



THIRD EDITION

WOMEN, POLITICS, AND POWER

A Global Perspective



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1

Introduction to Women in Politics

Women are underrepresented in politics. Simply turning on the television to a summit of world leaders, a debate in the U.S. Senate, or a UN Security Council meeting reveals fewer faces of women than men. Women make up half of the population of every country in the world, but the worldwide average percentage of women in national parliaments is only 22%. Of the more than 190 countries in the world, a woman is the head of government (president or a prime minister) in only 13. Women are 15% of ambassadors to the United Nations and 19% of the world's cabinet ministers.

But women's participation in politics has increased dramatically over the past 100 years. In 1890, women did not have the right to vote anywhere in the world. Today, no country in the world denies only women the right to vote. In 1907, Finland became the first country to elect a woman to **parliament**. Currently, women make up over 50% of the **national legislature** in two countries. The first country to reach 10% women in its national legislature was the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1946. Today, 81% of countries have at least 10% women in their national legislatures. Although women still are substantially underrepresented in politics in most countries of the world, women's representation in politics is increasing quickly. In the 10 years between 2000 and 2010, the average number of women in parliaments nearly doubled, from 11.7% to 19.4%.

The growth in women's political power is one of the most important trends of the past 100 years.

There is also significant variation in women's political representation across countries. In some countries, such as Sweden, Bolivia, and Rwanda, women have made remarkable progress in their political representation. Unfortunately, in many other countries, the struggle for equal representation proceeds slowly. And some populations, religions, and governments remain openly hostile to the notion of women in politics.

For years, Sweden reigned as the country with the highest percentage of women in its parliament. In 2003, however, Sweden was dethroned by Rwanda, which reached 48.8% women in its legislature. And in 2008, Rwanda became the first country in the world to breach the 50% barrier by electing 56% women to its parliament. Today, Rwanda continues to lead the world with 64% women, with Sweden ranked fifth in the world at 44%. The two countries could not be more different. Sweden is a developed Western nation, has been at peace for almost two centuries, and governs through a parliament first established more than 500 years ago (Kelber 1994). In Sweden, women's increasing participation in politics was a long, slow process. Beginning with reforms in the 1920s, Sweden broke the 10% mark for women's legislative representation in 1952, boasted the first woman acting prime minister in 1958, and then passed the 20% mark for women's legislative presence in 1973 and the 30% mark in 1985.

In contrast, in 2003 Rwanda had just begun to recover from a brutal genocide during which more than 1 million people lost their lives. Rwanda is a poor nation in Africa that ranks 166th out of 187 countries in its level of "human development" (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] 2011). The 2003 election was the inaugural election of a new constitution, which guaranteed women at least 30% of the National Assembly seats. Before that time, women had been less of a presence, never hitting 20% of the parliament before the transition to an interim government in 1994. But even with a guaranteed 30%, voters chose even more women—19% more in 2003, 26% more in 2008, and 34% more in 2013. The promotion of women by international organizations, the influence of local women's organizations, and shifts in women's roles after the war explain the sudden rise of women to substantial political power (Longman 2006; Tripp 2015).

That Rwanda and Sweden both rank so highly in women's legislative presence suggests that one cannot assume that women do better in Western industrialized nations. Indeed, there is substantial variation across regions of the world, and many highly developed Western countries fall far behind

developing countries in their representation of women as political leaders (Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU] 2015a, 2015b). The top five countries in the world today are Rwanda, Bolivia, Cuba, Seychelles, and Sweden. As of May 2015, the United States ranked 96th of 190 countries in percentage of women, falling behind Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ecuador, and Mozambique. Britain ranked 45th and is behind Costa Rica, South Africa, and Angola. France, Italy, and the United States have never had a woman president whereas Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and Indonesia have. It is also important to recognize that Sweden, Rwanda, Bolivia, and others are some of only a handful of stories of extraordinary success for women's presence in politics. Today, 50% of countries have less than 20% women in their national legislatures. And five countries have no women at all. See Photo 1.1.

The story of women, politics, and power is therefore different than that of women in education or women in the labor force. Although women have made remarkable inroads into both higher education and traditionally male occupations, the political sphere remains an area where, despite the progress they have made, women still have far to go.

Photo 1.1 Few Women's Faces at the G20 Summit, June 2012



UN Photo by Eskinder Debebe

Arguments for Women's Representation in Politics

Why should we care about a lack of women in politics? First, politics is an important arena for decision making. Individuals who hold official positions in government get to decide how to allocate scarce resources such as tax revenues. Politicians make decisions that may help some people at the expense of others. Decisions by politicians even affect people's individual choices by encouraging some behaviors and outlawing others. Second, political power is a valuable good. Politicians hold power over other social institutions, such as the family or education, and are able to codify particular practices into law (Martin 2004). Politicians have the power to enforce their decisions, sometimes with force. Third, to hold a political position is to hold a position of authority. Looking at the makeup of political figures in a country highlights who is legitimated to make societywide decisions in that society.

But does it matter if all political decision makers are men? In principle, the answer could be no. But in practice the answer is often yes. In principle, most laws are gender neutral, and elected representatives pay attention to all of their constituents equally. In practice, however, **feminist** political theorists have argued that the appearance of neutrality toward gender or equality between men and women in government actually hides substantial gender inequality. If gender-neutral language is used in principle but in practice only men appear in politics, then women are not equal but rather invisible. Theorists such as Carole Pateman (1988, 1989), Anne Phillips (1991, 1995), and Iris Young (1990) have shown that abstract terms used in political theory, such as *individual* or *citizen*, though having the appearance of being gender neutral actually signify White men. Even more forceful arguments say that the state was structured from its inception to benefit men and that it has a continuing interest in the maintenance of men's domination, both in Western countries (Lerner 1986; MacKinnon 1989) and in non-Western countries (Charrad 2001).

Without women, the state, being populated only by men, could legislate in the men's interest. That is, if women are not around when decisions are made, their interests may not be served. Golda Meir was an Israeli cabinet minister before she became prime minister of Israel. She related the following story:

Once in the Cabinet we had to deal with the fact that there had been an outbreak of assaults on women at night. One minister (a member of an extreme religious party) suggested a curfew. Women should stay at home after dark. I said: "but it's the men attacking the women. If there's to be a curfew, let the men stay at home, not the women."

Golda Meir's presence in the cabinet allowed her to point out the unfairness of making women stay home rather than men. If she had not been there, who would have pointed this out?

In general, men are less likely to initiate and pass laws that serve women's and children's interests (Berkman and O'Connor 1993; Bratton and Haynie 1999; Childs and Withey 2004; Htun, Lacalle, and Micozzi 2013; Schwindt-Bayer 2010; Taylor-Robinson and Heath 2003). Men less often think about rape, domestic violence, women's health, and child care. Women, in turn, have demonstrably different policy priorities than men (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004; Gerrity, Osborn, and Mendez 2007; Schwindt-Bayer 2006; Swers 1998). In democracies, the points of view of all groups need to be taken into account. Therefore, the views and opinions of women as well as men must be incorporated into political decision making.

These arguments are interesting in theory, but what about in practice? What might it mean to women around the world to be underrepresented in politics?

The Story of Mukhtaran Bibi: Village Council Justice

In June 2002, in Meerwala, a remote village in Pakistan, Mukhtaran Bibi's 12-year-old brother was accused of having an affair with a woman of a higher caste. The village council ruled that her brother had committed a crime and sentenced Mukhtaran Bibi to be gang-raped by four men as punishment. The four men stripped her naked and took turns raping her. She then had to walk home almost naked in front of several hundred people (Kristof 2004, 2005; Kristof and WuDunn 2009).

The expectation was that now Mukhtaran Bibi would commit suicide. Indeed, because they are now considered deeply dishonored and stigmatized, this is the typical path taken by the hundreds of Pakistani girls gang-raped every year due to family or tribal rivalries. Instead, Ms. Mukhtaran defied tradition by testifying against her attackers, resulting in six convictions. Government investigators now say that the accusation against her brother was false. Instead, members of the higher caste tribe actually sexually abused Mukhtaran Bibi's brother and tried to cover it up by falsely accusing him of the affair.

Mukhtaran Bibi's story has a mostly happy ending. She received compensation money from Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf and used it to start two schools in her village—one for boys and the other for girls. When the government detained her for planning to visit the United States in June 2005, international attention and outcry forced her release. Her autobiography was a best seller in France, and in 2010 she received an honorary doctorate

from a university in Canada. Although her attackers' convictions were overturned by a high court in March 2005 and the acquittal was upheld in 2011 by the Supreme Court, she receives public police protection to ensure the safety of her family.

The stories of many other young girls in Pakistan do not have such happy endings. They are beaten for not producing sons, raped, disfigured for trying to choose a husband for themselves, or killed as a matter of family honor. There were 790 honor killings in 2010 (U.S. Department of State 2011). Under the 1979 Hudood Ordinances, courts could view a woman's charge of rape as an admission of illegal sex unless she could prove that the intercourse was nonconsensual. Although the 2006 Protection of Women reformed Pakistan's rape law, in practice, rapists often go unpunished. The conviction rate for rape is near zero. Furthermore, the effects of the ordinances are still felt: Many of the women in Pakistan's jails today are rape victims.

Wife Beating in Nigeria—Legal Under the Penal Code

In December 2001, Rosalynn Isimeto-Osibuamhe of Lagos, Nigeria, wanted to visit her parents. Her husband, Emmanuel, told her she had to stay home. Their argument ended when Emmanuel beat Rosalynn unconscious and left her lying in the street outside their apartment. This was hardly the first time she'd been beaten. During the course of their four-year marriage, Emmanuel beat her more than 60 times (LaFraniere 2005).

This story is not an unusual one in Africa, where domestic violence is endemic. Chronic underreporting, cultural acceptance, and women's shame make it difficult to provide hard-and-fast numbers on the extent of wife beating in Africa. But a recent study suggests that one half of Zambian women report being physically abused by a male partner. An earlier Nigerian survey explains that 81% of married women reported being verbally or physically abused by husbands. Domestic and international advocacy groups have increasingly put pressure on African governments to address high rates of violence against women (Burrill, Roberts, and Thornberry 2010; Htun and Weldon 2012). But many African countries still do not have domestic violence laws on the books (Kishor and Johnson 2004; LaFraniere 2005; Odunjinrin 1993).

What could Rosalynn Isimeto-Osibuamhe do? Domestic violence is entrenched in Nigerian law. Section 56 of the Nigerian Penal Code allows husbands to use physical means to chastise their wives, as long as the husbands do not inflict grievous harm, where grievous harm is defined as loss of sight, hearing, power of speech, facial disfigurement, or other life-threatening injuries. Nigeria, a country of 350,000 square miles, has only two shelters for battered women. Police do not pursue domestic violence as

assault, and Rosalynn's pastor told her not to make her husband angry and to submit to him. Indeed, many of the women living near Isimeto-Osibuamhe believe that husbands have a right to beat wives who argue, burn dinner, or come home late (LaFraniere 2005).

Rosalynn Isimeto-Osibuamhe is unusual in that she was able to leave her husband. She is university educated and the founder of a French school. And she did find a shelter and stayed there for weeks. Many other women in Africa, unable to leave their husbands, are not so lucky.

Delaying the Clarence Thomas Vote—Women Representatives Speak Out

For many people in 1991, the television image of 16 White men interrogating Anita Hill during Senate Judiciary Committee hearings epitomized the lack of women's presence in American politics. But that hearing might not have taken place at all if not for the swift and decisive actions of a small group of women congresswomen.

In the fall of 1991, Clarence Thomas was close to being confirmed as a U.S. Supreme Court justice. But on October 6th, two days before the Senate was scheduled to vote on his nomination, a distinguished law professor, Anita Hill, accused Thomas of sexually harassing her in 1981. The story exploded in the media, and various groups began calling for a delay on the confirmation vote until the charges of sexual harassment could be fully investigated.

But on Tuesday morning, the 8th of October, it looked as though the Senate vote on Thomas would go forward as planned. The men of the Senate (at the time the Senate had 98 men and two women) did not plan to investigate the charges of sexual harassment and appeared ready to confirm Thomas's nomination to the Supreme Court. This continued a monthlong pattern, as Hill had told the Senate Judiciary Committee about her allegations in early September, but the committee had not pursued it. The men senators seemed ready to take Judge Thomas's word over Professor Hill's without formal or detailed examination of the evidence.

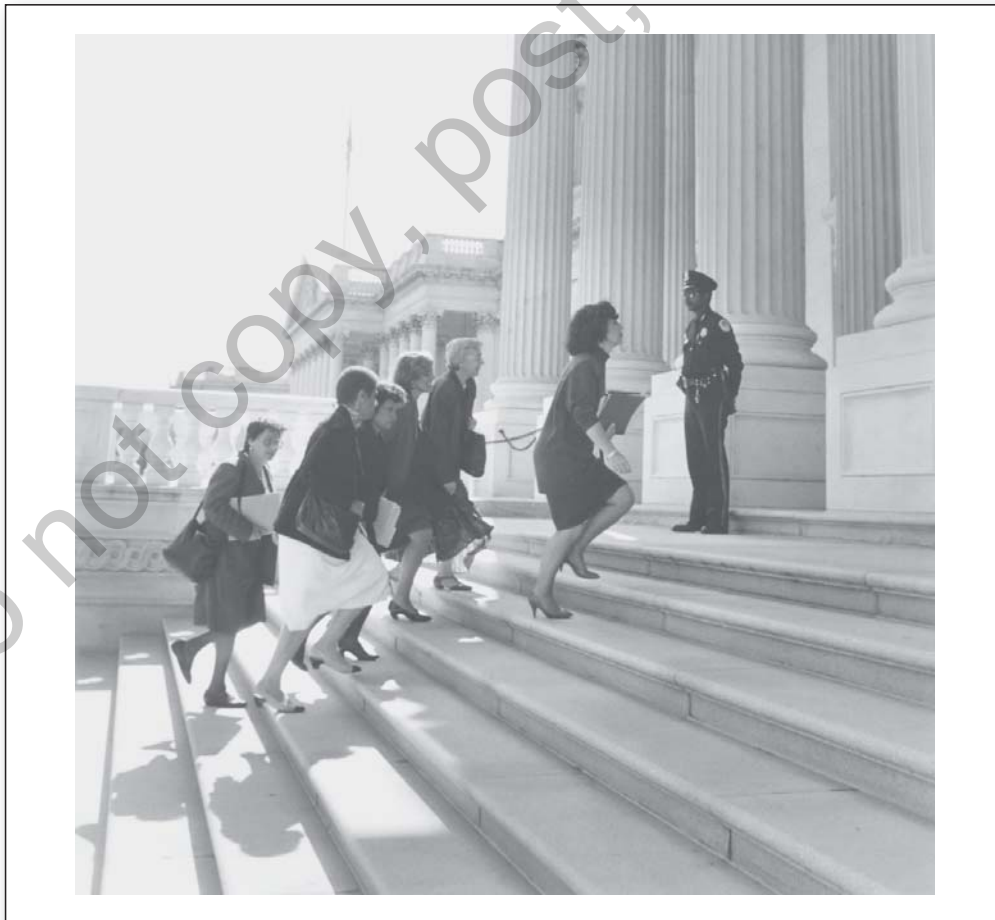
Because 98% of the Senate was men, congresswomen were concerned that women's perspectives on sexual harassment were not being fully considered. Therefore, a number of congresswomen decided to take action. They began by speaking on the floor of the House of Representatives, reminding their colleagues that justice required that Hill's allegations be taken seriously. Barbara Boxer argued the following:

Mr. Speaker, imagine yourself dependent on another human being for your livelihood. Imagine the power that person holds over you. Imagine that person making suggestive comments to you, and beyond that, telling you in detail

about pornographic materials he had seen. Would you be intimidated? Yes, especially if you are in your 20s and you are a woman in a man's field. . . . And, which court is that final protection of women from this kind of harassment? . . . The Supreme Court of the United States of America.

When procedural rules were used to stop these speeches, the congresswomen decided to go further and take their concerns directly to the Senate. In a march immortalized in photographs, seven congresswomen left Congress and strode over to the Senate side of the Capitol to speak with Senate Democrats during their regular Tuesday caucus meeting. High heels clicking as they advanced up the steps of the Capitol, these elected representatives were determined to emphasize that the women's point of view might be very different from the view of these men senators (see Photo 1.2). To them, these charges were serious and worthy of genuine consideration.

Photo 1.2 Congresswomen March to U.S. Senate



Paul Hosefros/The New York Times/Redux

The congresswomen were turned away from the closed-door caucus meeting, despite repeated pleas to be allowed in. The Senate majority leader ultimately agreed to meet with the women separately, and they stated their case. That night, facing mounting public pressure, he announced that a confirmation vote on Thomas would be delayed so hearings on Anita Hill's charges could be held.

Thus, seven elected congresswomen, Patricia Schroeder of Colorado, Barbara Boxer of California, Louise Slaughter of New York, Jolene Unsoeld of Washington, Patsy Mink of Hawaii, Nita Lowey of New York, and Barbara Kennelly of Connecticut as well as delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton of the District of Columbia played a critical role in helping America and the Senate understand that women's concerns were important in the halls of power.

This story also has a mostly happy ending. Although many felt that the Anita Hill hearings were ultimately a farce, public resentment of that farce helped to send Barbara Boxer, one of the marchers, and three other women to the Senate the following year—a Senate that would not have a women's bathroom until 1993. The Anita Hill hearings also helped increase awareness of sexual harassment of women in the workplace, which was only incorporated into the guidelines set by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (the body responsible for adjudicating sexual harassment claims) in 1980 (Boxer 1994; Dowd 1991; Winess 1991).

Ultimately, all of these situations lead to this question: If a government chronically underrepresents women, are we positive the rules of the game are fair?

Justice Arguments for Women's Representation

Women make up half of the population of every country in the world. A simple justice argument would therefore suggest that women and men should be equally represented in politics. But what does equal representation mean? Arguments for women's equal representation in politics fall into one of three types—each with a different conception of representation. These types of representation are formal, descriptive, and substantive.

The earliest and most basic formulation of equal representation is **formal representation**, meaning that women have the legal right to participate in politics on an equal basis with men. Formal representation requires that any barriers to women's participation in decision making be removed. Women must have the right to vote and the right to stand for office. Discrimination against women in the arena of politics must be eradicated. Men and women must be equal before the law. In short, women must have the same opportunity as men to participate in politics.

This may sound straightforward to people who have voted their whole life, but the fight for the formal representation of women in politics was long, difficult, and occasionally bloody. In the early part of the 20th century, as women fought for the right to vote, it was not always clear that they would get it. Furthermore, this struggle continues into the present: Multiple votes were taken before women got the vote in Kuwait in 2005, proof of education is required for a woman to vote in Lebanon, and women have just been granted the right to vote in local elections (in 2015) in Saudi Arabia.

Kuwait, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia are anomalies in the present day. The idea that women require formal representation in politics has become nearly universally accepted over the past 100 years. Women's political rights are now seen as human rights, and statements about women's political participation are set out in the resolutions, codes, and formal conventions of most international bodies as well as in the law of many individual countries. The United Nations (1946) adopted the first of a number of resolutions dealing with women's political rights in 1946 when, during its first session, the UN General Assembly recommended that all member states fulfill the aims of its charter "granting to women the same political rights as men" (Resolution 56 [1]). At the time, only about 50% of UN member states allowed women the vote.

Today, women can formally participate in politics almost everywhere, and resolution statements are much stronger, taking for granted the notion that women can and should participate. For example, in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, 189 countries agreed to a platform for action stating, "No government can claim to be democratic until women are guaranteed the right to equal representation" (United Nations 1995). Ultimately, these arguments for formal representation are about equal opportunity for women. The goal of formal representation is the absence of direct and overt discrimination against women in politics.

But observation suggests that formal representation does not necessarily result in substantial numbers of women in positions of political power. Even though most countries of the world grant women the equal opportunity to vote and to participate in politics, women remain substantially underrepresented in positions of political decision making. More than 99% of countries in the world have granted women the same formal rights to vote and stand for election that men have. But as noted earlier, fewer countries have more than 20% women in their legislative bodies. Equal opportunity through formal representation does not appear to automatically produce large numbers of women in politics.

For this reason, in the last decades of the 20th century, feminist political theorists began to argue that a different conception of equal representation

was needed. Equal representation can also require **descriptive representation**—that there must be descriptive similarity between representatives and constituents. If women make up 50% of the population, they should also make up roughly 50% of legislative and executive bodies.

Arguments for descriptive representation suggest that it is not enough to have formal political equality in politics. This is because simply extending the legal right to pursue public office to women does not ensure that they will. Rights alone do not remedy the substantial social and economic inequalities that prevent women from taking advantage of their political opportunities. Instead, their past and continued exclusion from elites reinforces the idea of women's inferiority in the political arena (Phillips 1995).

Advocates of descriptive representation therefore view formal political equality as only the first step in achieving equal representation for women. In principle, laws can ensure that women have an equal opportunity to vote and to pursue political careers. In practice, however, women may not come to the starting line with the same resources or skills as men, and this can result in differences in outcomes, even without differences in opportunity.

In discussing the limits of equal opportunity, an analogy to a foot race is often used. Perhaps the most famous example is President Lyndon Johnson's 1965 speech to the graduating class of Howard University:

You do not take a man who for years has been hobbled by chains, liberate him, bring him to the starting line of a race, saying, "you are free to compete with all the others," and still justly believe you have been completely fair.

It is easy to substitute *woman* for *man* in this speech and understand the critique of simple formal representation. The present effects of past discrimination can prevent laws ensuring equal opportunity from translating into equal outcomes.

Instead, something more is required: "Those who have been traditionally subordinated, marginalized, or silenced need the security of a guaranteed voice and ... democracies must act to redress the imbalance that centuries of oppression have wrought" (Phillips 1991:7). Further action must be taken—electoral laws changed, gender quotas introduced—to ensure that women are represented in politics in numbers more proportionately similar to their presence in the population.

Arguments for descriptive representation hinge on the notion that racial, ethnic, and gender groups are uniquely suited to represent *themselves* in democracies. Social groups have different interests due to varied economic circumstances, histories of oppression, and cultural or ideological barriers they continue to face. In principle, democratic ideals suggest that elected

representatives will serve the interests of the entire community and be able to transcend any specific interests based on their own characteristics, such as sex, race, or age. But in practice, “while we may all be capable of that imaginative leap that takes us beyond our own situation, history indicates that we do this very partially, if at all” (Phillips 1991:65). Although elections make representatives accountable to their constituents, they are sporadic enough to allow representatives to pursue private preferences or party loyalties.

If groups cannot be well represented by other groups, they need to be represented themselves among political elites (Williams 1998). In the case of women, the argument is that due to different socialization and life experiences, women are different from men. Thus, “women bring to politics a different set of values, experiences and expertise” (Phillips 1995:6). Women have different interests than men do, and those interests cannot be represented by men; therefore, women must be present themselves in the political arena. When asked why there should be more women in politics, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the world’s first woman prime minister, replied with the following:

Because they are not considered. Women’s problems are not considered now . . . women have to work very hard, not necessarily at a desk in an office . . . they have . . . family problems that are different than what the men have. (Liswood 1995:109)

Arguments for descriptive representation are not essentialist (Phillips 1995:55–56; Williams 1998:5–6). They do not assume that, by definition, all women share an essential identity with the same interests and concerns. Instead, these feminist writers make it clear that women have a common interest because of their social position. Because of women’s historically marginalized position, their general relegation to certain economic roles, and their primary responsibility for child and elder care, women have shared experiences and therefore common interests. And because women can best represent themselves, the argument continues, they need to be numerically represented in politics, not simply formally represented. Descriptive representation requires that women have a legislative presence (Williams 1998).

Arguments for descriptive representation are now commonplace in international statements on women’s political position. For example, the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action stated, “Women’s equal participation in decision making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women’s interests to be taken into account” (United Nations 1995, paragraph 181). In 2008, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) approved a protocol on gender

and development with the goal of increasing women's representation in the public and private sectors to 50%, including by using affirmative action.

Even if we accept that women have different interests than men and therefore cannot be represented by men, a question remains: Can women represent women? This question leads to a third type of equal representation: **substantive representation**, which means that women's interests must be advocated in the political arena. Substantive representation requires that politicians speak for and act to support women's issues.

Going even further than the numerical representation of women outlined in descriptive representation arguments, advocates of substantive representation point out that *standing for* is not the same as *acting for* (Pitkin 1967). Getting higher numbers of women involved in politics is only a necessary but not sufficient condition for women's interests to be served. Instead, for women's interests to be represented in politics, women politicians have to be willing to and able to represent those interests.

But what does it mean to represent women's interests, needs, or concerns? There are a variety of answers to that question:

- Women politicians could state that they view women as a distinct part of their constituencies or that they feel a special responsibility to women (Childs 2002; Reingold 1992; Schwindt-Bayer 2010).
- Women politicians could draft or support legislation that directly attempts to promote social, educational, or economic equity for women. Examples include the U.S. Equal Pay Act of 1963, which worked to end the pay differential between men and women, and Mozambique's 2003 Family Law that allows wives to work without the permission of their husband (Disney 2006).
- Women politicians could prioritize, support, or vote for "women's issues"—issues of particular interest and concern to women. These issues may be directly and obviously related to women—for example, Namibia's 2003 Combating of Domestic Violence Act, which supports victims of domestic violence and aids the prosecution of crimes against women (Bauer 2006). Or women's issues may be indirectly related to women through their greater responsibility for child and elder care. Examples include the Canadian 2001 Employment Standards Act, which extended parental leave from 10 weeks to 35 weeks. Or women's issues may not even seem like "women's issues" on the surface. For example, stemming from a gendered division of labor in rural India, women are more interested in digging wells to increase access to clean water while men are more interested in building roads to travel to work (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004).
- Women politicians may also prioritize, support, or vote for policies of particular interest to feminists, such as abortion or contraception (Molyneux 1985b; Tremblay and Pelletier 2000). For example, a woman politician in Chile may support a bill to decriminalize abortion in cases of rape, if the mother's life was in danger, or if the fetus was inviable.

Talking about substantive representation raises three distinct issues. First, women politicians may not have the desire to act “for women.” Second, even if they want to, women politicians may not be able to act for women. Finally, women politicians of a particular race, ethnicity, class, or caste may not desire to or be able to act “for all women.”

To begin, women who reach positions of political power may not have any desire to act for women in one or all of the ways described earlier. Women vary in their interest in advancing equality for women or in their commitment to feminist concerns such as access to abortion. Not all women feel moved to devote special attention to the interests of women, children, and families. For example, Margaret Thatcher, prime minister of Britain from 1979 to 1990, was famously antifeminist and pursued policies that many deemed detrimental to the women and children of England and Scotland.

Even if they want to act in the interests of women, women politicians may not be able to. Simply being a politician does not mean that one’s interests can be effectively pursued. There are a number of reasons why women politicians may be unable to initiate or support legislation related to women’s interests. First, as Joni Lovenduski (1993) warned, institutions may change women before women can change institutions. Women legislators are embedded in political institutions where men’s behavior—for example, forcefulness, detachment, and impersonality—is considered the norm. Thus, women may need to change or adapt to conform to those norms. Consider what a woman legislator from Southern Europe had to say: “Politics may change women because, in order to survive politically, women may copy the men in their methods and behavior” (IPU 2000:23).

Even if women do not change their behavior, they may be sanctioned if they act in the interests of women. Relating the experience of members of parliament (MPs) from the Labour Party in Great Britain, Childs (2002) explained the following:

The most common perception is that women who seek to act for women act *only* for women. This results in a tension between a woman MP’s parliamentary career and acting for women. If an MP desires promotion, she cannot afford to be regarded as acting for women too often or too forcefully. (p. 151, emphasis added)

If women act for women, they may be relegated to “female” committees such as health or social services. A desire to break out of these roles and gain more prestigious “masculine” committee assignments can lead to the disavowal of gender (“I’m a politician not a woman”; Sawer 2000:374).

Finally, as members of political parties, women politicians are beholden to party stances on various issues. Indeed, for many issues relevant to women, party differences may be greater than differences between men and women. Many studies of men and women legislators have demonstrated that women tend toward the **political left**, prioritize women's issues more highly, and espouse feminist ideals more often than men do. But much of the difference between men and women disappears if political party is taken into account. So, for example, women may tend to support women's issues such as public funding for day care or equality between the sexes more than the men of their own party. However, the men of left-wing parties may espouse more support for such issues than the women of parties on the **political right** (Burrell 1994:160–161; Dolan 1997; Swers 1998, 2002a, 2014; Tremblay 1993).

Still, having more women in politics unquestionably makes the government more receptive to the interests of most women. Advocates of substantive representation therefore argue that not only must the numbers of women in politics increase but those women must also receive support when they attempt to act for women's interests. For example, women's caucuses can help achieve substantive representation by supporting women and providing them with resources. As an example, the bipartisan U.S. Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues adopts legislative priorities, plans strategies to move women's issues forward, and links like-minded congressional members to each other and to outside groups. Some advocates of substantive representation argue that rather than simply electing women to political office, voters should elect feminists—either women or men—who are more likely to be directly supportive of women's interests (Tremblay and Pelletier 2000).

But can women politicians represent all women? Women are not just women—they are women of a particular race, ethnicity, religion, class, sexual orientation, or linguistic group. Although women's unique relationship to reproduction and the family cuts across all other social categories, women are not a monolithic group. The interests of a woman from a lower class may be different from those of a woman from an upper class. The problem arises when the women who attain political power are of only certain classes, races, or ethnicities—when they are elite women. For example, Costa Rican women legislators argued against an eight-hour workday for domestic workers, saying that they could not participate in politics if their domestic workers did not work extended hours (Sagot 2010:31). Or consider recent laws limiting Muslim women's right to wear Islamic headscarves and/or face veils, which have been passed by legislatures that lack any women representatives that wear traditional Islamic dress (Hughes and

Tienes 2011). Therefore, it is vital to ask whether these women politicians can represent all women, or whether they can represent only rich, or White, or Western interests (Smooth 2011).

Utility Arguments for Women's Representation

Arguments for why women should be represented in politics are not restricted to justice arguments. Other arguments focus on the utility, or usefulness, of having women represented in politics. These arguments can be divided into two types: arguments that increasing women's participation improves the quality of deliberation and arguments that visible women in politics act as role models for younger women.

Including women in politics can increase the quality of political decision making. When women are included among potential politicians, it doubles the pool of talent and ability from which leaders can be drawn. When women are not included, valuable human resources are wasted (Norderval 1985:84). Without women's full participation in politics, political decision making will be of lower quality than it could be or should be.

The quality of political decision making should also increase with greater inclusion of women because including women increases the overall diversity of ideas, values, priorities, and political styles. Introducing women to the political realm should introduce new ideas because women have different interests. In his philosophical work, John Stuart Mill (1859, 1861) argued that allowing diverse and competing views in the marketplace of ideas helps societies determine what is true and what is not true. If certain ideas are not allowed in the marketplace, then they cannot be proven right and used to change policy, or proven wrong and used to bolster existing ideas.

Diversity is certainly good in and of itself, but it should also make political decision making more flexible and capable of change. The analogy here is to diversity of species in ecological niches. Biologists know that ecological niches dominated by a single species are more vulnerable to changes in the environment than niches with a diversity of species. In a similar manner, having only the ideas and perspectives of men represented in a country's polity could make a country less flexible to changes in its internal or international environment.

A final utility argument is that women political leaders act as role models for young girls and women. Having a visible presence of women in positions of leadership helps to raise the aspirations of other women (Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006; Fridkin and Kenney 2014; Reingold and Harrell 2010; Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007). For example, High-Pippert and Comer (1998) found that women in the United States who were represented

by a woman reported more interest in politics than did women who were represented by a man. In Uganda, following the implementation of a law requiring that women make up at least 30% of local councils, women also began participating more in community events (Johnson, Kabuchu, and Kayonga 2003). Alternatively, if groups are excluded from politics, this creates the perception that persons in these groups are “not fit to rule” (Mansbridge 1999:649). Without the presence of women in politics, there are no role models to inspire the next generation.

A woman legislator from Central Europe put it well:

Because of cultural differences women often have different experiences and different views on certain issues. That means that as women move into previously male-dominated positions, new perspective and new competence are added.... The presence of women in parliament means new skills and different styles in politics.... It also brings a new vision, which ultimately leads to revision of laws in order to improve existing ones. Most of all, they [women] serve as role models for future generations. (IPU 2000:41)

But women can hardly affect dominant political values if their numbers are small. If there are only a few women in a country’s national legislature, they will be under pressure to behave like men. With only a few other women for support, any efforts by a woman legislator to raise a “women’s issue” are likely to be denigrated, and the woman who raises them is likely to be marginalized. When women are at least a large minority, then women’s issues get more support (Sawer 1990:10).

Consider the view of a woman politician from North Africa:

The central committee of the RCD [Constitutional Democratic Rally] has included 21.3 percent women. The change is tangible. In meetings, when a woman speaks in favor of a proposal which concerns women, the applause is louder and more sustained, at least from her female colleagues. They can have a decisive influence during debates and on decisions. A significant percentage can sway a vote. (IPU 2000:68)

A Brief Overview of Women’s Participation in Politics

Women’s modern-day participation in politics began with the acquisition of voting rights (suffrage). The first country to fully enfranchise women, and the only country to give women suffrage in the 19th century, was New Zealand in 1893. In 1902, Australia was the second country to give women suffrage and was followed by a variety of Western and Eastern European

states. By 1945, 46% of the world's countries allowed women to vote. We discuss the fight for women's suffrage in detail in Chapter 2.

Today, the average percentage of women in national legislatures around the world is 22% (IPU 2015b). There is substantial variation across nations, however. Table 1.1 presents a sample of countries and their world rank in women's representation in parliament midway through 2015. As discussed earlier, Rwanda currently has the highest percentage of women in its national legislature, followed by Bolivia in the second position. These are the only two countries with 50% women in their national legislatures. Cuba is next at third in the world (48.9%), followed by Seychelles and Sweden. The United Kingdom is in the top quarter of the world rankings at 45th, while the United States is in the middle of the world rankings, at 96th. Toward the bottom, we find Japan and Brazil, with 9.5% and 9% women in their legislatures, and Lebanon, ranked 179th with 3.1% women. Qatar and Micronesia are among the countries tied in last place for having no women in their national legislatures.

Table 1.1 World Rankings for Women in Parliament for Select Countries, 2015

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Percentage of Women</i>
1	Rwanda	63.8
2	Bolivia	53.1
3	Cuba	48.9
4	Seychelles	43.8
5	Sweden	43.6
6	Senegal	42.7
7	Finland	42.5
8	Ecuador	41.6
9	South Africa	41.5
10	Iceland	41.3
10	Namibia	41.3
14	Norway	39.6
16	Nicaragua	39.1
18	Mexico	38
20	Netherlands	37.3
21	Angola	36.8

Table 1.1 (Continued)

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Percentage of Women</i>
23	Germany	36.5
36	Guyana	31.3
44	Nepal	29.5
45	United Kingdom	29
48	Ethiopia	27.8
49	Afghanistan	27.7
56	France	26.2
68	Poland	24.1
67	Israel	24.2
71	China	23.6
94	Saudi Arabia	19.9
96	United States	19.4
129	Russian Federation	13.6
143	India	12
148	Georgia	11.3
155	Japan	9.5
160	Brazil	9
175	Nigeria	4.2
175	Haiti	4.2
179	Lebanon	3.1
187	Micronesia	0
187	Qatar	0

Source: Data from the IPU (2015a).

The sampling of rankings in Table 1.1 demonstrates that highly ranked countries can come from any region. For example, the top 10 countries come from Africa, Europe, and Latin America. But regional difference in women's representation, on average, is still a reality. Table 1.2 shows how the percentage of seats held by women in national legislatures (in the **lower house** and **upper house**) varies by region. As would be expected from the rankings, Scandinavia has the highest average rates of women's participation, followed

Table 1.2 Regional Percentages of Women in Parliament, 2015

<i>Region</i>	<i>Single House or Lower House</i>	<i>Upper House or Senate</i>	<i>Both Houses Combined</i>
Nordic countries	42%	—	—
Americas	27%	26%	26%
Europe	25%	24%	25%
Sub-Saharan Africa	23%	20%	22%
Asia	19%	13%	18%
Arab states	18%	7%	16%
Pacific	13%	36%	16%

Source: Data from the IPU (2015b).

by the Americas (which includes the United States) and Europe. Other regions have averages below the worldwide average—for example, Asia and countries in the Middle East. The Pacific has the lowest levels of women's participation of any region.

Currently, four countries have no women in their national legislature. One of these countries is in the Middle East—Qatar. Other countries in the Middle East, like Kuwait and Iran, have very low levels of women's representation, although above zero. It would not be expected that women would be well represented in these countries, as women only recently received the vote in Qatar in 1999 and Kuwait in 2005. The other countries without women in their national legislature are all small Asian-Pacific island nations—Micronesia, Tonga, and Vanuatu. Of these, Micronesia has never had women represented in its national legislature.

Women are less well represented as heads of government or in high-level appointed offices such as cabinet ministers. There are currently 13 women heads of government around the world: Sheikh Hasina Wazed, prime minister of Bangladesh; Angela Merkel, chancellor of Germany; Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, president of Liberia; Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, president of Argentina; Michelle Bachelet, president of Chile; Kamla Persad-Bissessar, prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago; Dilma Rousseff, president of Brazil; Portia Simpson-Miller, prime minister of Jamaica; Laimdota Straujuma, prime minister of Latvia; Erna Solberg, prime minister of Norway; Catherine Samba-Panza, president of the Central African Republic; Park Geun-hye, president of South Korea; and Ewa Kopacz, prime minister of Poland. We return to the issue of women in leadership positions, as well as women in parliaments, in Chapter 3.

Orienting Theories

Before continuing with our exploration of women in politics around the world, it is important to first introduce a number of key concepts and theories that we use throughout this volume. To understand women in politics, we must understand power, gender, and the interaction between the two.

Power

Sociologists often use a classic definition of power developed by Max Weber: the ability to impose one's will on others, even in the face of opposition. Specifically, Weber (1978) argued that "'power' is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests" (p. 53). According to this definition, power is a valued resource that cannot be held by all. If one person has power, another does not. Power is overt—applied directly and visibly.

However, theorists do not agree on the proper way to define or conceptualize power, and scholars such as Michel Foucault, Antonio Gramsci, C. Wright Mills, and Talcott Parsons have debated the nature of power for decades. Although we do not discuss the various definitions and debates here, we do suggest that in the field of women in politics, it may be especially important to conceptualize power in a way that accounts for ways of exercising power that are less visible or overt. Thus, we employ a threefold definition of power developed by Stephen Lukes (1974), who is also especially useful because his work specifically addresses primarily political (rather than economic) components of power. In short, Lukes's definition includes three dimensions:

- Dimension 1: prevailing in a conflict over overt political preferences
- Dimension 2: preventing the preferences of others from reaching the agenda
- Dimension 3: shaping the preferences of others to match yours

First, Lukes (1974) agreed with Weber that in some cases power is explicit and direct. But he distinguished a particular form of direct power often termed the *pluralist* view, which follows the work of theorists such as Robert A. Dahl and Nelson Polsby. This first, one-dimensional view of power focuses on actual and observable behavior, decision making, and conflict. We can evaluate the first dimension of political power by looking at the policy preferences and political participation of legislators or other actors, how they behave, and who prevails (p. 15).

The second dimension of power involves preventing the preferences of others from even reaching the agenda. This dimension is developed partly as

a critique of the first dimension's focus on observable decisions, arguing that, alternatively, power can be exercised by setting limits on the scope of decision making to include only certain issues. According to this perspective, demands for change can sometimes be "suffocated before they are even voiced; or kept covert; or killed before they gain access to the relevant decision making arena; or, failing all these things, maimed or destroyed in the decision-implementing stage of the policy process" (Bachrach and Baratz 1970:44, cited in Lukes 1974:19). This dimension of power can include a variety of mechanisms for controlling the agenda, including agenda setting, influence, authority, and manipulation.

Finally, Lukes (1974) introduced a third dimension of power that supplements both of the first two dimensions. The third dimension, unlike the first two, recognizes that one person may exercise power over another not only by getting the person to do what he or she does not want to do but also by influencing or shaping what the person even wants. The mechanisms of this process include the control of information, mass media, and socialization. This dimension allows us to recognize that perhaps "the most effective and insidious use of power is to prevent conflict from arising in the first place" (p. 23). Lukes acknowledged that this dimension is the hardest to study, but in the case of women's political power it is especially important to try to understand.

Before we finish our discussion of power, it is important to go beyond Lukes's dimensions, which compare the power of one actor or group over another, to considering the social structure in which individuals and groups operate. Structural theorists argue that power does not come just from an individual's or group's intrinsic qualities but from the roles and social relationships that structure power relations. For example, in schools, the structure of the education system creates an uneven distribution of power between teachers and students who each have a different set of social powers (Isaac 1987, cited in Hayward 2000). Other structural theorists have pointed to the importance of individuals or norms outside of the immediate relationship that contribute to the power of one side (e.g., Wartenberg 1990, 1992). For example, the teacher-student power relation is affected by parents, university admissions officers, and companies that take cues from the teacher. The teacher's power is thus reinforced by these other actors. A teacher's power is also reinforced by social norms—for example, expectations that he or she will be addressed formally, with the title Mr. or Ms. Similarly, when thinking about women in politics, one must think about how women's power relations are affected by political parties, pressure groups, cultural beliefs, and even global forces.

Addressing gendered power directly, feminist theorists further emphasize the process of personal transformation as a form of power—power within

rather than power over. That is, when women—or men—come to better understand themselves and their position in an unequal world, they can be inspired to challenge gender inequality (Kabeer 1994; Rowlands 1997). And feminist theorists stress the ability to work collectively with others as another form of power—power with others to bring about political change (Kabeer 1994; Parpart, Rai, and Staudt 2002). A useful example of the dimensions of power and how they relate to gender appears in the following example.

The Dimensions of Power: An Example

To further understand the dimensions and structure of power, we discuss this simple example: Suppose there are two young siblings named John and Jane. Every week, their mother allows them to pick one breakfast cereal at the grocery store that the two will then eat on weekday mornings before going to school. The first week, John decides that he wants the frosted cereal, but Jane prefers the rice squares. While in the cereal aisle, John stands over Jane and tells her that because he is bigger he should get what he wants. Even though Jane still wants the rice squares, she agrees, and the family goes home with the frosted cereal. In this example, John has one-dimensional power over Jane.

Before the family's next trip to the store, however, John begins to worry that his sister may put up a fight the next week to get the rice squares. But while eating his frosted cereal the following morning, John finds a solution—a coupon on his frosted cereal box for \$1 off wheat flakes, chocolate grahams, or frosted cereal. He clips the coupon off of the box and takes it to his mother. When the family goes to the store, the mother sends John and Jane down the cereal aisle with the coupon. Faced with the choice of only three cereals, Jane cannot get her rice squares so she again acquiesces to her brother's will, and the family goes home with the frosted cereal. In this case, John has exercised two-dimensional power, preventing rice squares from even entering the realm of decision making.

Later that day, John is very nervous. He looked at the frosted cereal box, and this time there is no coupon. He is sure that after two weeks of frosted cereal, Jane might finally get her way. So John devises a plan. Over the next week while watching television with his sister, every time the commercial for frosted cereal comes on the TV, he mentions how delicious the cereal looks. And every morning as he walks to school with his sister, he hums the song from the frosted cereal commercial. The next week at the grocery store standing in the cereal aisle, John begins to hum the song from the frosted cereal's commercial. "That frosted cereal sure is good," he says. Jane replies,

“Hmm. Let’s get frosted cereal again. It’s delicious!” In this example, John exercised three-dimensional power over his sister Jane.

Faced with this example, structural theorists would likely argue that it is not just the interaction between John and Jane that is important for understanding power. One must consider their roles within the larger social structure that is their family. For example, as the older brother, John may believe that he knows what is best for his sister, and Jane is used to looking to her older brother for advice and guidance. Thus, the power is not just a function of John’s forceful or scheming ways but also is grounded in the older brother–younger sister relationship of John and Jane.

Finally, it is important to consider why this situation did not play out differently. When threatened by her brother the first week at the grocery store, why did Jane not put up a fight? Why did Jane not pick up a box of breakfast bars and throw them at John, demanding that the family buy the rice squares? To understand this question, we have to consider who John and Jane are and how they were raised. What messages have they received from their parents, their teachers, and the outside environment about how to behave properly? To understand John and Jane, we must talk about gender.

Gender and Gender Stratification

Any discussion of gender usually begins by distinguishing sex and gender. *Sex* typically refers to biological differences between men and women whereas *gender* refers to socially constructed differences between men and women. Why do we prefer to talk about gender instead of sex? Because sex is typically not socially interesting. Gender is. Think about comparing Hillary Clinton to Barack Obama in the Democratic presidential primary in 2008. What difference did it make that Hillary Clinton was a woman? Answering the question by pointing to obvious physiological differences between Clinton and Obama will not get one very far (D’Amico and Beckman 1995). What interests us is Hillary Clinton’s socially constructed gender: Does her gendered upbringing lead her to have different attitudes than men politicians? Will she adhere to or break out of the roles and behaviors expected of her? What stereotypes will other politicians, or the public, bring to bear in evaluating her?

So what is gender? To begin, gender is difference. Even though human beings are among the least sexually dimorphous of species, most cultures actively work to distinguish men and women through dress, ornamentation, and exaggeration of physiological differences (Lorber 2003). Similarly, gender

character traits are often defined in opposition so that if a particular trait, such as aggressiveness, is attributed to one gender, it is typically determined to be lacking in the other. Men and women are polar opposite sexes. In Western cultures, we often find male–female pairings, such as rational–emotional, aggressive–passive, competitive–cooperative, or assertive–compliant (D’Amico and Beckman 1995:3).

Gender is created. Gender characteristics are cultural creations that get passed on from generation to generation through socialization. From birth, individuals are taught their gender. For example, today in the United States, infant girls are dressed in pink and described as cute or adorable whereas boys are dressed in blue and described as big or strong. Children begin to refer to themselves as members of their gender as soon as they learn to speak (Lorber 2003). When moving from infancy to childhood, toddlers are encouraged to move from baby to either big boy or a big girl. Researchers point out that these categories mean different things—in the United States, boys are taught to manipulate their surrounding environment using strength whereas little girls learn the importance of physical appearance (Cahill 1986; West and Zimmerman 1987). And during playtime in the Philippines, girls enact mother–child scenarios and play house (*bahay-bahayan*) but are cautioned against boys’ games, such as ball games (*larong bola*) and wandering about (*pagala-gala*; Sobritchea 1990). Throughout childhood, parents and other authority figures often interact with children differently based on sex, encouraging appropriate gendered behavior while discouraging transgressive behavior. As Simone de Beauvoir (1952) said, “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature which is described as feminine” (p. 267, cited in Lorber 2003).

Gender is re-created. We “do gender” by constantly creating and recreating it in our interactions with each other (West and Zimmerman 1987). We behave like a man or a woman, thereby practicing being a man or a woman every day. Thus, gender is not complete when a young person is fully socialized; instead, it must be practiced on a daily basis. Grown individuals are not socialized robots. They are active agents who choose to display, perform, and assert their gender in any given interaction (Martin 2004). But choice is constrained—if someone chooses not to “do” gender appropriately, then he or she will likely be sanctioned (West and Zimmerman 1987:146). The sum of countless individual displays of gender across social interactions creates an overarching gendered social landscape and helps to maintain a conception of gender difference as normal and natural.

But gender is not fixed. Gender varies across countries and over time and even within a single woman’s lifetime. The characteristics or behaviors

expected of women in one country may be very different from those expected of women in another (Costa, Terracciano, and McCrae 2001). What it means to be a man or woman has also changed over time (Connell 1987:64). Hansen (1994) demonstrated that in the 19th century men as well as women made quilts and wrote passionate letters to each other. A century ago, women were not meant to participate in politics whereas today they are presidents and prime ministers. The meaning of gender can even change dramatically within a single person's lifetime. Over a 50-year period in the United States, men began to take care of children and even stay at home. Women have succeeded in occupations that were considered inappropriate to their nature 75 years ago.

Gender can be hard to notice. Because people are socialized to perform gender since infancy and because they re-create gender on a daily basis, people often take gender for granted (Lorber 2003). Gender is a part of everything people do. But because gender is internalized, people often do not notice its impact on their perceptions or actions. Therefore, gender can be a powerful background identity that colors people's judgments about one another in very subtle ways (Ridgeway 2001). Because gender is in the background, people may consciously focus on more obvious characteristics of a person's personality or actions without noticing that, unconsciously, they are bringing gender assumptions into their evaluations. Thinking back to the previous section and our discussion of three-dimensional power, it is important to consider forces that may shape a person's perceptions, actions, and desires without the person's knowledge.

Gender is an institution. Like other institutions, gender is a persistent and pervasive social form that orders human activity (Acker 1992; Martin 2004). It is an overarching system of social practices for making men and women different in socially significant ways (Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin 1999). A set of social positions is defined by gender and are characterized by rules for conduct and procedures for interactions. Gender has a legitimating ideology that constrains and facilitates behavior on the part of individuals. Gender is tightly linked to other institutions such as the family, the economy, and education. Conceiving of gender as an institution helps to highlight power and the unequal allocation of resources, privilege, and opportunities (Acker 1992; Martin 2004; Risman 2004).

Gender is ranked. Gender is a socially constructed relationship of inequality where the gender categories of man and woman are linked to unequal prestige and power (D'Amico and Beckman 1995). The gender differences created and maintained through socialization, everyday performance, and social practice are not neutral but instead create unequal power relationships and ultimately translate into omnipresent gender hierarchy. Gender as rank

crosscuts all other social categories—wealthy, powerful women are disadvantaged compared to wealthy, powerful men.

Gender and Power Concepts: Patriarchy, Public Versus Private, and Intersectionality

So far, we have discussed how gender is both institutionalized and ranked. The combination of these factors means that, worldwide, women have less power than men do. Women's lower levels of power and status can be described in many ways, but common terms include gender stratification, gender inequality, women's disadvantage, sexism, and **patriarchy** (Chafetz 1990). *Patriarchy* is a term used to describe the social system of men's domination over women, where men's domination is built into the social, political, and economic institutions of society. Patriarchal societies are characterized by men's control of economic resources, men's domination of political processes and positions of authority, and men's entitlement to sexual services. According to the feminist perspective, though some societies are more patriarchal than others, all modern societies have a patriarchal structure.

Women's power relative to men varies not only across cultures but within societies as well. Specifically, under patriarchy women almost always have more power in the home than in political or economic environments outside of family life. To distinguish between these domains, we use the terms **public sphere** and **private sphere**. Throughout history and in many societies in the modern world, it is considered natural or proper for women's concerns to be in the home, or the private sphere. Women may still lack control over important decisions regarding how resources should be allocated within the home, but the private sphere is generally considered women's domain. According to this perspective, women should be focused on their family and children and making their husbands happy.

One form of this belief, the "Cult of True Womanhood," was present in the United States during the 1800s. According to this ideal, women's proper behavior involved four virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. Clearly none of these virtues suggested that women should engage in public political participation or try to run for office. Instead, women were encouraged to assist the church, a task that did not threaten to take women away from their proper sphere or make women less domestic or submissive. If any woman wanted more than the four virtues, she was thought to be tampering with society, undermining civilization, and acting unwomanly. For example, early women's activists such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Francis Wright, and Harriet Martineau were considered "semi-women" or "mental hermaphrodites" (Welter 1966).

Although it is clear that women have been oppressed throughout history, some people may think patriarchy is an outdated concept. Over the past few decades, women across a wide range of societies have made remarkable gains in literacy, life expectancy, education, the labor force, and control over reproduction. For instance, in the United States, women were once excluded from the most prestigious universities but now often outnumber men. Around the world, professional and managerial classes are now composed of both men and women. And in some countries, men are taking on more responsibilities in the home. So do men really still dominate, oppress, and exploit women?

Michael Mann (1986) argued that though gender inequality still exists, patriarchy is an outdated concept. Mann's reasoning is that patriarchy is fundamentally based on a male-dominated household. And as gender roles have changed over time, public and private boundaries between men and women have dissolved. But feminist theorists have countered that patriarchy is not just about public-private distinctions. The concept of patriarchy posits that there is "systematically structured gender inequality" (Walby 1996:28). And as the household form of patriarchy diminishes, other forms of patriarchy arise (Walby 1996). Although women may now work alongside men, in the United States they still earn 77 cents to every dollar earned by men, and this figure has not changed in 10 years (National Committee on Pay Equity 2013). And in relation to the state and policy, politics is not only historically a man's institution, but it also continues to be "dominated by men and symbolically interpreted from the standpoint of men in leading positions" (Acker 1992:567).

The public-private distinction has also received criticism from researchers focusing on non-Western countries. In many African countries, for example, women engage in economic activities outside of the home, such as trade; women and men often both have control over household finances; and women form collectives with one another for mutual benefit (Staudt 1986). Many of the public-private distinctions that do exist in these African countries came about during colonialism when Western powers engaged in trade solely with men, undercutting women's influence. Thus, although women across the world have less power than men do in the public realm, there are still important cultural distinctions to keep in mind.

When talking about women in Africa and other countries of the **global south** (formerly known as the Third World), feminists often point out that these women must manage multiple forms of disadvantage or oppression. Not only do they suffer the universal subordination shared by women across the world but also they must contend with living in poorer or less developed countries. Therefore, to reiterate the discussion in the earlier section on

women's substantive representation, it is important to realize that although women may share a common identity grounded in reproduction or status, they are not a monolithic group. Women have differential amounts of power based on factors such as region, class, religion, race, and ethnicity.

When talking about these multiple sources of power or disadvantage, feminists use the term **intersectionality** (Crenshaw 1991; hooks 2000). The idea of intersecting disadvantage is useful because it is difficult to average or add up the situation of being a racial, ethnic, or religious minority and the situation of being a woman to equal the experience of being a minority woman. Nor can you privilege either gender or minority status as the defining category for identity (Hancock 2005). Intersectionality research asks one to consider that women who are also poor, minority, or from the global south face multiple sources of oppression that may not combine in simple ways.

Earlier in this chapter, we introduced the work of feminist political theorists who argue that gender-neutral terms such as *individual* or *citizen* actually signify White men. Similarly, intersectionality researchers find that statements about women as citizens, activists, or politicians are often truly statements about White women whereas research on minorities focuses on minority men. But as Kimberlé Crenshaw (1994) articulated, “Women of color experience racism in ways not always the same as those experienced by men of color, and sexism in ways not always parallel to experiences of white women” (p. 99). And politically, women may be situated in multiple groups that pursue conflicting agendas (Crenshaw 1994). Without focusing on the intersections of disadvantage, the unique obstacles faced by minority women seeking rights, opportunities, or representation may simply be ignored altogether (see, for example, Hughes 2011). We discuss intersectionality and the experience of women from marginalized groups in Chapter 9.

Feminist Institutionalism

Many of the ideas we have discussed so far—gender as an institution and gender as creating unequal power relations—are central to understanding our next orienting theory. **Feminist institutionalism** focuses on the ways that gender is embedded in political institutions, thereby shaping, constraining, and reinforcing gendered patterns of power (Chappell and Waylen 2013; Hawkesworth 2003; Kenny 2007, 2011, 2013; Krook and Mackay 2011; Mackay, Kenny, and Chappell 2010; Mackay and Waylen 2009; Waylen 2014). According to feminist institutionalism, political institutions are typed as masculine, and their masculine character affects how institutions operate and how people interact with them (Paantjens 2005). Political institutions

shape the kinds of masculinity and femininity that are performed by politicians and other political actors (Chappell 2006; Lovenduski 1998).

Feminist institutionalism draws attention to **informal institutions**—the informal rules, customs, traditions, and norms that govern and constrain institutions (Chappell and Waylen 2013). Politics often operates not just by rules that are “on the books” but by ideas about how things have worked in the past. Even when formal rules exist, sometimes they are not followed (Bjarnegård and Kenny 2014). This can be a challenging task, since informal rules are often taken for granted, making them very hard to see (Chappell and Waylen 2013; Kenny 2014). People may not be aware that they are there.

The gendered character of informal institutions can help us to understand some of the ongoing obstacles to women in politics. Take Meryl Kenny’s research on Scotland, which has shown how parties construct the “ideal candidate” in ways that privilege men—the “favoured sons” (Kenny 2011, 2013). Or consider Elin Bjarnegård’s research on Thai politics. She finds that the men politicians cooperate largely with other men, creating and reinforcing what she calls *homosocial capital* (Bjarnegård 2013). These informal networks serve as a key resource for men during elections. In each case, there is no formal rule stating that men are ideal candidates or that men should network with other men. It is just “how things are done.” Feminist institutionalism considers these informal rules; how they interact with formal rules; and how individual party leaders, politicians, and voters influence, and are influenced by, both informal and formal rules (Chappell 2002; Kenny 2013; Krook and Mackay 2011).

Formal and informal institutions are both rigid and capable of change. When we think about an institution, the image that comes to mind is often a fixed and unchanging behemoth. Certainly, change may come slowly. Norms and traditions often carry on even in the face of the new, creating a “stickiness” that can limit the pace or degree of change. But feminist institutionalism conceives of institutions as dynamic and changing. Studying gender and politics involves attention to both change and resistance to this change (Hughes and Paxton 2008).

Overview of the Book

The rest of the book is divided into two sections. The first half of the book is general and thematic. We begin in Chapters 2 and 3 by providing a descriptive and historical account of women’s struggle for the right to vote and of women’s political participation and representation globally.

Four chapters (4–7) follow that provide overarching explanations for women’s representation in politics: culture, social structure, politics, and international factors. The final chapter in this section of the book (Chapter 8) considers substantive representation and whether women make a difference when they appear in politics.

The second half of the book acknowledges differences among women, both within countries and across geographic regions. Chapter 9 discusses intersectionality and heterogeneity among women. Chapters 10 through 15 break the world into six regions—(1) the West and the United States, (2) Eastern Europe and Central Asia, (3) Latin America and the Caribbean, (4) the Middle East and North Africa, (5) Asia and the Pacific, and (6) sub-Saharan Africa—and introduce important themes for women in politics within each region. Altogether, the second half of the book articulates the different paths women may take to political power in different parts of the world and within countries when accounting for marginalized identities. We conclude the book by taking stock and speculating about the possibilities for women’s empowerment in the future.