women for political participation. Education leads to the acquisition of resources such as knowledge, verbal skills, job opportunities or social status,

and money (Conway, p. 78)--all of which are resources one must possess in order to consider candidacy.

To that end, improving political opportunities for women means shaping policies that will allow all women, regardless of background, access to higher education. The U.S. currently has one of the most expensive higher education systems in the world (Usher & Medow, 2010), and due to the current political climate, this does not seem to be a problem that will be solved anytime soon. Thankfully, many women have managed to obtain college degrees in recent decades, and women now receive about 60% of all bachelor's degrees (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013); however, only 33% or one in three U.S. women currently holds a college degree (Ryan & Bauman, 2016). Some progressive politicians and theorists have suggested approaches such as state and or/federally subsidized community college programs for students from low to middle income families; this could be one step in the right direction. Educational outlooks for women of color are particularly worse as a result of a historical legacy in the U.S. of denying children of color the right to an equal education (Darling-Hammond, 1998). Women of color are also more likely to drop out once they reach college (Camera, 2015). In many areas of the country, urban communities with higher minority concentrations have poor quality public schools and few options for working class parents. College education is financially out of reach for most families—particularly families of color, many of whom are still working to accumulate wealth after generations of economic oppression (Kocchar & Fry, 2014).

Changing Institutions

Economic Factors

Aside from education, a woman's health may be one of the most important factors in her life that can either prevent or allow her to act upon her political ambitions. The debate around the Affordable Care Act has become a national dialogue, causing some to advocate for universal healthcare. Universal healthcare, which has been adopted in 32 nations including the UK, Spain, New Zealand, Italy, Israel, France, and Canada (New York State Department of Health, 2017), means that "everyone who needs services should get them, not just those who can pay for them" (World Health Organization, 2017). The author suggests that implementation of universal healthcare, if not at the very least, some form of health coverage expansion, will be key in improving women's outlooks. The U.S. spends more than any other nation on healthcare services, and yet, ranks among the lowest of the developed nations in terms of healthcare outcomes (Blank, 2012).

At the time of this writing, healthcare policies are being debated at the federal level which may jeopardize women's access to free or affordable birth control and abortion services. There is much more to be said on all sides of this issue, but for the purposes of this thesis the author concludes that until women *everywhere* have access to the education and resources that enable her to make autonomous choices about her reproductive health, many women are going to continue to experience barriers to political engagement including unwanted pregnancies and childbearing in times of personal and/or financial instability. While reproductive health and autonomy are vital components of a healthy life course for women, women's health is not reducible to reproductive health alone. Healthcare across the

life spectrum, including preventive care and treatment for physical *and* mental health, is just as necessary to improving women's life trajectories.

The other major factor that plays a role in mothers' and would-be mothers' ability to run for office is the presence of policies which facilitate the compatibility of childrearing and professional or political engagement. At a practical level, Bryson writes, it's particularly important to "ensure that the bearing and raising of children be made compatible with other activities, so that mothers can be fully active citizens and workers—this might involve flexible working practices, collective provision of childcare, shared parenting with men, or a combination of all three" (Bryson, p. 254). In fact, high-quality government subsidized childcare, especially for early childhood programs for lower income families, have proven to yield beneficial outcomes both for the child's behavioral and academic performance and for the mother's likelihood of entering the workforce (Fuller et al, 2002; Votruba-Drzal, E. & Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, P, 2004; Henly, J. R. & Lyons, S., 2000).

Feminist-minded legislators, then, could contribute to the improvement of women's opportunities by introducing and advocating policies at the state and federal levels which would allow for government backing of higher quality, free education programs. Each of these methods would go a long way in improving women's situatedness within the political system. However, Bryson notes, an effective feminist critique here would again criticize the entire system of patriarchal capitalism which does not incentivize the well-being of all people:

It seems unlikely that an economic system based purely upon the pursuit of profit would provide good quality childcare and the kind of flexible working arrangements that would allow men and women to combine full participation in childrearing with the pursuit of a career. (Bryson, p. 265)

Ultimately, for a wider cross-section of women to have the ability to enter politics, conditions and policies for working mothers must be reevaluated.

In the professional world, the gendered division of labor contributes to not only women doing “double-shift” work, but prevents women from entering and excelling in those careers which typically place one on a path to political success. Women who work outside the home have higher levels of political participation (Conway et al., p. 24) and are more likely to persuade others how to vote, attend political rallies and make campaign contributions. If this is true, then we must find ways to enact policies that will enable greater numbers of women to enter the workforce. For many, this will mean subsidized childcare to enable her to leave the home and/or obtain an education first. hooks wrote further on this idea that paths to greater economic self-sufficiency for women must lead to lifestyles which are counter to those that the white supremacist capitalist patriarchal mass media present us as “the good life”:

To live fully and well, to do work which enhances self-esteem and self-respect while being paid a living wage, we will need programs of job sharing. Teachers and service workers in all areas will need to be paid more. Women and men who want to stay home and raise children should have wages subsidized by the state as well as home-schooling programs that will enable them to finish high school and work on graduate degrees at home. (hooks, 2000, p. 52)

Ironically, any of these institutional changes could likely be more attainable if we had more women in government with the authority to change policy. That is, once again, why this thesis argues for a reformist approach. Essentially, we must look at immediate steps that can be taken to elevate more women to positions of power in government—and once we have better women’s representation, we can work to change these policies for *all* women in a way that women can “leave the door open” for those to come after them.

Political Strategies

The other side of the equation that must be addressed in order to facilitate greater political ambition and access for would-be women candidates is within the electoral system itself. Implementing change within the political structure, especially at the local and state levels, is key to improving women's opportunities to attain executive positions or power at the federal level (Lawless & Fox, 2010, p. 7), where the power to make many of the aforementioned policy changes lies. If we can get more women "in" at the state or local level, they can begin to build the credentials, recognition, skills and support base needed to work their way up in politics. The following are a few key suggestions as presented in the current political science literature.

Recruitment

Among the body of current literature on the topic, the issue of *recruitment* emerges as the most common thread. When exploring factors that contribute to women's candidacy, the majority of the current literature points to recruitment of women as perhaps the single most important contributor to her decision to declare candidacy (Conway et al., p. 110). In a 2017 study, Rombough and Keithly interviewed seven local Hispanic or Latina representatives in Texas. Through self-report, the authors found that for each of the seven respondents, recruitment--whether by a parent, a business associate, a partner or husband, or other community members--was a common factor among each of them. As such, Sanbonmatsu proposes that women's political ambitions are not solely self-initiated, but rather are *relationally embedded* (Sanbonmatsu, 2013). In a review of studies on political ambition, Sanbonmatsu found that women are much more likely than men to say that someone suggested they run for office than men, and that family, parties, and organizations play an

important role in women's decisions to run for office (Sanbonmatsu, 2013, p. 1). When candidates are identified, approached, and encouraged to run, recruitment can create viable candidates that may have not considered running on their own.

Women's organizations such as EMILY's List which aims to help elect progressive women candidates (EMILY's List, 2017) may play an important role in mitigating the gender gap in recruitment practices—an effect that is increasingly more evident among Democrats and progressive organizations. Sanbonmatsu and colleagues found that women state legislators were much more likely than their male counterparts to have attended a campaign training, indicating the utility of these trainings (Sanbonmatsu et. al, 2009, Fox & Lawless, 2010). Per Sanbonmatsu's argument, if we consider a *relationally embedded model* of political ambition for women, a woman's level of nascent political ambition has little bearing until someone *asks* her to run. In the case of organizational or party recruitment, Carroll and Sanbonmatsu found that “ambition and candidacy may arise simultaneously” through effective political recruitment (Sanbonmatsu, 2013, p. 44). This finding is supported by Dittmar's analysis which indicated that encouragement or recruitment is more predictive of candidacy among women than men (Dittmar, 2015, p. 760).

So are all efforts at recruitment equal? Perhaps not. Per Dittmar, Carroll, and Sanbonmatsu, the *type* of recruitment directed toward would-be candidates can make a difference: recruitment from party leaders and elected officials, they write, has the most measurable impact on a woman's ultimate decision to run (Dittmar, 2015, p. 760). While asking women to run may combat “self-perceived inadequacies and bolster self-confidence,” multiple studies have found that women are less likely to receive this type of influential party support (p. 760). The literature largely agrees that without recruitment efforts by parties,

many female candidates are unlikely to run for office. Only about half of the women in Carroll and Sanbonmatsu's 2013 survey were "self-starters" who considered running for office before anyone else suggested it to them. The other half of women surveyed indicated they had never thought about running until someone encouraged them to do so—a finding which was much less common among men, data which is supported by the findings of Moncrief, Squire, and Jewell (2001), who found that "encouraged" candidates were more likely to run. Women were also much more likely to report being recruited by a political party leader and to say that "being asked to serve their party was one of the main reasons they ran" (Sanbonmatsu, 2013 p. 47).

In sum, the literature points to a conclusion that while prospective female candidates do benefit from certain factors such as early gender socialization and nascent ambition, they must be recruited in order to make the ultimate decision to run. However, as Preece suggests, organizations and parties may need to consider operating outside of their traditionally male dominated networks to seek out women candidates that may look different and come from different networks than those they would traditionally consider to be "well positioned" (p. 247). A discussion to that end will follow later in this chapter. Further, a greater proportion of women represented in party leadership will be essential to improving recruitment strategies that may be more intersectional. There is some growing support for candidate training programs as a way to benefit new women candidates, but especially women candidates of color, as a means of helping to build skills they may need to help offset the disadvantages they experience as a result of their combined marginality. Interestingly, Carroll and Sanbonmatsu have found that women of color were more likely than other groups to have experienced "negative recruitment" from family, friends, and even party officials.

This negative recruitment is defined as gatekeeping behavior stemming from “normative perceptions of who is best suited to run and win elected office” (p. 107).

Sanbonmatsu (2015) explores in-depth the suggestion that training programs for women of color are a necessary and worthwhile part of any project aimed at greater representation for women of color and better equipping women of color to run for office. Programs like the Center for American Women and Politics’ “Ready to Run” diversity initiative have emerged in recent years as part of efforts to increase proportional representation, and include localized curriculums with education on “fundraising, positioning oneself for elected office, navigating the political party structure, media training, the nuts and bolts of organizing a campaign, mobilizing voters, and crafting a message” (Center on American Women and Politics, 2017). Such programs, especially those that are tailored to minority women, are not yet widely available. Currently, “Ready to Run” only operates in six states. Others, like *amplify*, operated by the National Women’s Political Caucus of Washington, are geared specifically toward women of color, but are only day-long yearly sessions which involve personal costs to participate (NWPCWA). Emerge, one of the larger women-based political training organizations, currently operates in 20 states and boasts 39% of alumnae are women of color. Emerge is geared toward Democrats only (Emerge, 2017). EMILY’s List, another major organization in the field, claims a similar statistic: 40% of their elected alumnae are black, Latina, or Asian. EMILY’s list selects only trainees who are Democrat and pro-choice (EMILY’s List, 2017).

Further expansion and development of such programs is necessary, Sanbonmatsu argues, because minority women take unique pathways to office and face different types of institutional and societal challenges in their race (Sanbonmatsu, 2015, p. 3). Using

NWPCWA's "Ready to Run" diversity initiative as a case study, due to its uniqueness as a nonpartisan program specifically for minority women, Sanbonmatsu conducted phone interviews with committee members (organizers) and directors of the program. Organizers shared a number of motivations for why they felt the program was important, some of the most notable of which included the lack of "political ego" for women, lack of female role models of similar ethnic background, and stereotypical obstacles such as the "angry black woman" for African American candidates (p. 146). One organizer explained,

The main goal is to get women excited about actually running for elective office. To build their confidence that they can actually take on what sometimes seems like an enormous goal, and actually do it and accomplish it and win. To have a paradigm shift about who can run for office and who is successful. Women of color—and African American women, women from the African diaspora in particular—sometimes don't see themselves enough in those roles and so they don't think they even have a shot. (Interview 12, p. 147)

Overall, committee members shared a belief that "because minority women do not resemble most sitting officeholders and have not traditionally held office in large numbers, they arguably lack access to networks and resources" including support from voters, donors, and party leaders (p. 150) which is so vital to campaign success. Organizers like those behind "Ready to Run" emphasize both the need to acknowledge the shared experiences common to all women *and* that women of color should be recognized as discrete groups (Sanbonmatsu, 2015, p. 151), a notion which is backed by feminist theorists like hooks, Crenshaw, and Lorde. Sanbonmatsu advocates for the further development and implementation of programs like these in order to equip women of different backgrounds with the tools they will need to face unique challenges in political races. She notes, however, that the geographical/state context is important, because different localities operate under different race and gender-related political histories (p. 151). The author argues that these types of programs are the most sorely needed in states with the least diverse women's representation and most prevalent displays of racism.

“Ideal” Candidates

So far, recruitment from organizations and political parties, as well as training programs, have been discussed as potential important steps toward increasing women’s representation. We must, however, bear in mind that much of this research likely skews toward privilege and applies more to women who are otherwise at least somewhat well-positioned to run for office. That is, encouragement and recruitment may be what is needed for women who have a good education, a stable income and their and their children’s needs already met. But for, say, a working-class single mother to consider candidacy, recruitment is not going to present the largest barrier, but rather her opportunities for gainful employment, healthcare for her and her family, etc. Were more women of color to hold office, public beliefs about minority women might change and a larger platform would be provided for women of color to define themselves, rather than be defined by stereotypes (Harris-Perry, 2011). This also arguably applies not only to women of color but any group of women who are not white, middle to upper middle class, straight, cis, and heterosexual.

The author further argues that the political parties and leadership, as well as the electorate, must take a good hard look at who is and is not considered an “ideal” candidate. If our aim is for adequate and proportional representation, then parties and voters must be willing to actively seek out and support candidates who may fall outside the realm of “traditional” qualifiers. Age is one criteria along which a huge disparity exists for elected officials. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, the average age of all state legislators is 56, compared with 47 for the adult U.S. population (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015). Averages in congress are similarly skewed: In 2016, the average age for members of the House of Representatives was 57, and for Senators, 61 (Congressional Research Service,

2016). While a case can be made here for the benefits of accumulated life experience, and, often at the federal level, prior political experience, we must question whether lawmaking bodies largely comprised of 60-year-olds are going to represent the concerns of all age groups.

Finally, in order to remain focused on an intersectional feminist perspective, voters, parties and organizations must reconsider whether the experiences of traditionally “well-positioned” candidates from upper-middle class backgrounds in the fields of law and business are going to adequately represent the concerns of those who have had different sets of life experiences and circumstances. What would it mean to have working-class representatives, or representatives from non-traditional fields? These preferences for certain candidate criteria are unlikely to shift significantly anytime soon, because ultimately, those in power will always continue to seek to install representatives that will represent their interests, or the interests of the dominant class. But this is something which nonprofit organizations geared at civic engagement, as well as individual voters, can be mindful of when choosing candidates and heading to the ballot box.

Quotas

Much of the literature in political science has examined the feasibility and utility of implementing quotas based on gender or minority status as a method of improving descriptive representation. Quotas are defined as “laws or policies requiring candidate lists or representative bodies to include women; racial, ethnic or religious minorities; or members of other targeted groups” (Hughes, 2011, p. 604). Many other nations have adopted gender quotas--over 100 nations have adopted them in some form in the past few decades--to mixed results. While some countries have seen dramatic increases in women’s representation as a result of adopting gender quotas, others have seen stagnation or even decreases in the numbers of women representatives (Hawkesworth, 2012, p. 198). These variations are likely

indicative of the differences in the types of quotas adopted and in the “political will of the male elites who adopted them,” because male party elites often “seek to mitigate the impact” of quotas and subvert their intended effects (p. 199). Krook notes, however, that while the passing of quotas may require the approval of the male political elites in power, women in most cases play the largest role in organizing and mobilizing to advocate for gender quotas (Krook, 2006). For Hawkesworth, the key is whether political parties develop strategies that are substantive or simply empty words.

Many parties pay lip service to the idea of gender parity in governance...including making verbal commitments, but do little more than that. Some develop special training opportunities for women interested in running for office to help them become viable candidates. Some provide vital assistance to women’s campaign funds. And some establish quotas that reserve places for women on candidate short lists, but the targets can be set well below gender parity. (Hawkesworth, 2012, p. 198)

After studying gender quotas internationally, Dasgupta and Asgari (2004) note that affirmative action policies like gender quotas can have one of two intended effects: either they can help to break down stereotypes about women in politics, or they can actually bolster them. On the one hand, seeing women in positions of political power can help to reduce biases about women’s roles simply through the exposure effect. On the other hand, if women are elected with less experience than their male colleagues and their performance is perceived to be inferior, gender quotas may actually produce a negative effect on voter attitudes toward women candidates, at least in the short term (p. 345). Despite this capacity for a negative effect on new women candidates, the authors ultimately concluded that gender quotas over time yielded a statistically significant increase in women’s representation in Italy. Another study found that at the municipal level, gender quotas can improve the quality and efficacy of governing bodies to the extent that they replace less educated men with more highly educated women (Baltrunaite et al., 2014). Such international data, however, is not

infallible due to the multitude of cultural factors that may influence the way that gender quotas play out from one nation or state to another.

The oldest type of quota, reserved seating, mandates that a minimum number of women legislators hold seats on a governing body. Other types of quotas include voluntary party quotas, in which parties attempt to stipulate that a certain percentage of its nominees be women, and mandatory quotas, in which parliaments frame election laws to mandate a certain proportion of women candidates (Hawkesworth, 2012, p. 201). In Rwanda and the Nordic states, such quotas have been instrumental in achieving gender parity in governance. However, in most other nations, women continue to confront the fact that presence in elective office, or descriptive representation, does not necessarily equal substantive or “non-token” representation (p. 202).

The same applies when examining quotas based upon race for minority candidates, in which members may hold seats but not be afforded the same weight of authority as members who did not benefit from affirmative quotas. Women and especially women of color elected through affirmative quotas may experience a “label effect” whereby they seek to overcome the stigma associated with their having benefitted from a quota (Krook, 2014, p. 1284). Female legislators and especially female legislators representing minority groups often confront an “impossible double bind” of being expected to be representative of society and women in their group while simultaneously meeting the educational and professional selection criteria established by male party elites (Franceschet et al, 2012, p. 229). There may also be a delegitimization of quota-elected women that occurs when quotas reinforce a gendered division of labor within a legislative body that causes men to focus on “important”

policy issues while women focus on “less prestigious” social issues (Francheschet et al., 2012, p. 230)

The problem is that across nations, it is difficult to discretely measure the impact of gender or minority quotas due to differing definitions of what constitutes a quota in theory and practice, as well as what bodies regulate them, the stage of the electoral process they affect, and whether the electoral system, party practices, or political norms are targeted (Krook, 2014, p. 1281). Women may also experience greater or lesser degrees of legislative autonomy stemming from how they are elected (p. 1284). The debate continues as to whether electoral gender and minority quotas inspire women to become more politically involved and make room for them at the table or if they will reinforce negative stereotypes about female leaders (Krook, 2014, p. 1284). Francheschet et al. (2012) suggest that in many places where gender quotas are in place, the criteria for candidate selection have gendered underpinnings and that there is a disconnect between “quota women’s” public images and who they actually are as legislators: “while women elected via quotas are assumed to be less qualified than their male colleagues, they often have extensive political experience and equal or higher levels of education.” (Francheschet et al., 2012, p. 229). They further found that where democratic institutions are weak, women face particular difficulties that “undermine the likelihood of substantive representation” (p. 230) as a result of different or less progressive cultural and institutional factors that may obstruct elected women from pursuing their concerns.

Gender and minority quotas have proven largely unpopular in the U.S, and for the most part have not entered into the public debate (Krook, 2006). This may be due to a number of reasons. As discussed previously, the balance of men and women in U.S. government is still

weighted very much in men's favor, and quotas may raise resentment among men who feel left behind by their implementation (Franceschet et al., 2012). Despite the growing prevalence of gender quotas in political party debates in Europe, the representation of minorities and women is still only a marginal political question in the U.S., perhaps due to pervasive ethnocentric and individualistic American attitudes that ignore the progress being made on that front in other nations (Dahlerup & Leyenaar, 2013). Maille (2015) suggests that part of the lack of support for quotas in the U.S. and Canada may be due to an overemphasis on training programs by women's groups and a lack of support for quotas on the part of such organizations (Maille, 2015). Hughes (2011) writes that although quotas are "ostensibly designed to promote diversity and inclusiveness, the quota policies in effect today rarely challenge majority men's dominance" of legislatures (Hughes, 2011, p. 1). She further suggests that *national* gender quotas that affect all political parties should go farther to advance minority women's representation, though to a lesser extent than majority women and minority men (p. 1)

Some legal scholars have questioned the constitutionality of gender and racial quotas in the U.S. (Somani, 2013), however, advocates of quotas insist that there are ways they can work around any constitutional restrictions: "[e]ven though Congress cannot directly set a requirement for parties to adopt such quotas, it is still constitutional for Congress to incentivize parties to do so by tying their use to funding under a public campaign-finance scheme" (Somani, 2013, p. 1452). The author concludes that the issue of gender quotas being implemented in the U.S. is still highly contested and will require further work. While gender quotas may offer a potential benefit to American women's representation, any effort

to enact them on a large scale must take pains to avoid benefitting majority (white) women and minority men more so than minority women.

Ranked Voting

In recent elections, the topic of ranked voting has emerged as a possible solution to what some see as a breakdown of the democratic electoral process due to a perceived lack of options on the ballot. In 2016, 98% of Congressional incumbents won re-election despite historically low approval ratings (Richie, 2017). In most states, the state's majority party tends to win elections at most levels of office, leaving voters with a less meaningful choice of candidates. In an effort to help voters "elect the candidates they like the most without helping elect the candidates they like the least," voters in Maine approved rank choice voting (RCV). At the outset of this writing, RCV would have been implemented in Maine in 2018; however, midway through this writing, Maine's Supreme Judicial Court and then its Senate voted to repeal the ranked choice voting law approved by voters, saying it was unconstitutional (Mistler, 2017). Maine would have been the first state to implement the practice statewide.

RCV allows voters to have more than two choices in elections by having them select candidates in order of first, second, third, and so on. If the first choice candidate wins more than half the votes, that candidate wins; if no candidate has more than half the votes, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated, then the votes of those who selected the eliminated candidate are added to the totals of their next choice (Richie, 2017). This method creates space for minority party and independent candidates while upholding majority rule and foster greater accountability for incumbents while reducing the impact of campaign

spending. A number of cities in Oregon, California, Maryland, and Massachusetts have already adopted RCV for their local elections (Richie, 2017).

While RCV has not yet been implemented widely enough or for long enough for the data to present a complete picture of its effects, some evidence points to RCV having a number of beneficial effects for fairer elections. Rutgers University Eagleton Poll and FairVote collaborated in 2013-2014 to conduct a research project on RCV in 21 cities that have implemented this method in their elections. They found that in the cities using RCV, candidates spent less time criticizing their opponents and ran less negative campaigns, while voters easily understood the process and believed it should continue to be used in their city (2014, Ranked Choice Voting Civility Project). If we consider the literature discussed in Chapter 3 involving women's relative risk aversion and aversion to election environments that may be dishonest or threatening, it is possible that the greater degree of civility involved in campaigns that use RCV may be more enticing for would-be women candidates. Anecdotally, cities that have used RCV demonstrate a possible benefit for women: In 2015, 3 out of 4 mayors of the Bay Area Cities that used RCV in their elections were female, and women hold more than half of the offices elected by RCV in Oakland, Berkeley, and San Leandro, CA (FairVote, 2015).

Proponents of RCV further suggest that it may provide greater opportunities for candidates of color. Women and people of color combined hold 47 of the 52 elected offices using RCV in California (FairVote, 2015). One study of cities using RCV found the average voter turnout increased by an average of 5 points after implemented that election system (Kimball, 2014). The practice has already been implemented and is largely popular with voters in dozens of countries worldwide, including Germany, Greece, Ireland, Denmark,

Spain, and New Zealand (Anest, 2009). After all, using the traditional winner-takes-all system in single-member districts means that ostensibly 49% of the population in that district has no representation (Anest, 2009). Since most voters do not fall neatly on one end of the left-right spectrum, RCV may add legitimacy to elections by allowing voters to make decisions that are not only based on what they might perceive as the lesser of two evils (Dasgupta & Maskin, 2008). The use of rank-choice voting may be an important piece of increasing women's and minority women's representation, however, it is clear that more research must be done to determine the range and scope of its intended benefits.

District Differentials

Current literature points to certain districts being more woman-friendly and/or minority-friendly than others. As described in the previous chapter, certain factors such as a district's religiosity, urban population, and demographics can have a significant impact on how much support is earned by women candidates (Mitchell & Monroe, 2014; Setzler, 2013). Some evidence suggests that multimember districts, or MMD, in which multiple candidates are elected, provide a larger window of opportunity for women and/or women of color (Swain & Lien, 2017). Clark and Caro (2013) reviewed data from extant studies and affirmed the findings that women candidates were more likely to seek and win office in MMDs--however, they note that much of the data has examined the effects for MMDs for women as a homogenous group. There is some question as to how consistently MMDs benefit various groups of women.

Some argue that multimember districts may have the opposite effect by diluting representation of concentrated minorities, because a minority candidate running against white candidates in mostly white districts are more likely to lose (Swain & Lien, 2017, p. 135),

because support for a minority candidate from a minority voting base in a district may be drowned out by the majority vote (Smith, 2002). Other studies suggest that MMDs may still provide some benefit for minority candidates by allowing voters to split their votes between majority and minority candidates (Gerber et al., 1998). The potential for this dilutive effect can, however, be mitigated by the creation of *majority-minority* single-member districts, in which only one candidate is elected. SMD, or single member districts that are majority-minority provide the greatest benefit for urban black women (Swain & Lien, 2017, p. 135).

In fact, ever since the Voting Rights Act of 1965 when race-conscious districting practices led to the creation of many majority-minority municipal, state, and congressional districts, the vast majority of elected officials of color, especially women, are elected from these districts (Sanbonmatsu, 2015, p. 3). Thus, the racial composition of a district constitutes a major difference between the path that women of color and white women take to reach office (Hardy-Fanta et al., 2006). Swain and Lien propose that since multimember districts are conducive to better success of women as a group, the creation of higher numbers of multimember district systems *in districts with high concentrations of people of color* may facilitate better opportunities for would-be black or Latina women candidates (Swain & Lien, 2017, p. 135). At the municipal level, those authors also found that “at-large” appointments to school boards presented a barrier to minority representations, and that candidates of color do better in district-based systems (p. 136).

In sum, the effect of certain districts being more conducive to women’s political candidacy than others can point to a couple of potential strategies. Aspiring women candidates of color may have a measured advantage if they choose to run in single-member, majority-minority districts. Women who live in “woman-friendly districts”—those that are

urban, educated, and more progressive---should be actively recruited and given support so as to build greater levels of representation in those area with the aim eventually being that building a greater coalition of women in politics in women-friendly areas can lead to better opportunities for those in “non-woman friendly districts” through woman-minded policy reform, the exposure effect, and the negating of stereotypes about women politicians. On the other hand, organizations that work in the name of equal representation should focus more of their efforts into supporting women who have ambitions to run in the non-woman friendly districts.

Term Limits

Another potential avenue toward opening up more opportunities for women in politics which has received more attention in recent years is the practice of term limits. Term limits, which set a cap on the number of terms served by legislators at the national or state level, have been advocated by a number of scholars and political scientists as a practical means to increase the number of women serving in Congress and state legislatures by breaking the cycle of incumbency advantage. The concept of term limiting politicians may seem at first glance like an obvious solution to decreasing the political gender gap, because they increase representative turnover, thus freeing up more open seats (Carey et al, 2006). According to the National Conference on State Legislatures, term limits emerged amid arguments in the 1990s that they would allow greater numbers of women and minorities to hold legislative seats. However, over 25 years later, the benefits to term limits may not be as clear-cut as originally thought. Since that time, 15 states have experimented with term limiting policies- and in those states, significant gains have not occurred (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015).

As such, the political science literature remains somewhat conflicted as to whether term limits have a benefit that outweighs any potential negative side effects. Carroll and Jenkins examined data for six states that implemented term limits in 1998 to determine the effects of the policies. They concluded that, despite some variation among states, the overall number of women serving in legislative seats in those states actually *decreased* following the election (Carroll & Jenkins, 2001). The data suggested the primary reason for the decrease was the overall lack of women entering and contesting primaries for those seats: no woman ran for 42.5% of the races for house seats vacated in 1998 due to term limits (Carroll & Jenkins, 2001, p. 199). Further, in states like Colorado where women already held a number of seats, women losing their base of term-limited seats contributed to the decrease. At the time of that writing, the authors noted the need for more robust study of the dynamics of term limits, and suggested that term limits may exert their maximum potential effect only if used in tandem with robust efforts by parties, organizations and voters to recruit and support women to run for the seats that open up as a result of term limits (Carroll & Jenkins, 2001).

Noting that the results of that study may have been limited by short-term data and the limited number of cases, the authors take up arguments presented by proponents of term limits that the practice is a necessary and viable solution to eliminate the over-representation of white male incumbents. Much of the scholarship, they note, has focused on advocacy for term limits for women as a whole, and little has focused on the role term limits would play for minority women's representation. There is some debate that while term limits may free up seats for minority representatives, they may also harm in the long run by removing qualified, experienced minority officials who fought so hard to obtain their seats (Carroll & Jenkins, 2005). In the data used from elections in 2000, the authors again found a decrease in

women's state seats resulting from more women being forced to vacate seats than were elected to them. In a few states, however, women were able to secure victories over male incumbents.

For minority groups, there were slight representational gains seen in most states following the 2000 election (Carroll & Jenkins, 2005). Overall, it appears that current data indicates mixed effects for women and minority women resulting from term limits. Most gains for minority women, they note, were due to wins in majority-minority districts. The authors concluded that still more research is needed, but that term limits present a mixed outlook—one which may be more beneficial for minority women than for women as a group. In order to combat the effect of more women losing than gaining seats due to term limits, they posit the suggestion that future women who know they will be term limited eventually can be proactive about mentoring and recruiting other women to replace them (Carroll & Jenkins, 2005). Ultimately, it appears that term limits may indeed be highly beneficial in terms of breaking the cycle of incumbency and creating more space for white women and women of color alike; however, any such policies must be combined with concerted efforts at improving women's incentivization to run and more aggressive recruiting practices for women.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The strategies presented in the previous chapter may leave us with more questions than answers--yet there are a number of insights to be gleaned. The author proposes that the most effective approach to increasing women's representation intersectionally will involve some combination of each of the factors discussed. This would include efforts to raise girls (and boys) in a way that combats patriarchal traditional gender norms, mitigating risk aversion and internalized sexism through presenting activities and challenges that will contribute to her seeing herself as strong and an actor; increasing women's economic and educational opportunities, protecting reproductive choice, and educating men and boys to help create more feminist allies. Anti-racist education is another essential piece of the effort to increase minority women's representation. This could include early childhood exposure to diverse groups and thoughtful discussions about the differences and commonalities between people of different backgrounds.

Working toward racial justice also includes efforts on the part of the privileged group to maintain solidarity with and hold space for marginalized communities while being willing to yield the floor and divest of one's own privilege (Rothenburg, 2005). White people and people of color alike can work to recognize and call out expressions of racism, such as microaggressions they may hear in the workplace. The study of critical whiteness theory has surfaced in recent years within academia, and scholars of this theory present much more in-depth discussions of effective antiracist projects. On the political side, this would entail some combination of robust and forward-thinking recruitment efforts by organizations that are more intersectional, greater efforts by political parties to support would-be women

candidates, greater availability of training programs for women of color, strategic candidacy in multimember, majority-minority and “woman-friendly districts,” mentorship from women in political leadership, and perhaps further experimentation with term limits. Ranked voting may provide a benefit; however, future studies will need to take up the task of analyzing how RCV actually plays out in the long term in those cities and states that have adopted it.

While this thesis has attempted to shed light on some of the barriers and obstacles to women’s--and particularly minority women’s candidacy and representation--and to make sense of some of the conflicting information presented in the political and social science literature presented as strategies to narrow the gender gap, it must be acknowledged that this study is limited by the range and scope of this investigation. The author has attempted to maintain an intersectional feminist perspective to the degree that was appropriate within this thesis. However, this study confronts a number of limitations. Firstly, the author must acknowledge and attempt to critique the relative dearth of literature in political science which is genuinely intersectional and/or feminist.

Much of the literature used to develop this thesis, as a sample of the wide body of political and social science research it represents, deals with women as one monolithic, homogenized group--the practice of which most feminists would critique. As Lorde wrote, “women” are NOT a homogenous group; there are within the category of “women” a multitude of realities and experiences, opportunities, challenges, privileges, and oppressions. Each group of women along various axes of identity experience the world and the barriers to politics differently (Lorde, 1992). As Dovi (2002) adds, “If the presumption is that all women or all black people share the same preferences and goals, this is clearly--and

dangerously--erroneous" (p. 729). This perspective is noticeably missing from much of the scholarship on women in politics.

Disciplinary and Data-Related Limits

The author has been limited by the types of research and literature that are currently available in social science, particularly in the realm of political science. For example, the data provided in the Citizen Political Ambition Panel study offers many important insights; however, it is the first of its kind to date, and draws upon a limited sample of respondents, all of whom have been identified as at least somewhat qualified or "well-positioned" to enter the political world. This contribution to the field could be made even more valuable if future scholars sought out a more diverse sample of respondents, perhaps featuring narratives from citizens who do not fit the traditional criteria of being "well-positioned" to run for office. After all, it is the voices of those groups who are missing in government. As Scola (2013) notes, though scholars have begun to study cross-sectional variation in female legislative representation, they have not yet systematically examined the effect of race and ethnicity from a "within-group" perspective.

That is, the variations among barriers and experiences between, for example, Black and Native women has not been sufficiently analyzed. This calls for much greater attention because not all factors are going to accurately predict the experiences of white female legislators and women of color legislators with the same level of accuracy (Scola, 2013). In perusing the current literature for more group-specific research, the author found very little work available that dealt specifically with women of color--and those that did focused largely on black women. There is some data available on Latina women as a group, and hardly any on indigenous or Asian women.

Much of this is likely impacted by the nature of the discipline in which woman political scientists operate, which is said by some to be a sexist old “boys’ club” in which women, let alone their perspectives, are given less credit and voice. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reported on this issue in 2013: That is, “by many measures, women in political science do not achieve the same success as men. Their ranks among full professors are lower; their teaching evaluations by students are more critical; they hold less prestigious committee appointments; and, according to a new study, their work is cited less frequently” (McMurtrie, 2013, p. 1). The numbers themselves are indicative of an imbalance: in 2010, 71.4 percent of all faculty members in the field were male, and from 1980 to 2006, male professors published on average 5 times more than did females (McMurtire, 2013, Jaschik, 2011). It follows, then, that if women within the field feel constrained by the male-dominated nature of their discipline, they may feel more limited in the types of research on which they may write and be published or even be seen as credible and relevant.

Political science notably has a long history of sexism and publishing literature that included stereotypes and which failed to be inclusive (Johnson, 2009). This has left little room for feminist discourse within political science. As Crenshaw wrote, the practice of feminism should center both on “the life chances and life situations of people who should be cared about without regard to the source of their difficulties” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 166). In that regard, political scientists have a long way to go in terms of working toward intersectionality and presenting research that will speak to the life situations of all people. Bryson would add that feminist-minded political science literature should also expand its definition of politics “such that power relations between men and women are not only in the

public sphere but pervade all areas of life” (Bryson, 1992, p. 263)--such as those gender dynamics discussed in Chapter 3.

Critique of a Reformist Approach

Circling back to Chapter 2’s discussion of the legitimacy of this project as a feminist analysis, we must “recognize both the importance and the limitations of conventional politics and legislation” (Bryson, 1992, p. 195). To that end, the author again acknowledges the limitations of the conventional politics and legislative and electoral systems within which this paper has worked. Dovi (2002) writes that as women, we cannot, and historically have not trusted the dominant group to represent our interests. Within feminist scholarship and feminist political scholarship there are a range of different views taken in regard to increasing women’s electoral representation. Some feminist political scientists argue that attaining a “critical mass” of women elected officials—a large enough proportion so as to surpass “token” status—would have a crucial effect on group behavior and those women’s abilities to advocate for feminist issues.

Sawer (2014) notes that despite the 1990s being a decade in which women saw significant gains in their representation, many of those gains were overshadowed by the neoliberal privileging of the markets, and many women legislators lacked the voice to protest budget cuts to programs that would affect women (Sawer, 2014). The basic assumption of neoliberalism is that governments cannot create economic growth or improve social welfare, and that private companies, individuals, corporations, and unhindered markets are the proper catalysts of economic growth (Bockman, 2013). Around the 1970s, under this ideology of privileging market capitalism, it became more commonplace for politicians to profit from industries and to contract formerly state-owned industries and activities (Bockman, 2013).

The impact of this ideological shift has led to less favorable policy decisions for women, such as a prioritizing of “welfare-to-work” programs over nutrition, healthcare, and childcare programs under the assumption that markets can better distribute resources than the state; however, for many underprivileged women, labor market participation can deplete access to much needed resources (Cook, 2012).

Both radical and liberal feminist movements alike have been problematized by Black feminists, such as Lorde, who wrote about the feeling of having been marginalized from the leftwing social movements that claimed to represent her (Lorde, 1984). She famously spoke at a feminist conference in which she addressed the concept of the “personal is political”:

For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. Racism and homophobia are real conditions of all our lives in this place and time. I urge each one of us here to reach down into that deep place of knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives here. See whose face it wears. Then the personal as the political can begin to illuminate all our choices (Lorde, 1984, p. 25)

It is true that Lorde, Crenshaw, Hooks and others like them may have argued that working within the electoral system to change it is attempting to “use the master’s tools to dismantle the master’s house.” The author does not refute that critique outright. Rather, the author concludes that, as Lorde and others before her wrote, racism, sexism, homophobia and patriarchy are ingrained in the political system. But until women gain more positions of power within it, we cannot begin to realize a system without these masters. The importance of making reforms within these systems is, for now, the most tangible means to build a coalition of power figures that will greater invest in the needs and concerns of all groups of women. Until we have more women in positions of power when it comes to shaping policy, we cannot expect for them to shift in a feminist direction.

While change at the macro-level, such as a shift in the American forms of governance, are valuable and worthwhile considerations, feminist political analysts must begin by starting with pragmatic strategies at the individual, local, and state levels such that would allow a greater cross-section of women to be represented. In the meantime, we can work to raise, educate, and train more feminists to run for office such that they can be better advocates for women's issues once they are elected. We can work to acknowledge the differences between us and act as allies for those who are differently positioned from ourselves. Finally, as Lorde wrote, the most important thing feminists can do for one another is to nurture each other and lift each other up to empowerment, for "it is this real connection", she wrote, "that is so feared by a patriarchal world." (Lorde, 1984, p. 25)

Descriptive or Substantive Representation?

One important critique that has been alluded to in the body of this work but which must be left to future scholarship is the distinction between *descriptive* and *substantive* representation. Another way to frame this important question is this: do we simply want more *women* in office, or do we want more *feminists* that will presumably better advocate on behalf of women-oriented policies? Within political science literature, a distinction is made between *descriptive representation* in which the numbers of women in office more accurately reflect the proportion of women in the population and *substantive representation*, in which women representatives actually work to champion the causes of the many varied groups of women they represent. Another way of explaining it is descriptive representatives are more about what they *say*, while substantive representatives can be judged by what they *do*. Thus, substantive representation entails a greater degree of accountability by the represented (Pitkin, 1967; Wangnerud, 2009; Hayes & Hibbing, 2017).

There is an implicit assumption, Dovi writes, that democratic political institutions that lack proportional representation from historically marginalized groups are unjust, and that simply increasing the number of representatives in each identity group can help ameliorate their lack of representation—but, this line of thinking generally serves only to further *descriptive representation* for women and minorities. Many of the current insights offered in the political science literature are aimed primarily at increasing descriptive representation: that of quotas, term limits, and redistricting practices (Dovi, 2002). The thinking here is that if a group is/has been oppressed, they should have more representatives which come from that group. To this point, Dovi agrees: “To be fully democratic, a society that has denied full political membership to certain groups must be strongly committed to including those groups in its political life” (Dovi, 2002, p. 729). Such a commitment requires society to take active steps to increase the number descriptive representatives for each group.

However, Dovi emphasizes that little has been said about the criteria that should guide the *choice of representatives*, because within the current body of work, the emphasis falls on the need for the presence of these representatives: what is missing is a discussion on how effective representatives are chosen within a group. That is, any two women—be they both black, lesbian, or Latina—will make vastly different decisions while in office and present different leadership styles to their constituents. So how do we select candidates that will be more likely to *substantively* represent their constituents by actively engaging in discourse with them in order to better understand and represent their interests? Dovi argues that the “politics of presence” would better support robust democratic relations if representatives for women and minorities were selected “on the basis of their mutual relationships with dispossessed subgroups” (Dovi, p. 730).

What this means is that ideal candidates with the potential for substantive leadership must actively dialogue and network with their constituents of different demographics, encourage their input and participation, and work to at least *understand* their differing needs and perspectives—even if the representative does not agree with them all. Representatives do not need to be exactly the same as those represented, nor can they be, but they can strive for building a relationship of accountability. They should also allow themselves to hear and be influenced by their constituents. Substantive representation also means that representatives must acknowledge and affirm the differences that exist between themselves and those they represent (Dovi, 2002, p. 731). The most important trait of any truly substantive representative, per Dovi, is that of a “shared sense of a linked fate” with that of their constituents (p. 732).

As Dovi notes, many descriptive representatives fail to further or can even undermine the best interests of the group they represent (Dovi, 2002, p. 730). Again, just because a state legislator or Congresswoman is female or black/Latina/Asian, that does not necessarily mean that she will represent the interests of that whole group—indeed, to do so would be somewhat impossible. In response, the author of this thesis agrees that such a distinction between descriptive and substantive representation is fully necessary and valid. However, the author argues that while it is true that the interests of all women are not the same, just as the interests of all gay women or black women are not the same, there are certain core causes—such as the reduction of gender violence, paid family leave and affordable childcare, and equal work opportunity—that we all hold in common and can work for together as a start. Once we start to gain greater strength in numbers by acquiring more and more diverse legislative seats for women, then those women representatives can begin to better address

and listen to the concerns of various marginalized subgroups. Ultimately, it's impossible to have each individual viewpoint and experience represented within an electoral system; but what voters can do is strive to elect leaders who will aim for more equitable and substantive representation. Elected officials can do the same.

This thesis has presented a brief overview of the problem of the gender gap in political ambition and the lack of women's representation in U.S. politics. Societal, political, and institutional barriers to women's political engagement, and those uniquely faced by women of color, have been presented through an intersectional feminist framework. Current strategies to improve women's representation as presented in the political science literature have been analyzed for robustness and intersectionality. It should be clear that American women, especially those who are members of other marginalized groups, face significant challenges to political engagement and representation which largely stem from the pervasive manifestations of the patriarchal society which they inhabit.

This study, however, has barely begun to skim the surface of this issue and the many complex underpinnings that factor into it. Further scholarship currently does exist on many of the topics touched upon in this thesis, including a large body of work on intersectional feminism, issues of gender, race and racism, and reproductive rights, and the author does not claim to be an authority on any of those subjects. In relation to this thesis, future studies may do well to take up the larger issue presented by radical feminism, that of the legitimacy of the political institution itself, and whether it can or should be improved, or dismantled altogether. As has been acknowledged, American democracy is, from a feminist perspective, highly problematic. The author would hope to see future scholarship engage this topic further, perhaps in the form of studies which could explore alternatives to the electoral system.

During the course of this writing, a number of shifts have begun to emerge in the wake of the 2016 election of Donald Trump as President, many of which are still developing. The dismay experienced by many feminist and feminist allies at the election of this President, who has openly and notoriously expressed outright sexism and an attitude which is arguably complicit with the objectification and sexual assault of women--not to mention racism, bigotry, nationalism, and xenophobia--may be the catalyst for a new phenomena. In January, 4.2 million people nationwide attended marches for "Women's Day" in solidarity with women, though many intersectional feminists have critiqued this movement as failing to be intersectional (Stockman, 2017).

These criticisms are valid, and yet, the level of engagement and activism developing presently is unprecedented within recent years. The number of women in Virginia and New Jersey--the two states to hold legislative elections this year--saw 75% and 25% increases in women running, respectively (Ripley, 2017). Organizations like Emerge that train female candidates are reporting huge increases in enrollment this year, up 67% in New Jersey, 82% in Oklahoma, and 145% in Philadelphia (Ripley, 2017). While the extent and duration of this wave of women's increased political participation remains to be seen, the author remains optimistic that the election that has been viewed as a setback by some may actually be a blessing in disguise, in that it fosters the development of a generation of highly motivated, engaged young women who will consider running and hold office for the first time.

While this thesis attempted in good faith to accurately engage and adhere to an intersectional feminist perspective, the author acknowledges that this undertaking may be limited by two points: one, that the breadth of this thesis itself did not enable the author to sufficiently delve into the issues of racial and gender injustices in many aspects; and two, that

the author's own positionality as a privileged (educated, middle class, straight, cis, white) woman have undoubtedly contributed to this writing manifesting a certain, albeit inadvertent, privileged perspective. To this point, the author acknowledges her own privileged positionality and shortcomings in terms of fully articulating, understanding, or doing justice to many of the points herein which deal with oppression and injustice of the marginalized. For the author, this is an ongoing personal project of social justice which will continue to develop through self- and community education.

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