

# Women in Comparative Perspective: Japan and the United States

This symposium had its genesis in a workshop on understudied groups in advanced industrial democracies. Sponsored by the American Political Science Association and funded by the Japan–United States Friendship Commission, the workshop met from August 27 through August 29, 2000 in Washington, D.C. It was the first of a cross-cultural series on a spectrum of topics that will give trans-Pacific scholars the benefit of each other's experiences and perspectives. When APSA applied for the grant it stated that: "Japan and the United States share many attributes but also have striking differences. These similarities and differences allow for informative comparisons and interesting exchanges that are the hallmark of good scholarship. Sharing different perspectives and experiences on a wide range of topics will be helpful and enlightening to scholars on both sides of the Pacific."

by  
**Marian Lief Palley,**  
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This initial workshop focused on women and politics. Five Japanese scholars and six American scholars worked together for three days, examining political behavior, political and social institutions, and public policies as they relate to women in the two nations. Each workshop participant has authored an article for this symposium, and the pieces that they wrote relate to the issues discussed at the workshop's sessions. Five articles address Japanese women's political participation and political behavior, as well as public policies that affect women in Japan. Six of the articles look at these same political dimensions in the United States.

The first section of this symposium compares Japanese and American political institutions. Tokuko Ogai in her piece, "Japanese Women and Political Institutions: Why are Women Politically Underrepresented?," discusses the structural and party constraints that have limited the role of women in Japanese politics. Next, Yumiko Mikanagi considers the literature on Japanese women and political institutions and proposes some areas for future study. Julie Dolan looks at political appointments of the last two decades in "Political Appointees in the United States: Does Gender Make a Difference?" Michele Swers addresses the policy impact of electing women to Congress and to state legislatures in "Understand-

ing the Policy Impact of Electing Women: Evidence from Research on Congress and State Legislatures."

The next section of this symposium asks questions about women's political behavior in Japan and the United States. Masako Aiuchi's article, "How Women Won or Lost in the Japanese Lower House Election: Case Studies of Women Candidates Who Ran as Challengers," analyzes data from the June 2000 election for the Japanese House of Representatives. This piece is followed by Misako Iwamoto's "The Madonna Boom: The Progress of Japanese Women into Politics."

Iwamoto considers the conditions that have led to an increase in the number of women holding public office in Japan. Stephanie Larson addresses American political behavior in "American Women and Politics in the Media: A Review Essay," as does M. Margaret Conway in "Women and Political Participation." Larson scrutinizes the research that has been published on the effects of the media on women and political participation, while Conway asks: "Why are so few women elected to public office in the United States?"

The final section of this symposium considers public policy issues and women in Japan and

the United States. Barbara Palmer offers "The Integration of Women into the American Judiciary," in which she considers the effect that women have had—and will likely continue to have—upon the judicial system and judicial decision making. Following Palmer's article is Mikiko Eto's "Women's Leverage on Social Policymaking in Japan," in which she gauges the leverage of women on social policy making and, in particular, how women may influence social policy decision making in Japan. The final piece in this collection is, "Women's Policy Leadership in the United States," by Marian Lief Palley, who assesses women's participation and leadership in the policy process as it pertains to local jurisdictions.

## Editor's Note

On April 26, 2001, Junichiro Koizumi, Japan's new Prime Minister, announced the appointment of his Cabinet. Rather than appointing ministers from the factions that have dominated the government since 1955, Koizumi appointed a Cabinet that broke with the traditional political factions. Women were among the beneficiaries of his move from tradition-bound appointments. Five of the 17 ministerial appointments went to women.

The articles that appear in this *Symposium* were written prior to the election of Mr. Koizumi. Therefore, the perspectives presented by the authors of the articles in this issue do not reflect the outcome of the most recent election or the unprecedented appointment of women to head important ministries such as the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Justice.

—Marian Lief Palley

## Contributors to "Women in Comparative Perspective: Japan and the United States"

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# Japanese Women and Political Institutions: Why are Women Politically Underrepresented?

## Foreword

It is a common belief that democratic political systems are gender neutral. Yet data show that women continue to hold far fewer elected positions than do men. It is thus imperative that we re-examine not only the assumption that political systems are gender neutral, but also the electoral systems themselves. When we identify how the current electoral and political party systems support or sustain these low rates of female office holders we may begin to understand the hurdles that women face in entering politics.

Post-World War II Japan offers an opportunity to study women's role in politics. In the past 50 years, Japan has revised its electoral system three times, yet there has been scant analysis of the effects these changes have had on women. Moreover, the number of female officeholders has remained quite low. I address the structural and party constraints that have influenced Japan's low rate of women office holding, after a brief overview of the three different electoral systems that Japan has employed in the postwar period.

by  
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## Japan's Electoral System after WWII

In the first post-WWII election of 1946, Japan organized its electoral districts under a large constituency system. In 1947, Japan reconfigured the system, shrinking districts to medium-sized constituency. The system remained this way until 1993, when the districts were down-sized once again: a small constituency system complemented by proportionally elected representatives.

April 1946 marks the first time that Japanese women could exercise the right to vote.<sup>1</sup> Not only did women vote—79 women ran for office, of which 39 women were elected to the House of Representatives, the Lower House of Japan's National Diet. Under the initial large constituency system, 54 electoral districts were aligned more or less along prefecture boundaries. Thus within one electoral district, anywhere from two to 14 people would be

elected, depending upon the population of that district.

This first postwar election occurred under chaotic conditions just eight months after the end of WWII, and introduced the Japanese people to a new electoral process. For the first time, voters chose multiple candidates on the same ticket and women fared quite well under this system. While there is insufficient data on this period regarding voter profiles, we postulate several explanations for the election of 39 women. First, many voters thought that they were supposed to include one male and one female candidate on their ballots. Second, voters were unable to tell from the name itself if a candidate were male or female. The third and perhaps best explanation for the success of these women bestows upon the Japanese voter a more rational approach to the election: voters chose female candidates because women were more closely associated with peace than were male politicians, and the times demanded a radical political change (Ogai 1996). Moreover, as Darcy, Welch and Clark have demonstrated, large district electoral systems enable weaker candidates to win seats (1987).

Only one year later, Japan reconfigured its large electoral districts into a medium-sized system. Due to the fears of policymakers that the Diet was too diverse, this alteration of the electoral system hindered political outsiders such as the Communist and Socialist parties, and women (Soma 1986). As the number of districts increased, the number of seats per district decreased. The total number of districts reached 130 with a more limited three to five representatives elected on average in each district.

As anticipated, Japanese women did not fare well under this new system. In fact, during the 18 national elections run with the medium-sized districts, women received an average of 2% of total votes. What is more, most of these successful female candidates ran as members of opposition parties. In other words, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)—which dominated Japanese politics for much of the postwar period—did not strongly support women candidates. In fact, the LDP's reign included a 10-year stretch in which none of the its female members held office.<sup>2</sup>

By 1993, a political rift split the LDP and ended its 38-year dominance. Eight parties and several factions fought for political majority and once again Japan reformed its electoral system, this time to small-sized constituency combined with a proportional system. This required voters to elect one person to office in each district, and also to vote for candidates under the nationwide proportional system. The subsequent elections (October 1996 and June 2000) used this new electoral system and the number of women in the Diet has increased, primarily from the proportionally-elected seats. As anticipated from data in other democratic countries, Japan's voters tend to vote for men for these lone seats, but to maintain a less conservative attitude toward the nationwide, proportionally-elected representatives. Keeping in mind these shifts in the electoral system, I now turn to the influence that political parties have had on the advancement of women in politics. First, the overwhelming dominance of the Liberal Democratic Party.

### **Elections under the LDP Hegemony**

Historically, the LDP's position as majority party originated within an international context. With the signing of the U.S.–Japan Security Treaty in 1950, the conservative parties that would join to form the LDP were clearly favored by the United States. Moreover, economic growth was a primary goal of the conservatives. The LDP was able to secure the cooperation of the political, bureaucratic and business sectors, which wished to reap the benefits of the LDP's economy-friendly policies. Finally, the Japanese populace endorsed the potential for economic growth. Thus, the LDP met most of the needs of a majority of the voting public in those crucial early years. However, the LDP never seriously addressed any social concerns other than economic accomplishment.<sup>3</sup>

Before analyzing the LDP in order to identify specific barriers that impeded women in Japan's medium-sized electoral system, I need to discuss certain characteristics of Japan's parliamentary system. Specifically, there are two reasons for which general elections may occur. First, the Japanese Constitution acknowledges the dissolution of the House of Representatives when the Diet passes a no-confidence resolution to the Cabinet.<sup>4</sup> Otherwise, elections are held every four years. It is interesting to note that only once in the 20 elections since 1946 have representatives served a full term of four years; all other elections have been called after a no-confidence motion. Because elections may come about very suddenly, all representatives—regardless of their party—are in a constant state of preparation for the next election.

Under the system of medium-sized districts (1947–1993), the LDP developed highly successful election strategies, constructing human networks—or *Koenkai*—and interest networks to connect business and politics. As a necessary step toward maintaining a majority of seats in the House, the LDP ran two to three candidates per district. However, LDP candidates running under the same party banner could succeed only when they were able to develop an independent base of support. *Koenkai* are indispensable to the election process because they afford each politician a base of support outside of the party. Candidates maintain strong ties with family members, ex-schoolmates and regional or neighborhood associations within their constituency. As a result, each politician may

determine somewhat accurately the percentage of votes that he or she will earn at election time.

In addition, the LDP hegemony depended on the hierarchical financial systems that connected the local and regional governments to the national government. Because local and regional governments supply most public services, almost one-third of the Japanese central government's budget is transferred to the local governments to overcome deficiencies in local tax revenues. In addition, the local governments' more costly projects, such as road construction or dam building, are almost completely funded by the central government. Central bureaucrats have the power and skills to distribute the budget, and National Diet members often work to help the local governments of their respective regions acquire necessary federal funding. If a local politician succeeds in getting assistance, it signifies that his or her business connections are strong enough to get the job done. Considering fiscal power at the national level, special interests quickly learned that they needed the support of LDP insiders and bureaucrats who could negotiate the complex budget system. In turn LDP politicians came to rely upon the political support of special interest groups and their *Koenkai* in order to win at election time. Ultimately, it became impossible to win an election without such support.

The most successful candidates possess one of three political backgrounds that are thought to guarantee one's future in office. The results of the January 1990 elections illustrate these three important traits: Out of 275 LDP representatives elected, 78 had previously served at the local or prefectural levels, accounting for 15.2% of total seats. Second, those who previously worked as bureaucrats were also likely to win elections (67 out of 275 LDP candidates, or 13.1%). The third most successful category comprised those people who formerly worked as secretaries to politicians. What is more, we should be aware that 72.3% of those elected under the LDP banner came from political families.<sup>5</sup>

The LDP was highly successful in adapting its political actions to structural constraints. When the introduction of medium-sized districts made it necessary to run party members against one another in the same district, the LDP changed its campaigning process to accommodate those conditions. When budgetary constraints made room for an intermediary between federal and local governments, the LDP once again accommodated. However, these LDP solutions did not necessarily support women's candidacies.

### **Scanty Chances for Women at the Election Time**

Under the medium-sized constituency system, the LDP spent 38 years in the majority. Initially sustained by the United States as well as the economic interests of the Japanese populace, the LDP quickly learned to approach politics in a heavily networked manner that soon cemented the party's dominance. Yet without possessing any of the three career trajectories described above, a woman was unlikely to develop the qualifications necessary for a viable candidate. If a woman does not happen to be born the daughter of a famous politician, it is even more unlikely that she would have worked as a career bureaucrat or served a long career in local or regional politics. While there have been many analyses of the LDP's long-term dominance, very few studies have applied their

findings to understanding women's roles in the policymaking process.

What then, are the prospects for Japanese women in political office? To succeed, women must be able to follow the same career paths as those necessary for their male LDP counterparts. So far, women have gained relative success through only one of these channels, as second generation political candidates.<sup>6</sup> With such narrow career paths to follow, women face unique barriers to political participation. In terms of a career as an elite bureaucrat, women continue to pass the entrance exam in growing numbers (currently 16.1%). While the entrance rate has improved since the 1980s, women fill only 1% of the key positions in the top offices of the national government (Prime Minister's Office 2000).

If we analyze one of the three paths to political success—serving in a local assembly—women once again face significant barriers. In local assemblies, women account for 5.9% of elected offices (prefecture assemblies are 5.3%, city assemblies are 10.0%, and town/village assemblies are 4.0% as of June 1999). Moreover, a local office is less likely to serve as a stepping stone to a national position for women, who are not considered eligible to climb the political ladder until after their ambitious male counterparts. Inevitably, women wait at the end of the queue.

In accordance with a strong sex role consciousness, male LDP politicians relegate women to the private sphere. Consequently, LDP policy initiatives have assumed a common family structure just as much as have Japanese corporations, which assume women to be dependent on their husbands. Interest politics have driven the LDP's success, but at the same time have consistently excluded women from politics. Thus a male hegemony persists, affirming policies based upon an anachronistic family structure that does not accommodate the realities of Japanese women's changing lifestyles. Are these problems unique to women of the LDP?

### Women's Chances with Opposition Parties

During LDP dominance, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), won only one major election (1947), and while remaining Japan's second largest political party, with its main support coming from labor unions. While the LDP ran multiple candidates per district, the SDP in many cases could offer only one candidate per district. Under the large district system of 1946, 10 of 39 elected women were SDP members. Most of these women held onto their seats for a considerable amount of time. However, all proceeding female SDP candidates were successful only if they had the support of the women's section of Nikkyoso, the large teacher's union. In other words, women were unsuccessful in the SDP unless they had the support of the labor unions. (Takako Doi, former SDP Party Chairperson, is a notable exception to this rule.) In the mid-1970s, union membership began to decline, and as it did so did the number of Diet seats for the SDP. As expected, SDP ranks shrunk, and female membership also dropped. While there is some variety of causal explanations for union decline, the SDP did not address the political implications of a declining constituency base. Rather, the party was satisfied to remain the second largest party in the Diet. With the LDP also declining in size since the mid-1970s, the SDP's number two position remained relatively secure.

In the Japan Communist Party (JCP), the fortunes of women also waxed and waned with those of the party itself. At the height of the JCP's power—soon after the war—three women won seats to the Lower House. Yet, these women abdicated their seats when General McArthur suppressed the JCP. As the party strengthened again from the late 1970s through the mid-1980s, female representatives of the party also increased in numbers. As the party jumped from holding 19 seats to 41 seats after the 1979 election, the number of female representatives increased from five to seven. Although the number of elected JCP representatives declined to 12 seats after the 1980 election, the female representatives remained at seven.

Not only has the number of Japanese women in politics remained small, but women have also been more successful in opposition parties. The SDP and JCP combined counted more women representatives than did the LDP. Unfortunately, due both to their relative numbers and proximity to the center of the policymaking process, elected women have had few opportunities to influence policy under the medium-sized electoral system.

### Rates of Female Office Holding after the Fall of the LDP

In 1986, Takako Doi set an example for women in the political arena when she took charge of the SDP and thus became Japan's first female political party president. As she gained popularity with the media, Doi promoted women's representation in the general local election of 1987 and the Tokyo Metropolitan election of July 1989. Consequently, women won a historic 22 seats in the election for the House of Councillors in July 1989, bringing the total of women office holders to 32. Ringing in the so-called "Madonna Boom" Doi drastically increased public support for women in politics. She targeted and capitalized on the LDP's "dirty politics," such as the Recruit Scandal and Prime Minister Sosuke Uno's adulterous affair. In addition, the Consumption Tax and the LDP initiative to open the rice markets to foreign competition led women to vote SDP. Voters hoped that female candidates would clean up politics. As a result, the SDP gained 21 seats, for a total of 114 in the Lower House. Women filed seven of these seats, with six new faces.

Three years later the LDP lost its majority in the Diet, and by early 1996 the electoral districts were reconfigured, this time under a system of small constituency and proportional representation. Small constituency meant that only one seat was available per district, while the proportional ticket was a straight party vote. The two types of districts were integrated in that a candidate who lost a small district election was still eligible on the proportional ticket.

With only two elections to study under the new system, certain trends nonetheless seem to be forming. In terms of female candidates for office, some believe that women find it extremely difficult to run and win in small constituencies. In 1996, 153 women ran and 23 were elected, but only six of these women won small district elections, and these six women were highly qualified and well-known. In a dramatic turnaround in the June 2000 election, the number of elected women jumped to 35 (of 202 candidates) from 23. Even more impressive was that 13 women—including seven newcomers—gained seats in small districts. Furthermore, two new female freshmen from the Democratic Party (DPJ) took over seats traditionally held by powerful, male incumbents. While more research

needs to be done to fully understand their successes, these two new politicians indicate that women's squeaky-clean political image, combined with the parties' attitudes toward women and the changing structure of the electoral process, may improve the rate at which women win elected office.

Also, women may finally have a real chance in the proportional representation elections, as is suggested by the evidence from European countries where this system is already in place. In Japan's 1996 election, 19 women won proportional seats—three times as many as those won in the small district elections nationwide. In 2000, an additional 22 women won, double the amount of women who won in the small districts. It is important here to note that proportional seats are chosen from an established list. From each party, leaders assess the candidates' probabilities for success

before they make up the proportional list for that party. How they calculate such probabilities and how those calculations then influence the proportional candidate list is still not widely understood by the voting public, nor have the calculation processes stabilized. Already, interest groups have begun to donate to political parties in a way that will allow them to influence the party's proportional candidate list. If women are to continue to succeed in the proportional elections, it may require that parties support

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people, Japanese women play an important role in politics and policymaking, a role that can only improve Japan's democracy.

## Notes

1. Suffrage for men over 25 years old appeared in 1889, on condition that men paid taxes greater than 15 yen. Universal men's suffrage became law in 1925. By October 1945, due to the demand of American General Douglas MacArthur, all Japanese citizens—males and females of at least 20 years of age—received the right to vote.

2. Although LDP women were few, three of them received appointments to ministerial positions: Masa Nakayama to Minister of Health (1960), Tsuruyo Kondo to Minister of Science (1962) and Shigeru Ishimoto to Minister of Environment (1984). Kondo and Ishimoto were the members of the House of Councillors.

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won elections, such as Makiko Tanaka, the daughter of the late Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka; and Yuko Obuchi, daughter of former Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi, who died months before election 2000.

7. Doi was first elected to the Diet in 1969. In June 2000, she was re-elected for the eleventh time.

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women on the proportional list, perhaps in conflict with interest group constituents.

## Conclusion

The political turmoil that began in 1993 is not yet over. While the interest politics that made the LDP so successful have supposedly lost the people's support, the LDP nevertheless returned to the majority in 1996 and opposition parties have yet to gain supremacy. Under these conditions, women politicians face challenges that cannot be explained only by cultural explanations of a "woman's place," but are better understood through an analysis of the structural constraints within which female politicians continue to struggle.

Japanese women's share of public office holding has been influenced by the type of electoral system within which they must operate. In particular, the medium-sized district system was terribly unfair to women, contributing greatly to their underrepresentation. Once the small-sized districts and proportional form of representation became stabilized, we can hope that women receive the party and systemic support they will need to succeed in politics. Representing one-half of a population of 126 million

3. For more information on historic changes in Japanese politics, see Calder 1988, Curtis 1991, Masumi 1995, Pempel 1998, Stockwin 1999.

4. Constitution of Japan, Article 69: "If the House of Representatives passes a no-confidence resolution, or rejects a confidence resolution, the Cabinet shall resign en masse, unless the House of the Representatives is dissolved within ten days."

5. Until 1980, the top three careers paths of LDP representatives were: bureaucrats, businessmen and local politicians. Since then, the number of LDP politicians who had been businessmen declined while local politicians increased (Naka 1986). In the June 2000 election, 128 (26.7%) out of 480 newly-elected representatives had previously served in offices at the local or prefectural levels; 110 new representatives (22.9%) were from political families; and 86 representatives (17.8%) were ex-bureaucrats (Asahi Shinbun Evening Edition, 26th June, 2000).

6. There are several cases in which the daughters of politicians have

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# Women and Political Institutions in Japan

In this brief overview, I examine Japanese literature on women and politics in Japan. In doing so, I focus specifically on literature that examines political institutions—defined here as a set of rules and procedures that affect public policymaking—in the field of equal employment laws. In the first section, I lay out the types of literature that exist in this field. In the following section, I draw attention to what the literature lacks in the field of women and political institutions. In the third section, I scrutinize a few articles that concentrate upon political institutions and politics related to women. In place of a conclusion, I make suggestions for future study.

## Existing Literature in the Study of Equal Employment Laws

The existing literature on the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL) of 1985 (revised in 1997) may be divided into two genres. The first category is the work of primarily law professors and lawyers. *Ho Joseigaku Eno Shotai* (An Invitation to Women's Studies in Law) by Yamashita Yasuko, Kaino Tamie, Kamio Machiko and Ueno Mamiko, for example, provides an overview of laws that affect women's lives, such as international treaties, family laws, labor laws and the Constitution. A book that focuses more on the EEOL is Asakura Mutsuko's *Kintoho No Shinsekai* (The New World of the EEOL). This book gives a detailed interpretation of the text of the law—specific terms and phrases such as “gender-based discrimination.” *Horitsu De Miru Josei No Genzai (Kaitei Ban): Raifu Saikuru To Ho* (Legal Perspectives on the Current Status of Women [Revised Edition]: Life Cycles and Laws) by Takahashi Tamotsu gives a comprehensive view of laws related to women, including the EEOL, but again, this book's main goal is the interpretation of specific articles in each law.

The second category of literature is not necessarily analytical but more informative and practical. It comprises such works as *Jiten: Josei O Meguru Shokuba No Horitsu* (Dictionary: Work-Related Laws Concerning Women) by Komita Akiyo, which offers practical know-how for women who face gender-based problems at

work. Komita explains, for example, the stipulations of the EEOL regarding retirement forced upon female workers due to marriage or childbirth and what legal remedies are available under such circumstances.

## What is Missing and Why?

Japanese literature on women, politics and policymaking lacks a focused study of the roles that political institutions play either as causes for gender bias in public policymaking, or as reflections of gender inequality in Japanese society.

The reasons for Japanese gender studies' neglect of political institutions may be due in part to the nature of the feminist movement in Japan, which has been closely intertwined with global feminist movements. To be sure, it would not be fair to say that the contemporary Japanese feminist movement which emerged in the 1970s, was a simple transplant of its western counterparts. Although Japanese feminists had their own concerns, rooted in their culture and societal traditions, they also took influence—in terms of both theoretical orientation and political strategies—from what was happening in the U.S. and other western nations. Consequently, Japanese feminism originated under the auspices of then-dominant radical feminism, which consciously kept feminists at arm's length from the allegedly patriarchal state. The strong influence of radical feminism also manifests itself in Japanese women's studies, which has followed the philosophical orientation of the contemporary feminist movement and as a result has de-emphasized the roles of the state and public institutions.

Women's studies in Japan is led primarily by historians, sociologists and anthropologists, but relatively few political scientists—simply because there are so few female Japanese political scientists. The share of female members in the Japan Political Science Association is less than five percent. Therefore, gender-intensive studies of political institutions are still at an early, practically nonexistent stage.

## Political Institutions and the EEOL

There are only a handful of studies that focus on political institutions and women in Japan. Therefore, while information on the EEOL abounds, little is known about

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how political institutions affected the framing of the EEOL.

When I began a study on the EEOL, I found only one article that specifically focused on the role of political institutions in the creation of the EEOL: Shinoda Toru's "Danjo koyo kinto ho o meguru ishikettei" (The Decision-Making Process of the EEOL). The article examines the role of deliberation councils in the drafting of laws. Deliberation councils are decision-making bodies attached to ministries or agencies of the government. Their members discuss public policy and offer proposals to the government when consulted by respective ministers. Shinoda specifically focused on the case of the Women and Minors' Deliberation Council—which is attached to the Ministry of Labor—and the role it played in drafting the EEOL. He indicated that in cases where the interests of council members are diametrically opposed, the council functions as a strategic arena for the government to "co-opt" opposing parties, and thus to ensure effective implementation of policies promoted by a ministry or a bureau of a ministry (Shinoda 1986,107).

My study of political institutions and their impact on gender is an attempt to incorporate the structure of the state into the explanation of the varying gendered outcomes of public decision making. In an article entitled "Japan's Gender-Based Social Security Policy," I compared two contradictory types of public policies that arose in the 1980s. On the one hand, gender-rectifying policies—such as changes in school curriculum, the Citizenship Law, and the EEOL—aimed to correct gender inequality. On the other hand, gender-reinforcing policies—such as changes in social security policies and taxation rules—reinforced the gendered division of labor. How could these two opposing policymaking trends coexist? In terms of promoting gender equality in Japanese society, institutional elements such as the structure of bureaucracy were as important as the ruling party's strong belief in using neoliberalism to produce conflicting outcomes of public policymaking.

## Critical Issues

In addition to the need for more studies on political institutions and their relationships to gender and policy, some critical issues related to Japanese women and political institutions require close investigation. First and

foremost, there are still very few women in Japanese politics, despite recent increases. In the last general election—held on June 25, 2000—Japanese voters elected only 35 of 202 female candidates, thus giving females a success rate of only 17 percent. This contrasts with 1202 male candidates who won 445 seats, for a success rate of 37 percent.

Another question is why political leaders and parties do not explicitly try to exploit the gender gap. Since the mid-1990s, the number of so-called *muto-ha* (swing voters; literally, the faction of voters with no party affiliation) has dramatically increased. In an exit poll by *Yomiuri Shimbun* (June 26 2000), 19 percent of respondents indicated no affiliation with any political party. Only the LDP had a larger share (34 percent) than the *muto-ha*. Because swing voters are increasingly important in determining electoral results, political parties are sensitive both to the turnout rate, which affects the number of *muto-ha* who actually vote, and the voting patterns of swing voters.

Young voters, urban residents and women compose a large share of these swing voters. Therefore, it seems natural that political parties should make concerted efforts to attract these voters. However, as the last election indicates, no political party has adopted a platform that aims specifically at the interests of these voters, women in particular. Thus we need to ask: what are each party's structural and/or ideological tenets that hinder the adoption of women-sensitive policies?

Considering the persistent strength of the bureaucracy in policymaking, why do so few women hold positions of bureaucratic power? (Less than two percent of the top three ranks of senior government is occupied by women.) Also, how do we explain why there are so few women in legal professions? (Only 10.4 percent of judges, 8.4 percent of lawyers, and 5.5 percent of prosecutors are women and there are no female judges on the Supreme Court.)

Of course there are many factors other than historical accidents and culture that influence the number of women in decision-making positions. However, as overseas examples have already demonstrated, institutional measures like affirmative action and quota systems may effectively increase the number of women in areas previously monopolized by men. Thus, institutions make a difference and need to be explored further in relation to women and politics in Japan.

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# Political Appointees in the United States: Does Gender Make a Difference?

Information about women who hold appointive office is a neglected area.

—Eileen Shanahan, former Assistant Secretary, HEW<sup>1</sup>

With every new presidential administration in the United States, the incoming president is in charge of appointing thousands of individuals to work throughout the executive branch of government and assist him in fulfilling his constitutional responsibility to “faithfully execute the laws of the Nation” (Pfiffner 1996). When the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) first began studying female political appointees in the early 1980s, very few women had ever served in Cabinet positions or other high-ranking executive positions within the federal government. In fact, in 1977, almost two hundred years after the founding of the United States, President Carter appointed only the fourth and fifth women ever to serve as Cabinet Secretaries (CAWP 1998).

As Carroll and Geiger-Parker note in the introduction to the very first study of female political appointees, “for the first time in history, women had been appointed in large enough numbers to survey and

to compare with other appointees” (1983a, ix).

Since then, the number of women in high-ranking executive branch positions in the federal government has expanded greatly. During the eight years of the Reagan administration, 277 women were appointed to high-ranking positions requiring Senate confirmation. Following Reagan, George Bush appointed 181 women, while President Clinton surpassed both of his predecessors combined, appointing 592 women throughout his tenure, including the first women ever to serve as Secretary of State (Madeleine Albright) and as Attorney General (Janet Reno), positions considered part of the president’s inner cabinet (Garcia 1997; Women’s Appointments Project 2001). Although George W. Bush’s administration is only a few months old as of this writing, he has thus far appointed six women to high ranking administrative positions, making history by appointing the first female Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior (Ann Veneman and Gail Norton),

the first female National Security Adviser (Condoleezza Rice), and the first Asian-American woman to serve as a cabinet Secretary, Elaine Chao (at the Department of Labor) (Dewar 2001; Vargas 2000; Washington Post 2001; Women’s Appointments Project 2001).<sup>2</sup>

Despite the recent increases for women into high-ranking, high-profile administrative positions in the federal government, we still know very little about these women. Since Eileen Shanahan long ago lamented the lack of knowledge about female appointees, very little research has systematically explored the careers, policy contributions, or perspectives of these high-ranking executive women. This essay reviews the existing research on female appointees in the executive branch, reflecting on what we know thus far about women’s experiences in reaching the top of the federal government and the impact they have upon arrival. The essay focuses primarily upon those women serving in the federal government, but also includes findings from state governments, where appropriate.<sup>3</sup>

## Recruitment of Female Appointees

Although President Clinton appointed women to nearly a third of all executive positions requiring Senate confirmation, women remain far from equal with men in the ranks of the president’s lieutenants (Women’s Appointments Project 2001). How do they arrive in their positions? Do they bring different qualifications to their jobs than their male colleagues?

Most early research on women appointed to presidential and gubernatorial administrations examines their backgrounds, finding that female appointees are as well-educated and distinguished as their male counterparts (Borrelli 1997b; Bullard and Wright 1993; Carroll 1986; Carroll 1987; Carroll and Geiger-Parker 1983a; Carroll and Geiger-Parker 1983b; Fisher 1987; Martin 1989; Martin 1991; Martin 1997; McGlen and Sarkees 1993). In fact, there are remarkably few differences in background qualifications between the women and men called to serve. Men are slightly more likely to have an advanced degree while women are more likely to have attended private colleges and universities; women are also likely to come from more advantaged backgrounds than do their male colleagues, at least as evidenced by

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their father's and mother's occupations (Bullard and Wright 1993; Carroll 1986; Carroll and Geiger-Parker 1983a; Carroll and Geiger-Parker 1983b; McGlen and Sarkees 1993; Martin 1997). Among previous Republican appointees, women arrived with greater federal administrative experience than do their male colleagues (Martin 1997), while women tapped for the Carter administration brought greater state government experience than did their male counterparts (Carroll 1986; Carroll and Geiger-Parker 1983a). Female presidential appointees are more often recruited from the Washington, D.C. area than are male appointees (Martin 1991, 1997), but even so Borrelli (1997b) argues that female "insiders" (those with previous government experience in Washington) receive more skeptical treatment during Senate committee hearings than do male insiders.<sup>4</sup> Lastly, the agencies and departments in which appointees are chosen to serve vary by gender, with female political appointees more often selected for posts in agencies and departments dealing with stereotypically female concerns (health, education and social services) (Carroll and Geiger-Parker 1983a; CAWP 1998; Kleeman 1987).

### Gender and Political Impact

Does it matter if women are presidential appointees? Representative bureaucracy scholars would answer yes, that the demographic makeup of the executive branch of government does indeed affect the substantive outputs of government (Kranz 1976; Krislov and Rosenbloom, 1981). According to theory, a diverse public sector is important not only for symbolic reasons, but because governmental decisions are expected to be more responsive to the public when the workforce "looks like America." Individuals from different social backgrounds bring different attitudes, priorities, and perspectives to their jobs. With a diverse federal executive, "the wide range of concerns generally voiced in a highly pluralistic nation is more likely to be heard ... than in one drawn disproportionately from a single social group" (Shafritz et al. 1992, 230). Reagan appointee Amorette Hoeber nicely illustrates this point:

[Y]ou have to have a wide variety of people in the building in order to get the decisions made well, because it is that sort of a consensus process where you get all different points of view expressed, and women's backgrounds tend to be different than men's backgrounds. Therefore, they bring something to the table, in addition to the image sorts of things (quoted in McGlen and Sarkees 1993, 219).

As legislative scholars have repeatedly shown, female politicians bring different perspectives to government, often being more attuned than men to policy problems and issues that concern women (Burrell 1994; Dodson et al., 1995; Dolan, 1997; Gertzog 1995; Swers 1998; Thomas 1994).

As presidential appointees, women have likewise used their positions to speak out for and draw attention to problems commonly affecting women in society. Serving as President Carter's Secretary of Commerce from 1977 to 1979, Juanita Kreps encouraged the formation of the President's Interagency Task Force on Women Business Owners, a major initiative to help women increase their numbers in the private sector (Lamson 1979, 58). Appointed as the first woman to head the National Institutes of Health, Bernadine Healy advocated women's health issues from the beginning of her tenure and proposed a \$625 million NIH study involving 150,000 women and studying breast cancer,

osteoporosis, and heart disease (Schroeder and Snowe 1994). Two months after taking office as the first female Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright instructed U.S. diplomats to make "the furtherance of women's rights a central priority of American foreign policy" (Lippman 1997).<sup>5</sup>

Beyond these anecdotes, systematic research examines executive women's attitudes, reasoning that attitudes provide legitimate clues about likely behavior. Women who are attentive to women's concerns on paper are expected to be more responsive to women's policy concerns when opportunity for action arises. Numerous studies confirm that female appointees, both at the state and federal level, are more feminist, liberal and Democratic than their male colleagues (Bullard and Wright 1993; Carroll 1986; Carroll 1987; Carroll and Geiger-Parker 1983a; Carroll and Geiger-Parker 1983b; Havens and Healy 1991; Stanwick and Kleeman 1983).<sup>6</sup> Surveys of presidential and gubernatorial appointees indicate that female Republican and Democratic appointees are more supportive of childcare, abortion rights, and the Equal Rights Amendment than their male colleagues (Carroll 1987; Carroll and Geiger-Parker 1983a; Carroll and Geiger-Parker 1983b; Havens and Healy 1991; Stanwick and Kleeman 1983).<sup>7</sup> Thus, the existing attitudinal evidence suggests that female appointees, as a group, respond to the distinct concerns and preferences of the female citizenry.

However, attitudes may not translate directly into policy output that benefits women as a group. For instance, a female appointee may work in a position that offers few opportunities to voice a distinctly feminine perspective. Thus, scholars try to determine how female appointees affect policymaking and the nature and substance of government outputs. To date, most studies focus on women's managerial responsibilities and talents. Within both federal and state administrations, a majority of female appointees indicate that they frequently hire women as staff members, doing their part to facilitate the entry of even greater numbers of women into governmental positions (Carroll and Geiger-Parker 1983a; Carroll and Geiger-Parker 1983b).<sup>8</sup> Conducting personal interviews with male and female appointees in the Departments of State and Defense, McGlen and Sarkees (1991, 1993) find that males and females exercise slightly different leadership styles, with female appointees more often expressing greater satisfaction in dealing with subordinates and managing their staffs. Further, when asked to identify their major accomplishments, female appointees more often listed management accomplishments as well as accomplishments that affected women (McGlen and Sarkees 1991, 1993). Although research regarding the impact of female appointees is still preliminary, the influx of women into federal government over the past eight years provides ample opportunities for further study.

### Directions for Future Research

As this brief review demonstrates, the literature on women in the executive branch has certainly grown since the CAWP first began conducting research in the early 1980s, but opportunities for additional research remain. We know a great deal about women's recruitment patterns and qualifications, but considerably less regarding whether policy outputs differ because of women's presence. Scholars studying presidential appointees could draw from legislative studies (i.e. Kathlene 1994;

Rosenthal 1997; Thomas 1994) to identify creative approaches for assessing women's impact in the fourth branch of government. However, much more of legislators' words and actions are preserved on public record (votes, floor speeches, committee membership, etc.) than are political appointees', making it more difficult to isolate and interpret political appointees' behavior.

Another open line of research concerns the salience of race. We know almost nothing about women of color in the executive branch, even though a number of women of

color have served in highly visible posts (e.g., Hazel O'Leary, Alexis Herman, Aida Alvarez, Condoleezza Rice and Elaine Chao). Small sample sizes have made it difficult to explore women from different racial backgrounds, but ongoing changes provide us with additional opportunities to ascertain the political responsiveness and career patterns for these women. Doing so will provide a much more comprehensive understanding of gender at the top of the executive branch.

## Notes

1. Eileen Shanahan, former Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at HEW, quoted in Carroll and Geiger-Parker, 1983.
2. The other two Bush appointees are Christine Todd Whitman, head of the Environmental Protection Agency, and Karen Hughes, White House Counselor (Hughes 2000).
3. For general reviews of women in the bureaucracy, see Dolan (2001), Lepper and Farrell (1980), and Stewart (1990).
4. For a case study of Roberta Achtenberg's journey through Senate confirmation proceedings, see Schroedel, Spray and Snyder (1997). For details about the confirmation hearings of other Clinton appointees, see Borrelli (1997a).
5. For biographical sketches of numerous federal executive women, see Stineman (1980), Lamson (1979), Center for American Women

and Politics (1998), and Cooper and Wright (1992).

6. See also McGlen and Sarkees (1991, 1993) who find female appointees within the Departments of State and Defense are more conservative than their male colleagues.

7. Research uncovers attitudinal differences among women and men employed within the career ranks of both state and federal governments, too. See Dolan (2000), Guy and Duke (1992), Hale and Branch (1992), Hale, Kelly and Burgess (1989), Hale, Kelly, Burgess and Shapiro (1987), Kawar (1989), Kelly and Newman (2000), Naff (1998), and Stanley (1989).

8. These findings are consistent with research from municipal governments, where female mayors likewise appear to make government employment more accessible to women (Ricucci 1986; Saltzstein 1986).

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# Understanding the Policy Impact of Electing Women: Evidence from Research on Congress and State Legislatures

In the 2000 elections, women continued their slow advance into the halls of political power. Today women constitute 13.6% of the House of Representatives, 13% of the Senate, and 22.3% of state legislatures (Center for American Women and Politics 2000). The underrepresentation of women in politics has provoked concern from media commentators, political activists, and feminist scholars who believe that there is a connection between descriptive representation—being a woman—and substantive representation, the advocacy of women's interests (Mansbridge 1999; Phillips 1995; Pitkin 1967; Sapiro 1981). Predictions of the magnitude of women's impact on the policy process span a wide range. The pressure of frequent elections suggests that all representatives, regardless of gender, will zealously advocate the interests of their constituencies. On the other hand, it

is possible that female legislators will devote special attention to the interests of women, children, and families. Additionally, women may exhibit a different style of leadership that

will have consequences for the very process by which public policy is made. In this essay, I review the evidence concerning the nature of the policy impact of electing women and I suggest directions for future research.

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## Women in the State Legislatures: A Substantive Impact

Scholars interested in determining the influence of women on the policy process originally focused their attention on the individual states because more women have served in the state legislatures than in Congress. The evidence from these studies demonstrates that women serving in the state legislatures exhibit unique policy priorities, particularly in the area of women's issues.<sup>1</sup> In multistate analyses and longitudinal studies of single legislatures, scholars have found that in comparison to men, female legislators are more liberal in their policy attitudes and they exhibit a greater commitment to the pursuit of feminist initiatives and legislation incorporating issues of traditional

concern to women, including education, health, and welfare (Berkman and O'Connor 1993; Dodson and Carroll 1991; Dolan and Ford 1995; Saint-Germain 1989; Thomas 1994). Women are also more likely to see their women's issue proposals passed into law (Saint-Germain 1989; Thomas 1994). In addition to differences in policy behavior, researchers found that women display a unique view of their representational role. Female legislators expressed a sense of responsibility to represent the interests of women and they were more likely than men to view women as a distinct part of their constituencies (Reingold 1992; Thomas 1994, 1997). Some scholars maintain that women exhibit a distinctive way of thinking about policy problems. For example, in her analysis of crime policy, Kathlene (1995) notes that women favored rehabilitative initiatives while men preferred proposals concerning punishment.

By examining legislative behavior across time and in different states, scholars found that the sex differences in the policy priorities of legislators intensified as the proportion of women in the legislature approached a "critical mass" (Berkman and O'Connor 1993; Saint-Germain 1989; Thomas 1994). Drawing on the theories of Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977) concerning the impact of proportions on groups, these researchers noted that as women increase their numbers in the legislature, they are more willing to pursue policy preferences based on gender.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, Thomas (1994) and Saint-Germain (1989) maintain that the presence of a women's caucus provides women with additional resources beyond their numbers, thus reducing the negative effects of tokenism.

## The Policy Influence of Women in Congress

The scarcity of women in Congress before the 1992 "Year of the Woman" election made it difficult to evaluate the policy impact of electing women. The first systematic efforts to analyze sex differences in the legislative activities of members of Congress focused on roll-call voting behavior (Gehlen 1977; Leader 1977; Frankovic 1977). Over time, studies examining whether women are more liberal than their male colleagues have had mixed

results (Burrell 1994; Frankovic 1977; Gehlen 1977; Leader 1977; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 1997; Welch 1985). However, other research indicates that gender exerts a significant effect on voting for specific gender-related concerns such as abortion (Tatolovich and Schier 1993) or a set of women's issues (Burrell 1994; Dolan 1997; Swers 1998).

Yet analyses of roll-call voting only scratch the surface of potential gender differences in legislative participation, since the position a legislator takes on a roll-call vote does not reveal the depth of the member's commitment to women's interests, nor does it indicate the process by which a bill advanced through the legislative process (Hall 1996; Swers 2000). Beginning in the early 1990s, scholarly efforts to examine women's influence on the entire legislative process demonstrate that like their counterparts in the state legislatures, women in Congress have had a unique influence on the congressional policymaking process, particularly in the area of women's issues. Congresswomen are opening the national agenda to gender-related concerns by sponsoring and cosponsoring more legislation concerning feminist issues and issues that reflect women's traditional role as caregiver than their male colleagues do (Swers 2000, forthcoming; Tamerius 1995; Vega and Firestone 1995; Wolbrecht forthcoming). Congresswomen use their committee positions to advocate for the incorporation of women's interests into committee legislation (Dodson 1998, forthcoming; Dodson et al. 1995; Gertzog 1995; Norton forthcoming; Swers 2000, forthcoming). Female legislators also demonstrate higher rates of participation in floor debates on women's issues (Cramer Walsh forthcoming; Swers 2000; Tamerius 1995) and speak with a distinctive voice on these issues (Cramer Walsh forthcoming; Dodson et al. 1995; Levy, Tien, and Aved 2001; Swers 2000). Finally, Congresswomen view women as a distinct portion of their constituencies and they express a commitment to representing women's interests in their legislative activities (Carroll forthcoming; Dodson et al. 1995; Foerstel and Foerstel 1996; Gertzog 1995).

Clearly, the research on the policy impact of female officeholders at the state and national levels has revealed important differences in the legislative priorities of individual legislators. Additionally, the research on state legislatures highlights the influence of the proportion of women in the legislative body and the presence of a women's caucus on a legislator's ability to express unique preferences based on gender. However, scholars need to devote more attention to the ways in which political and institutional contexts shape the decision calculus of legislators concerning what policies to pursue. A new frontier of research seeks to illuminate how institutional and political context factors—such as a member's position within the committee structure and the agenda of the majority party in the legislature—shape the range of choices available to members regardless of their abstract policy preferences (for example, Dodson et al. 1995; Norton 1994; Rosenthal 1998; Swers 2000).

### **The Relationship of Women to the Institution**

The new institutional research highlights the ways in which women are adapting to legislative norms as well as the ways in which institutional and political contexts may inhibit legislators' efforts to advance their policy priorities. For example, Dodson (1995, 1998, forthcoming)

demonstrates how Democratic and Republican women in the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress used their positions on key committees and within the party leadership to make certain that legislation concerning violence against women, reproductive rights, and women's health gained a place on the national agenda. Furthermore, these congresswomen ensured that female-centric legislation did not fall victim to issues of time and funding on the way to becoming law. By contrast, in her work on congressional action on reproductive issues, Norton (1994, 1995, 1999, forthcoming) reports that between 1969 and 1992, the members of key committees and subcommittees were able to impose their preferences on reproductive policy despite the will of the majority in Congress. The absence of women from these key committees inhibited women's efforts to change policy regardless of their commitment to pro-choice initiatives. Similarly, Berkman and O'Connor (1993) maintain that state legislative committees with higher percentages of Democratic women were the most successful in blocking anti-abortion legislation. Demonstrating the importance of political context and majority vs. minority party status, Swers (2000, forthcoming) found that moderate Republican women changed their bill sponsorship patterns between the 103<sup>rd</sup> and 104<sup>th</sup> Congresses, as they increased their sponsorship of social welfare bills and decreased their advocacy of more controversial feminist proposals in order to capitalize on their majority power and avoid antagonizing important party constituencies, particularly social conservatives. This new institutional research indicates that we must further investigate how both the positions of members within the institution and the changes in the external political environment alter the priorities of legislators in ways that we cannot discern by surveying their abstract policy preferences.

Beyond investigating the impact of institutional factors on the ability of members to pursue their policy priorities, scholars are also examining whether women are transforming the nature of the institutions in which they serve. These scholars start from the premise that institutions are gendered, meaning, "gender is present in the processes, practices, images, and ideologies, and distributions of power in the various sectors of social life" (Acker as quoted in Kenney 1996). Thus, male behavior is regarded as the norm in legislative institutions and women feel pressure to adapt to those expectations (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995; Kelly and Duerst-Lahti 1995; Kenney 1996; Rosenthal 1998; Thomas 1997). Research on male-female differences in leadership style demonstrates that women exhibit an alternative method of leadership, which challenges institutional norms. For example, Rosenthal (1997, 1998, 2000) finds that female committee chairs exhibited a more integrative leadership style than their male counterparts. As a result of gender-role socialization and women's distinctive paths to leadership, the integrative style of female chairs emphasizes consensual, cooperative, and inclusive decision making rather than the transactional and competitive bargaining styles employed by their male colleagues. Similarly, in her analysis of crime legislation, Kathlene (1995) found that women focused more on community-based solutions such as prevention and rehabilitation, while men concentrated on abstract rights and expanding punishment.

Since women's integrative leadership style challenges established masculine legislative norms, women cannot easily incorporate this alternative style in all institutional

settings. For example, Rosenthal (1998) found that integrative leadership behavior is less likely to occur in the more professionalized legislatures in which legislating is a full time job and members have access to staff to develop policy expertise. She also notes that more states are trending toward the model of the professional legislature in which both male and female legislators eschew an inclusive, collaborative leadership style in favor of a more competitive model of leadership. Additionally, Kathlene (1994) reports that in committee hearings in the Colorado legislature, women entered the debate later, spoke less often than their male colleagues did, and interrupted witnesses less frequently than male legislators did. The aggressive behavior of men in committee hearings actually increased as the number of women in the committee room rose. This tension between the new methods of leadership introduced by women and the established institutional norms demonstrates that political activists cannot assume that increasing the number of women in office will lead to reform of the political process.

### Directions for Future Research

The existing research on women in Congress and state legislatures has greatly expanded our understanding of women's experiences as legislators. Clearly, female legislators perceive women as a distinct part of their

constituencies and they bring different policy priorities to the legislative agenda, particularly in the area of women's issues. Future research must investigate the ways in which female legislators incorporate women's interests into policy discussions in areas that are not readily identified as women's issues. Scholars should also examine whether the increasing presence of female officeholders is influencing the policy priorities of male representatives. Additionally, we must devote more attention to the intersections of race and gender (Barrett 1995; Darling 1998). How does being an African-American or a Hispanic woman influence a legislator's policy priorities and her relationship with white female legislators, white male legislators, and male legislators of her own race?

Finally, scholars must devote more attention to the influence of institutional and political contexts on the legislative activity of members. A focus on institutions allows us to move beyond legislators' testimony concerning their policy interests to an understanding of how members' positions within the institution shape their willingness to pursue policy preferences based on gender. Future research on institutions must also more carefully delineate the ways in which institutions are gendered and how these hidden norms influence the behavior of male and female legislators. Thus, we need more research to expand our understanding of the ways in which gender considerations mediate the experience of women as officeholders.

### Notes

1. The findings concerning the policy impact of women in state legislatures are based on studies of female legislators in the 1980s and 1990s. In her review of studies of female legislators serving in the 1970s, Thomas (1994) reports that these women had more liberal policy attitudes and voting records than did their male colleagues, particularly on feminist issues. However, they did not exhibit different policy priorities in their legislative activity. Additionally, these women focused more on constituency service than policy development and they perceived themselves as less effective than their male colleagues

in the legislative arena. See also Diamond (1977), Kirkpatrick (1974), and Johnson et al. (1978).

2. In her study of skewed groups, Kanter (1977) found that the more numerous "dominants" set organizational norms and treat members of the minority as "tokens" who represent their category as symbols rather than as individuals. Minorities do not escape the constraints of tokenism until the groups become "balanced" at approximately 35%.

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# How Women Won or Lost in the Japanese Lower House Election: Case Studies of Women Candidates Who Ran as Challengers

## Introduction

In the latest election for Japan's House of Representatives (Lower House) in June 2000, 202 women ran, and 35 were elected.<sup>1</sup> Reflecting the enactment of 1999's Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society in 1999, major political parties in Japan recruited more women candidates than ever before. The Social Democratic Party (SDP) headed by Takako Doi—a woman—had the highest percentage of female representatives (52.6%, or 10 of its 19 HR members). The Japan Communist Party (JCP) also increased its percentage (20%, or four out of its 20 HR members). This shows, to some extent, the advantage held by female candidates from leftist parties that advocate feminist concerns, such as gender equality in political representation.

However, I focus not on the women of these two parties but on three women who ran as official candidates of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). The DPJ is relatively new, having

been founded in 1998 through the party realignment process of the 1990s. It has become the largest opposition group against the conservative ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). The DPJ represents a wide spectrum of ideologies, from moderate-liberal to extreme left. The party is still undergoing unification—in other words, it is weaving its party context, which is among the factors that define the electoral opportunity structure. As Matland and Studlar (1998) put it, “The party context means internal party conditions such as party rules about the representation of groups when fielding candidates or general party ideology that can affect which candidates are seen as attractive.”<sup>2</sup> The current lack of strong leadership in the DPJ is expected to facilitate the incorporation of traditionally underrepresented groups like women and the youth.

The DPJ failed to include in its platform a quota for women's representation, but offered to politically inspired women some affirmative measures such as: an open

recruitment program for women before the election; direct financial aid (\$10,000) for women candidates; and a “Campaign Caravan” of party luminaries to the districts where the DPJ women were running. The party also had training sessions for women candidates.

In spite of the party's ostensibly serious efforts to help more women win elections, DPJ's women have not fared very well. I examine the factors that led two DPJ women to success but another woman to failure.

## Women Candidates and the Democratic Party of Japan

As the LDP's most prominent opposition, the DPJ needed to recruit as many candidates as possible both for 300 single-member districts and for 180 proportional-representational seats in 11 regional blocs for the election of the Lower House in June 2000. However, the DPJ found it difficult to recruit candidates in districts where strong LDP incumbents had already announced their candidacy. No one wanted to run in a difficult race or challenge an opponent's dynasty.

Labor unions, which are at the left end of the DPJ's ideological spectrum, were once the primary suppliers of candidates for the now-disbanded Socialist Party. Unions are the largest element of the DPJ, but have less power than before due to dwindling membership and diminished political enthusiasm among younger members. Although unions had made a practice of financially supporting unsuccessful candidates until their next electoral opportunities, they can no longer afford it. Therefore, DPJ's candidates must be financially secure, as are lawyers, doctors, and wealthy housewives.

The DPJ's candidate-recruiting process draws from three pools: recommendations from the local DPJ; recommendations from the party's support groups or organizations; and those who applied via the DPJ's open recruitment program (for both women and men), which is designed to expand the diversity of candidates. DPJ's Committee for Gender Equality, which is headed by a female, coordinates the recruitment of

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women candidates. National DPJ leaders assign their selected candidates, female or male, to any district where the local DPJ failed to recruit its own candidate.

For the open recruitment program of June 2000 there were 620 applicants, 62 of which were women. Among those women, 41 were eligible to run but only five actually did. Some local DPJ organizations also openly recruited candidates from outside the party. In total, 26 women from inside and outside the party ran as DPJ candidates. Six women were elected: three from the single-member districts and three from the party list. The following case studies focus on the three DPJ women who ran in single-member districts; two women won, but the other lost.

### **Case Study A: Challenging a Dynasty**

Hiroko Mizushima was a 31-year-old psychiatrist working at a university hospital in Tokyo. She took care of children who were diagnosed with eating disorders. Through her experience as a doctor, she noticed an increasing incidence of mental problems in children, and argued that these problems should be analyzed in a sociopolitical context.

In July 1999 she applied for the DPJ open recruitment program for women, and qualified as an official candidate, but she did not know where she was supposed to run. After several consultations with DPJ leaders, she finally decided to run in the first district of Tochigi—about 68 miles north of Tokyo—where she had virtually no connections, political or otherwise. This district was home to a 70-year dynasty of a famous political family, Funada. A defeat of the seventh-term LDP incumbent, a grandson of the founder of the dynasty, seemed almost impossible. In the last election, the DPJ candidate lost by a big margin, and the party could not recruit anyone who dared to challenge the Funada. Mizushima recalls:

I moved to the district with my family in October, eight months before the election. The first thing I tried to do was become friends with the DPJ people there who might help my campaign. I heard the discrimination against women was very strong in the area. I was a woman psychiatrist, and an outsider who had come to challenge a dynasty. I was well-prepared for defeat.

Mizushima's greatest adversary was not outside but inside her camp. First, an underdog mentality had permeated her local staff. Second, DPJ campaigners were reluctant to work for her, or rather, they didn't know how to carry a candidate who was not from their own organization. The local DPJ had depended heavily on labor unions, and although Mizushima wanted her own way, the union people pursued their conventional electoral politics. Mizushima almost cancelled her candidacy:

I tried very hard to assure my people that I was a strong candidate and that we might win if we had a strategy. But people in my camp seemed less concerned about victory or defeat, and more concerned about whether they could win as many votes as they won in the last election. If I received fewer votes than they won in the previous election, they would be criticized. So they were afraid my strategies would eliminate loyal votes for the party. That was why they were so defensive.

Yamada,<sup>3</sup> a member of the Upper House of the Councilors who challenged Funada in the previous election, became Mizushima's campaign manager and rallied his supporters for her. He and other local party leaders

followed the conventional wisdom and took Mizushima around to say hello to union members and to ask for their support. Mizushima, however, eventually cancelled this ritual in an attempt to have more time to meet ordinary people in her district, and to go stumping to show herself as a serious contender:

The solid votes for the DPJ in the district were about 40,000, but we needed 60,000 more votes to defeat the incumbent. I did not think I would win as far as I followed conventional tactics. I tried to reach as many people as possible, including feminist groups. Taking advantage of being a psychiatrist, I gave consultations to mothers with younger children in my district and some of them came to support me and worked for me in the campaign.

The atmosphere in Mizushima's camp changed, both when the DPJ national office designated her district's election as most crucial, and when the LDP incumbent, prince of the Funada Dynasty, revealed his involvement in extramarital affairs that resulted in divorce (he left his wife and three children, remarrying to an LDP Upper House member). The Funada campaign underestimated the effect of his divorce and ignored the voters' sympathy with the incumbent's abandoned family. When Mizushima announced her challenge, the media coverage intensified and the national attention turned to the first district of Tochigi. "Family values" suddenly became an election issue:

My camp, however, tried to avoid a negative campaign against the incumbent. Voters saw me smiling with my two-year-old daughter in my campaign brochure. That was a strong message to voters, telling them which candidate has family values.

This strategy worked well. Some Funada supporters thought of punishing him, and voted for the DPJ candidate. Mizushima received 107,634 votes, while Funada received 91,411, losing for the first time in his political career. Mizushima's victory might owe something to Funada's complacency, but Mizushima serves as an example that a female candidate with an excellent strategy can win an almost impossible race.

### **Case Study B: Challenging a Former Boss**

Sayuri Kamata is a former member of the City Council of Sendai, the capital of Miyagi Prefecture in the northeastern part of Japan. Kamata, 35, was born and raised in a very political family. Both of her parents were ranking members of the local LDP, and she had been involved in campaign activities from early on. In 1995, she ran for the City Council and won. She was a committed policy maker in the fields of education and environment, but gradually learned the limitations of local government. She resigned from the Council and ran for the Upper House in 1998, but lost.

It was through this campaign that she recognized the strong gynephobia of the male-dominated LDP:

I did not feel I was fully endorsed by my party when I ran. People wouldn't listen to me, and harassed me because I was a young woman. They often said, "You should stay at home taking care of your husband and children," and never accepted me as a full-fledged member of the party. I thought the LDP would ruin my political career, so I decided to quit the party, although I knew my decision would bother my parents.

Kamata wanted to switch her party from LDP to DPJ, and was looking for another opportunity to run for a national political office. The election of the Lower House was

approaching, but the local DPJ was unable to recruit candidates to challenge LDP incumbents in several districts. The DPJ of Miyagi started a local open recruitment program, expecting qualified applicants to join. Kamata recalled:

I applied for the program while I was waiting for the approval of my DPJ membership. When I finally qualified as an official candidate, I appealed that I should run in the second district of Miyagi. That was my district and I wanted to challenge and defeat the male LDP incumbent whom I had worked for in the last election. I never liked him and never approved of his pork-barrel politics.

The unseating of a greedy politician became a goal of Kamata's campaign, and knowing her enemy helped her to forge an effective strategy. There was, however, a strong opposition inside the DPJ to having Kamata as a candidate, not only because she was a former LDP member, but because she was a young woman. However, Tomiko Okazaki, a female Upper House member, defended Kamata. Although their party affiliations were different at that time, they agreed on the importance of bringing more women into politics.

Even after her candidacy was announced, Kamata had a difficult time in launching her campaign:

The rental contract of an office for my campaign headquarters was cancelled three times. Some have alleged the existence of a "male conspiracy," that is, an alliance of the male LDP and DPJ members preventing me from seeking a political office. However, women DPJ members were receptive to me and I organized my campaign headquarters with a powerful woman as chief manager.

Even though her campaign kicked off with the support of only an estimated 30% of her electorate, Kamata tried very hard to differentiate herself from the incumbent:

I went stumping in various places, speaking to the general public about my stands on education and the environment, while my opponent followed the traditional style of the conservative male campaign, trying only to tighten up support from local business circles.

Although the incumbent's camp started a fierce negative campaign against her, Kamata's approval rating increased. The DPJ national office designated her district as crucial, and she eventually won with 50% of the popular vote.

### Case Study C: A Failed Challenge

Hokkaido is a large island far from Tokyo, with a traditional "conservative right vs. progressive left" party rivalry (although this political formula is no longer useful for understanding Japanese politics in general). The progressive left Japan Socialist Party (JSP) had enjoyed solid support from coal miners' unions and other unions, but when the mines closed the JSP disbanded. Union members joined the LDP and have been forced to integrate into a changing society, yet they have not changed their way of thinking and still desire a confrontational political climate. What is worse, these allegedly progressive male leaders are likely to enforce a "boy's club" mentality. The idea of having a woman candidate was unthinkable until April 2000, when the election was approaching and no male candidates were running for the Lower House.

The LDP chose as its candidate Motoko Ideta, a successful dairy farmer who had been very active in agrarian reform and had received several awards for her work. After

23 years of agricultural experience, Ideta recognized the importance of environmental preservation. She opposed publicly-funded construction projects, such as building bridges and highways in remote rural areas. Her criticism of these works, however, only mobilized votes for the LDP incumbent.

Ideta's policies upheld the leftist ideals of the DPJ. Through a mediator she met the party leaders, and decided to run against a fifth-term male incumbent, Nakagawa, prince of another political dynasty. Unfortunately, her district's DPJ leaders did not know how to conduct a woman's campaign. They only followed conventional tactics. Ideta recalls:

I wanted to differentiate myself from the incumbent by stressing my gender and my policy priorities. I wanted to go to the grassroots to talk to people, instead of being taken to the unions to say hi and bow to ask for a vote. I wanted to stump in the city, where I didn't have much name recognition, but I wasn't allowed to. I wanted to organize a women's division in my campaign in order to mobilize women's votes. We created the division, but no woman could lead it since no women had any political experience. I did not see a single woman in a leadership position in my camp.

A female union leader adds:

Women union members were not involved in the candidate selection process. Male leadership decided everything and the candidate seemed very remote from us. I wish we had had more time to talk to Ideta so that we could have cooperated more effectively in the campaign.

A female volunteer in Ideta's camp:

Male leaders didn't look confident about winning the election. They were concerned only with how many more votes Ideta would win, compared with the votes the party won in the last election.

The DPJ did not succeed in winning new support—they lost by an even larger margin than in the previous election. Their underdog mentality made their campaign defensive, but doubt remains about the leaders' enthusiasm for winning the election. As one of Ideta's campaign employees—a male—puts it, "Things would have been different, if the candidate had been a male."

### Impact of Women Candidates in the Japanese Electoral Process

Mizushima took advantage of her opponent's infidelity and divorce incidents, or more accurately, she won punishment votes from Funada's angry ex-advocates. Yet, why did Funada's supporters contribute to his opponent's victory? In Japan, a politician's wife is generally expected to take care of the local constituency while her husband stays in Tokyo for the Diet sessions. During elections, she goes door to door to have tea or coffee with constituents and bows politely as she solicits votes for her husband. She keeps close ties with women in the constituency to make sure their votes will not go to the opponent, especially if the opponent is a woman. Funada's former wife typified this gender role, as did the wife of Ideta's opponent, who is very popular among her husband's female supporters. The conservative women's network strives to ensure votes for candidates it favors, and for some candidates the existence of a supportive wife is a crucial component of a political career. However, such politicized gender roles may change as more women enter politics.

Mizushima and Kamata are expected to considerably affect the Japanese political landscape. First, their entry into politics demonstrates that a young woman with a husband and children may seek elected office as a career. Second, it may normalize the patriarchal tilt of the traditional political marriage.

### *Do Women Support Women?*

Unlike in the United States, a gender gap is not evident on the Japanese electoral scene. Whether more women than men support women candidates is not clear, as

Japanese women currently do not form a voting bloc. Even in the so-called “Madonna Boom” Election of 1989, when many Socialist women were elected to the Upper House, there was no significant gender gap; socialist women won because many more women and men voted for the party than ever before. In the eleventh district of Hokkaido, where Ideta ran in 2000, the exit poll showed that 53% of women and 55% of men voted for Nakagawa, her male opponent. Female voters outnumber male voters, and their turnout rate is usually higher than men’s. Perhaps success for women candidates depends upon strategies for attracting more female voters.

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## Notes

1. This is the record high under the New Constitution. Another woman was elected in the special election of October 2000, elevating women to 7.6% of the House of Representatives.

2. Richard Matland and D. Studlar. 1998. “Gender and the Electoral

Opportunity Structure in the Canadian Provinces.” *Political Research Quarterly* 51:117-40.

3. He wishes to remain anonymous.

# The Madonna Boom: The Progress of Japanese Women into Politics in the 1980s

## The Scarcity of Female Politicians in Japan

In elections held in April 1946, Japanese women voted for the first time. Due to the old electoral system, voters elected an unprecedented number of women: 39 out of a possible 464 candidates. Since then this record number has never been equaled or broken, and with the establishment in 1947 of the mid-size constituency single-vote system (3–5 seats), the number of women members of the House of Representatives hovered around 10 (2%) until 1986. Although the length of a term of office is set at four years, there are circumstances in which the House may be dissolved.

The House of Councillors, which has less political power than the House of Representatives, originally used an electoral system that combined the national constituency single-vote system (100 seats) and the local constituencies single-vote system (150 seats). Each prefecture was allocated 2–8 seats, and every three years half of the councillors faced re-election. In the first election for the House of Councillors in 1947, 10 women were elected. The number of women councillors wavered between 10 and 22 until 1986. The national constituency system changed in 1983 to the national proportional representative system, which actually advantages women candidates.

Local government—comprising assemblies, mayors, and governors—holds elections every four years. Similar to the House of Representatives, the local assemblies may be dissolved at any time. In the early 1980s, women accounted for only 1.1% of local assembly memberships, and composed only a handful of women mayors. The first female governor was elected in 2000.<sup>1</sup>

## Women's Increasing Participation in Local Assemblies

The results of 1987's local elections indicated a substantial increase in the number of female assembly members, from 1.1% in the early 1980s to 2.1%. Five factors influenced the outcomes of these elections.

First, in September 1986, Takako Doi became the first female chair of a Japanese political party, the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDP). Her popularity grew because of her unambiguous and direct way of speak-

ing, and her success raised the public profile of female politicians in Japan and attracted the interest of the media and the public.<sup>2</sup>

The abortion issue of the early 1980s was the second factor to have increased women's political participation. In Japan abortion is still illegal, although the Eugenic Protection Act of 1948 has always allowed certain extenuating circumstances. Ultraconservative factions of the governing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) tried to amend the Act to make abortions totally illegal. These factions mobilized local assemblies at the grassroots, using methods learned from the United States' anti-abortion movement. They encouraged local governments to pass resolutions that would press the Diet to change the Act. This behavior inspired Japanese women—including old and new feminists—to take direct action, which resulted in the reform's defeat.<sup>3</sup> After experiencing the difficulty of trying to convince male local assembly members (98.9%) of the importance of legal abortions for women, many female activists decided to run for local council.

The era of 'Administrative Reforms' was the third determinant in the increase in the number of female politicians. In the mid-1980s, the Nakasone government cut budget expenditure in the areas of education, welfare, and environmental protection. This tide of budget cuts filtered down to local governments, where the male mayors and assembly members instituted severe cuts of their own. Women's groups objected to decreased spending for day care centers and school lunches. The cutbacks galvanized women into action.

The fourth factor for increased female political activity stemmed from changes in the strategies of the three parties opposed to the LDP and its 40-year domination (from 1955 to 1993). The Komei Party (associated with a Buddhist sect) and the Japan JPC Party (JPC) vied for new supporters in urban areas, especially those with lower-income residents. In the first half of the 1980s, both the Komei Party and the JPC decided to endorse female candidates in local assembly elections.

In the mid-1980s, the SDP—the opposition party most threatening to LDP hegemony—lost much of its nonunionized support base. Compounding this problem was the requirement that union members resign from their respective companies before running in elections. In an attempt to stabilize its unionized male constituency while maintaining its political power, the

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SDJP recruited nonunionized female candidates and deemed them “Madonnas.”<sup>4</sup>

The dawning of gender consciousness among Japanese female baby boomers is the fifth and final factor. Until the 1950s, Japan was predominantly rural and housewives were relatively rare. Only in the 1970s did being a housewife become a popular career option. Compared to the West, the Japanese “women’s liberation” movement at this time was still unknown. In the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s, Japanese female baby boomers women focused on their children’s education and competition for entrance to high school and university. Yet after their children were grown, these women became conscious of their empty lives; their eyes opened to Japan’s awful conditions for women and children—especially in the areas of welfare and education. This sparked a wave of female involvement and activism in the late 1980s.

## The “Madonna Boom”

Takako Doi’s arrival on the political scene gave birth to a widespread enthusiasm for female politicians. Her stumping tour prior to the 1987 local elections saw thousands of women come out in support of her drive to recruit more female candidates. Everywhere she went, the media followed, reporting on her clothes and her voice. There is a story of an aged woman grasping the hands of a female SDP candidate and praying to her “You and Ms Doi will make a wonderful society for women.”<sup>5</sup> Between the 1987 elections and the regular election of the House of Councillors in July 1989, there were a number of by-elections of councillors. Of the three SDP candidates who won, one was a woman candidate dubbed the “Madonna of Niigata.” Thus the Madonna Boom began.

The Madonna Boom peaked during the elections for the House of Councillors in July 1989, due to myriad catalysts. The Japanese government had, a few months earlier, introduced a consumption tax; a stock scandal resulted in the resignation of Prime Minister Takeshita; the liberalization of US agricultural imports caused a backlash against the LDP; and a Geisha fiasco tarnished the inauguration of the incoming prime minister.<sup>6</sup> All these factors affected female voters, but none was as grievous as the consumption tax. Although females who bore children ran the risk of incurring the consumption tax, neither abortion nor contraception was covered by Japan’s social health insurance. While Japan would, in 1991, repeal the consumption tax against child-birth, Japanese women in 1989 had license to be concerned.

In July 1989, the SDP submitted 55 candidates—12 of whom were women—for 126 councillors’ seats. They won a total of 41 seats: 31 men and 10 women. A new opposition organization, Rengo, won 11 seats, but only two went to women. The total number of women councillors elected was 33 out of 252 seats, a new record. The opposition won 75 seats in that election, and combined with the opposition councillors who had not stood (only half face re-election each time), the total was 128, thus transforming the opposition into the majority. In the vote for the Prime Minister, the

House of Representatives supported Kaifu—male and two years younger than Doi—while the House of Councillors supported Doi. This was only the second time in Japanese history that the two houses had differed in their nominations. Because of the accepted superiority of the Lower House, Kaifu was elected Prime Minister.

The Kaifu government pushed for reform of the consumption tax and called a snap election of the House of Representatives in February 1990. The Socialist party tried to increase its stable of candidates, but could only put up 148, eight of whom were women, for the 512 seats. They could not overcome the entrenched convention of running only one candidate in each mid-sized constituency, and consequently the LDP regained power. The number of SDP representatives increased to 136, but at the expense of other opposition parties. Female winners in this election numbered only 12. Perceiving her own failure in realizing her dream of “Women Changing Politics in Japan,” Doi resigned the Chair of the SDP in June 1991.

## After the Madonna Boom

Due to lack of preparation, experience and training, some of the Dietwomen elected in the 1989 Councillors’ election and the 1990 Representatives’ election failed in their subsequent bids for re-election. There are currently 43 female councillors. The number of women local assembly members has grown slowly but steadily, with women now constituting nearly 6% of local assemblies. In 2000, for the first time in Japanese history, two women governors were elected.

In 1996, a combination of small constituencies (300 seats) and 11 blocks of proportional representation (once 200 seats, now 180 seats) replaced the mid-size single-vote system of the House of Representatives. In 1996, there were 14 women representatives; after the general election in June 2000, there were 35—the second highest number in history.

In Japan, grassroots patriarchy is still strong. Female challengers face many obstacles—most notably the aged male gatekeepers who select candidates in almost all the districts. Members of the House of Representatives are the most powerful. Male incumbents, especially from the LDP, strongly resist the participation of women candidates. However, the new electoral system, with its proportional representation and increased potential for party competition, has sparked a public desire for more women candidates. Some pundits believe that the House of Councillors is composed largely of out-of-touch figureheads and for that reason alone women might find it easier to attain positions in the Upper House.

Because of the unions’ shifting support from the SDP to the new Democratic Party, the SDP’s ranks decreased in size through the regrouping of parties between 1996 and 1998. Doi is the chair again. Since the 1998 Councillors’ election and the 2000 Representatives’ election, slightly more than half of the socialist party’s Diet members are women (seven out of 14 councillors and 10 out of 19 representatives). This new phenomenon compels other political parties to work towards sponsoring more female candidates and Diet members. Perhaps the second stage of Japanese women’s advancement into politics is now beginning.

## Notes

1. For more information on the ways that Japanese women have been inconspicuously yet systematically excluded from political decision making see: Misako Iwamoto. 1997. “Onnna no Inai Seijikatei” (The Political Process without Women). *Joseigaku* (Journal of Women’s Studies Association of Japan) 5:8–39.

2. About Takako Doi and the Madonna Boom, see: Misako Iwamoto. 2000. “Josei to Seijikatei” (Women and Political Process). In *Nyuporitikusu no Seijigaku* (Political Sciences of New Politics), ed. Kensuke Kaku and Hitoshi Maruyama.

3. Cf. Misako Iwamoto 1993. “Jinkoninshinchuzetsu Seisaku niokeru Kettei,

Hikettei, Metakettei” (Decision, Nondecision and Meta-Decision in the Abortion Policy). *Nenpo Gyosei Kenkyu* (Journal of Study of Public Administration) 28.

4. In the films of the popular Japanese cinema series *Tora-san*, the title character falls in and out of love with a Madonna (a different actress from film to film).

5. Akiko Domoto and Keiko Higuchi. “Onnna ha Naze Shakaito wo Eranda ka” (Why Women Chose the SDP). *Ekonomisuto* (Economist), 23 Oct. 1989, 93.

6. He offered 300 thousand Yen per month to a Geisha, who was angered at being treated as a trivial prostitute, and thus exposed the scandal.

# American Women and Politics in the Media: A Review Essay

The study of women and politics in the media is a relatively young subfield, blessed with scholarship from the fields of communications, cultural studies, history, sociology and political science. Members of these fields use methodologies—such as semiotics, qualitative analysis, and quantitative content analysis—to examine the content of communication about women and politics in news and advertising. Studies of the impact of messages use polls, experiments, and focus groups. Scholars draw primarily upon theories of framing (Entman 1993), hegemony (Gramsci 1971), and organizational structures (Epstein 1973; Sigal 1973) to explain why news content looks the way it does. Although most research focuses on content rather than causes and consequences, some studies are putting the pieces together to explain how efforts of groups and individuals influence coverage of women and politics and how audiences react to those messages.

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Most of the research on women and politics in the media is divisible into the topics of advertising, and news coverage of the women's

movement and feminist organizations, first ladies, women candidates, women politicians, and women in the electorate. This list overlooks research on media agenda setting on certain issues, like child abuse (Nelson 1984), which could arguably be considered as "women's concerns." It also fails to consider scholarship on entertainment media because although there is much research on women in film and television entertainment, this scholarship does not focus on government or politics (as social scientists more narrowly define this term). Also omitted from the list are rhetorical analyses, although some of this research examines televised speeches of female politicians (DeRosa and Bystrom 1999).

## **The Women's Movement, Feminist Organizations, and the Media**

Research on the content of news coverage during the feminist movement of the 1970s illustrates both the achievements and frustrations of the movement's efforts

to receive favorable attention for itself and feminist issues. Susan Douglas (1994) provides telling examples of how the mass media demonized, trivialized, and sexualized feminists. More systematic analyses of mainstream coverage of the women's movement (Costain, Braunstein, and Berggren 1997), the National Organization of Women (Barker-Plummer 2000), and feminists and feminism (Huddy 1997), reveal that the media either ignored or stigmatized feminism prior to 1970. Eventually, the movement brought certain women's issues to the media's attention (Barker-Plummer 2000; Costain, Braunstein, and Berggren 1997; Huddy 1997). NOW's active press relations efforts effectively publicized sexual equality issues (Barker-Plummer 2000) (although the media provided relatively little coverage for the abortion rights debate because it lacked drama and simplicity [Terkildsen, Schnell, and Lang 1998]).

## **First Ladies and the Media**

Some research on first ladies and the media is embedded in those case studies that consider media coverage to be part of a larger, often historical, picture (Burrell 1997). Although some scholars examine campaign coverage of presidential candidates' wives (Bystrom, McKinnon, and Chaney 1999), news about first ladies receives the most attention. For example, Scharrer and Bissell (2000) compared coverage of the political and nonpolitical activities of three first ladies: Nancy Reagan, Barbara Bush, and Hillary Clinton. They found that all three received negative coverage when they were politically active.

Perhaps because of Hillary Clinton's redefinition of the role of first lady, scholars have taken a closer look at the narrative themes that dominated her coverage (Gardetto 1997) and the strategic mistakes made by the White House press office when managing her image (Winfield 1997). Research on first lady coverage has begun to theorize about the cultural contradictions of the role and the problematic coverage this ambivalence generates (Brown 1997; Brown and Gardetto 2000). A focus group study explored the impact of the media's Hillary Clinton coverage, and found that audiences interpreted her coverage differently based upon their political ideologies (Brown 1997).

## Media Coverage of Women in the Electorate

The media's characterization of women voters was not studied until 1980 when the media reported a gender gap. The media exaggerates the gender gap (Ladd 1997), focusing only on which candidate is winning rather than relevant women's issues (Borquez, Goldenberg, and Kahn 1988). In fact, journalists often misunderstand the gap (Norrande 1999). In 1984 the gender gap and the simplistic notion that women as a whole form a single voting bloc were virtually sold to the press by women's groups who wanted deference from politicians (specifically to have Walter Mondale pick a female vice-presidential running mate) (Bonk 1988; Frankovic 1988). In 1996, media attention to the gender gap resulted from: the parties' promoting women at their conventions; the marked difference of opinions between the sexes on political issues; and journalists who had for some time been sensitized to the gap (Frankovic 1999).

Another way that the media characterized the female electorate in 1996 was as "soccer moms." Newspapers predominantly used this term, but television news and presidential candidate Bob Dole also discussed women as such (Vavrus 2000). Not only did the media portray soccer moms as alienated (Poole and Mueller 1998), it exaggerated their importance to the outcome of the election (Carroll 1999). Both Carroll (1999) and Vavrus (2000) criticized the media for grossly generalizing women and reducing them to depoliticized stereotypes whose only concerns were motherhood and consumerism (Vavrus 2000).

## Women Candidates in the News

Kim Fridkin Kahn has extensively studied how the news media covers women candidates relative to men, and the consequences of this coverage (1992, 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1996). Her findings indicate that women have a harder time controlling the media's agenda than do their male counterparts. Women candidates receive less issue coverage and more negative comments on their viability (Kahn 1996). Although some recent research challenges the extent of women candidates' disadvantages (Rausch, Rozell, and Wilson 1999; Smith 1997), these studies lack the extensiveness and rigor of Kahn's work. In addition, even these studies bring bad news for female candidates: the studies' female subjects received more negative coverage than their male opponents (Rausch, Rozell, and Wilson 1999) and less coverage in open races (Smith 1997). Anecdotal evidence supports the notion that campaign news coverage disadvantages women (Smith 1997; Witt, Paget, and Matthews 1994). Taking a cultural studies approach (rather than using a quantitative content analysis) to female Senate race coverage from 1992, Vavrus argues that the media treats women candidates in a classist, biologically essentialized manner (1998).

## Women Candidates' Campaign Advertising

There is a great deal of scholarship that concentrates on the differences between the campaign advertisements of male and female candidates—but much of it is contradictory. Case studies (Sheckels 1994; Sullivan 1998) challenge the widely-held belief that women are less likely to attack in their ads (supported by Johnston and White 1994; Kahn and Gordon 1997). Much of the

research on political advertising describes its content and production techniques (Benze and Declercq 1985; Bystrom and Miller 1999; Johnston and White 1994), and some of it also compares the different traits, issues, and qualifications the candidates' ads discuss (Kahn 1993; Williams 1994). The research that both surpasses simple analysis of content and studies the effects of advertising in experimental settings shows that women's ads are less effective if the candidate is emoting (Hitchon, Chang, and Harris 1997), and work best if they emphasize stereotypical female issues (Iyengar et al. 1997).

## Media Coverage of Female Politicians

Given the lack of research on media coverage of female politicians, it seems as though scholars lose interest in female candidates if they win their elections. *Women Politicians in the Media*, by Maria Braden (1996), is full of examples of news stories that trivialize and stereotype women officeholders, from Jeannette Rankin to current politicians who are quoted complaining about sexist coverage. However, a systematic content analysis of newspaper coverage of women in the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress fails to find few examples of these (Carroll and Schreiber 1997). Instead, their coverage contained frequent references to women as the agents of change and to women's issues (Carroll and Schreiber 1997).

## Where to Go from Here

Much of the research on the media's treatment of women in politics is clearly descriptive. Perhaps this is why only a few such research articles (Kahn 1992, 1994a, 1994b) have found homes in top political science journals. Building models to test the impact of media content on audiences and political actors might help to rectify this problem. Communications journals are fairly inviting to scholars of women and politics, and *Women & Politics* has been receptive to articles with a media focus. As for political communication journals, *Political Communication* has published articles on American women, but no such articles have appeared in *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*.

Those conducting political communication research about women need to broaden the topics, data, and theories they use. First, with the exception of some descriptions of news stories about Carol Moseley-Braun (Jelen 1994; Manning-Miller 1996), we know virtually nothing about how the news media covers women of color, nor do we understand these women's advertising strategies. Rather than viewing women as an undifferentiated class, we need to articulate and explain how the media treats different subgroups of women, and why they do so. Second, political scientists need to follow the examples of others (such as Brown and Gardetto 2000; Sullivan and Turner 1996; Vavrus 1998) and borrow concepts, theories, and insights from the field of women's studies, which could assist us in providing more systemic explanations for why things look the way they do, and help us re-evaluate some of our assumptions. For example, the introduction of feminist perspectives might require that terminology and concepts commonly used by political scientists (such as "men's issues" and "women's issues") be critiqued or perhaps avoided.

Third, we need to broaden the scope of our data. Despite most women in politics being in state legislatures and local governments, with a few exceptions (Larson forthcoming;



Miller forthcoming), we continue to focus on the news and advertising of Senatorial and gubernatorial candidates. Fourth, we need to look beyond the mainstream press to the “parallel sphere” (Herbst 1994), which is controlled by women and intended for women’s empowerment. There should be more studies of magazines such as *Ms.* (Farrell 1998), as well as of web sites and organizational newslet-

ters. Finally, we need to stop talking about how women are different from men and instead consider how (and if) men are different from women. Although this might sound like hair splitting, it is important to combat androcentrism and to acknowledge that men are gendered too, and, as in the case of the gender gap in 1996 (Norrander 1999), they might be the ones who are changing.

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# Women and Political Participation

## Introduction

This essay focuses on three questions: Why are so few women elected to public office in the United States? What theories might best explain that? Are the theories that explain patterns of women's office holding in one country useful in explaining patterns of office holding in other nations?

We briefly review the extent to which women participate in electoral politics as voters and as office holders in the United States, then discuss several theories that try to account for women's low rates of holding elected office. In regards to empirical research, we focus on the evidence relating to structural and political explanations for women's increasing, yet still limited, frequency of holding elected office in the United States. Finally, we examine explanations developed in other countries for patterns of women's elected office holding.

Political participation may be defined as "those activities of citizens that attempt to influence the structure of government, the selection of government authorities, or the

policies of government" (Conway 2000, 3). In a liberal culture that values freedom, equality, and democracy,

citizens are expected to engage in political activities, at least to the extent of voting in elections; citizens have options to participate even further, such as being active in a political party organization or running for public office. In the United States, however, only certain segments of the citizenry can effectively seek and win elected office. For most offices in most states, elected offices are disproportionately held by white males.

## Women's Participation in Electoral Politics

The U.S. Constitution's Nineteenth Amendment, ratified in 1920, established women's suffrage at the national level, although some states had already taken the initiative to enfranchise women. Rates of women's voting turnout, however, did not equal those of men until 1980's presidential election and 1986's midterm elections (Conway 2000, 37). In the 1990s women were equally as likely as men to engage in other types of political activities, such as

signing petitions, attending school board or city council meetings, and writing to state legislators or members of Congress (*Public Perspective* 1995).

Despite women's increased political involvement, they are much less likely than men to hold elected offices. In 2001, women constitute 13 percent of the U.S. Senate and 13.6 percent of the U.S. House of Representative. At the state level, women compose 22.3 percent of state legislators. At the city level in 2000, women served as mayors in 19 of the 100 largest cities and in almost 20 percent of cities with populations over 30,000. Compared to the late 1970s, women have made significant gains proportion of elected offices they hold (Center for American Women and Politics 1998a, 1998b, 1999, 2000).

However, the question remains: Why have women not made greater increases in their rate of elected office holding? The remainder of this paper addresses that question and considers three explanations for why more women are not elected to public office.

## Three Theories

Several different theoretical approaches—legal/institutional, sociological, psychological, rational choice, and political process—seek to explain patterns of participation in various types of political activities (Conway 2000; Conway, Steuernagel, and Ahern 1997; Fowler 1993; McGlen and O'Connor 1998; Rinehart 1992). One aspect of sociological theory emphasizes cultural explanations for the low proportion of public offices held by women. The patriarchal culture that has dominated American society with its social norms and role expectations, has assigned women to domestic life or narrowly prescribed work roles, such as clerk, secretary, nurse, or teacher. Social norms combined with limited educational and occupational opportunities prevented most women from obtaining the skills and resources necessary to compete successfully for public office. With the enactment of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited sex discrimination in employment, and the 1972 Higher Education Amendments, which prohibited sex discrimination in admissions to higher education programs, women gained the opportunity to acquire the skills and employment experiences that could

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facilitate running for and serving in elected office.

While women may have the skills and job experience necessary to hold office effectively, public attitudes must also be supportive, and citizens must be willing to vote for women. Opinion polls indicate that public attitudes have changed. For example, a 1970 Gallup poll indicated that 13 percent of voters said they would not vote for a woman candidate; by 1984, the proportion had dropped to seven percent. However, a poll conducted for the White House Project found that only 76 percent of those surveyed said they would support a woman for president. Barbara Lee, who initiated the White House Project, believes that percentage to reflect an unknown number of respondents who were giving what they thought was the socially desirable answer (Clift and Brazaitis 2000, 295).

A variant of the cultural theory focuses on the time demands associated with women's traditional roles of wife and mother and the frequent lack of family support for women seeking a job outside the home—let alone an elected office. By the end of the twentieth century, three-fifths of all women aged 16 and older worked outside the home; among women between the ages of 16 and 64, three-fourths worked outside the home. Use-of-time studies by Robinson and Godbey (1999) indicate that men and women who work outside the home do not share equally their household and childcare responsibilities. Some women, in effect, work two jobs: one at work, one at home.

A second explanation for women's low rates of elected office holding emphasizes—in addition to family care responsibilities and time demands associated with employment outside the home—the differential acquisition of skills relevant to a political career through involvement in nonpolitical activities. Although both men and women have the opportunity to acquire such skills through volunteer organizations, religious institutions in which lay persons play an active role, and work-related activities and organizations, men more frequently than women engage in those organizational activities that foster skill acquisition (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1996).

A third explanation for low rates of elected office holding by women highlights the roles of gatekeepers in determining who can successfully run for public office (Burrell 1993; Niven 1998; Norris 1997; Norris and Lovenduski 1995). Much of the research on why more women do not hold elected office, however, ignores the prior selection phase of office seeking. In that prior selection process, many potential women candidates may be discouraged from even entering the primary election nominating contest. Although primary elections to nominate a political party's candidates for the general election mitigate the influence of political gatekeepers relative to the past, when caucuses and conventions served as the formal nominating mechanism, gatekeepers retain substantial influence over who can successfully compete in the nomination phase of an election. Some research suggests that female candidates for the House of Representatives have not been disadvantaged in fundraising (Burrell 1994; Uhlener and Schlozman 1986), although that has varied across time and by type of election (Green 1998). Support from party leaders, interest group leaders, and campaign fundraisers is usually necessary for acquiring sufficient endorsements, financial resources, and volunteer workers to run a successful campaign for the political party's nomination. Inability to obtain that support discourages potential

candidates from seeking office. As most of these powerbrokers are men, women may be less likely to gain the support of gatekeepers and subsequently opt not to enter the contest for a party's nomination. One example of the effects of this selection stage on women's candidacies is Elizabeth Dole's withdrawal from the 2000 Republican presidential nomination contest because of her inability to raise enough money to run an effective nomination campaign. Scholars have paid limited attention to this selection process, yet it is undoubtedly a major contributor to women's limited access to elected office.

Recognition of the fundraising problem led to the formation of women's campaign support groups, or political action committees, such as Emily's List (which supports pro-choice Democratic women candidates) and WISH (which supports pro-choice Republican women candidates), which raise funds for state and national candidates. Research demonstrates that attaining elected office in the United States is, for most elected officials, a progression up a political career ladder, with the first rungs representing the local level (Francis and Kenny 2000; Schlesinger 1966). Women candidates' support groups are infrequently found at the local level, where most political careers begin.

### **Comparative Studies of the Candidate Selection Process**

Comparative studies of the candidate selection process emphasize the role of gatekeepers in determining who becomes a candidate. Pippa Norris points out that those who serve in elected office represent the demands of gatekeepers, "whether [gatekeepers] are voters, party members, financial supporters, or political leaders who select from the pool of applicants" (1997, 1). Norris's model of political recruitment resembles a "funnel of causality" with social background, resources, and motivations resulting in a pool of eligibles, from which the gatekeepers select whom they will endorse. This selection is in part constrained by electoral and party rules, as well as laws. Norris argues that an appropriate study of political recruitment must examine not only the attitudes and behaviors of candidates and gatekeepers, but also the institutional structure within which political recruiting occurs. In contrast to the United States, most other democracies' political party organization leaders determine who can run for office (see, for example, Erickson 1993 and 1997; Fukui 1997; Guadagnini 1993; Norris 1997; Sainsbury 1993; Wessels 1997).

While some scholars suggest that political elites do not discriminate against women, David Niven (1998) argues that perceptions of the effects of biases in political recruitment in the United States are based on inadequate, rudimentary and conflicting evidence. Most studies focus on the electoral success of women who are candidates in general elections, rather than on the ability of women to obtain their party's nomination. Niven focuses on four states, in each of which he examines the potential pool of women who could be candidates for state legislative office and the local party organization chairs who might play a significant role as gatekeepers. He tests two alternative explanations for gatekeepers' inclusion of women on potential candidate lists and for women's success (or lack thereof) in obtaining their party's nomination for state legislative office. One explanation—the outgroup effect—pinpoints gatekeepers' discrimination against those whom they see as different from themselves. The other explana-

tion—the distribution effect—suggests that selectors believe male candidates are more likely to be successful in the general election because they always have been successful. Niven's research suggests that both the outgroup effect and the distribution effect bias local party organization leaders' willingness to support women as candidates for state legislative office.

While Niven's research specifies the function of one type of gatekeeper, similar carefully-designed and executed research may prove the existence of other types of gatekeepers. Niven's study was restricted to one office in four states and one type of gatekeeper. To what extent do women who have the social background, resources, and motivation discussed by Norris not seek elected office because of the biases of various types of gatekeepers?

In her comprehensive examination of women's entry into American politics, Jo Freeman (2000) concludes that, in electoral and party politics, there are two paths to influence: the individual and the organized bloc. The individual requires sponsorship, which women do not often receive. The alternative, the organized bloc, provides necessary resources, such as votes, money, or

volunteers, but the formation of an organized bloc requires individuals who are willing to work together. As Freeman notes, "...empowerment requires group solidarity and resources. Both of these routes were fraught with problems for women and neither was readily available" (2000, 231).

Other factors inhibit the selection of women to run for elected office. The nature of the election district influences women's success rates. Gatekeepers are more likely to endorse women candidates seeking office in multimember districts and in electoral systems using some form of proportional representation (Rule and Zimmerman 1992). The type of office sought also influences the willingness of gatekeepers to support women candidates. Both public opinion surveys and experimental studies demonstrate that gender stereotypes exist in the public's view of candidates. Women are generally perceived as better able to handle domestic policy issues, such as education and social welfare, while men are viewed as better at dealing with policy issues such as finance, foreign policy, and national security (see Burrell 1994; Sapiro 1981–82).

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# "To Do Justly": The Integration of Women into the American Judiciary\*

In 1869, the state of Iowa admitted Arabella Mansfield to the Bar, making her the first woman to receive a license to practice law in the United States (Epstein 1993, 49). That same year, Myra Bradwell applied for an attorney's license in the state of Illinois. When the state refused her, she appealed her case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which denied her claim by an eight-to-one vote (*Bradwell v. Illinois* 83 U.S. 130 [1873]). In his concurring opinion, Justice Joseph Bradley argued that, "The paramount destiny and mission of woman are to fulfill the noble and benign offices of wife and mother. This is the law of the Creator" (83 U.S. 130 [1873]). Ironically, shortly before the Supreme Court announced its decision, another woman in Illinois, Adah Kepley, attained a license to practice law. The judge who granted this license believed that her admission to the Bar was "proper and in accord with the spirit of the age" (Berkson 1982, 288).<sup>1</sup>

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The first woman ever to serve in the American judiciary was Esther Morris, who in 1870 became the part-time justice of

the peace in South Pass Mining Camp, Wyoming (Berkson 1982, 287). It would be 52 years before a woman would arrive on the bench of a state supreme court: in 1922, Florence Allen was elected to the state supreme court of Ohio. In 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed Allen to the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, making her the first woman ever appointed to a federal court of general jurisdiction.<sup>2</sup> Her autobiography, *To Do Justly*, reveals that none of the judges she served with were in favor of her appointment. In fact, upon hearing of her appointment, "one of them went to bed for two days" (Allen 1965, 95).

The purpose of this essay is twofold: to provide a statistical overview of the integration of women into the American judiciary and provide a review of the literature in this area. Simply, what do we know about women on the bench? The integration of women into the judiciary has occurred at a remarkably slow pace. Even today, most women judges serve alone or in pairs. Consequently, much of

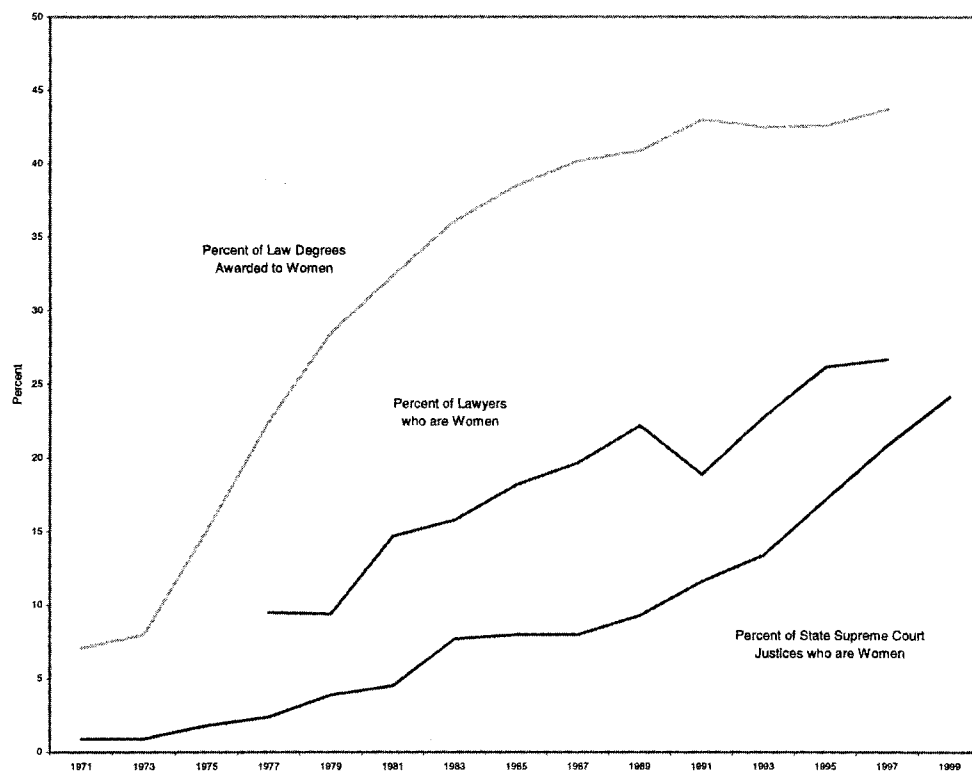
the research on women on the bench has focused on their status as "tokens" (see Kanter 1977; Yoder 1991): do women behave differently than their male counterparts, or do they blend in and conform to existing norms and institutional cultures? In order to conduct statistical analyses of the impact of gender on judicial decision making, most researchers have had to pool large amounts of data over a period of several years in order to develop samples with enough cases decided by women judges (see, for example, Crowe 2000; Davis, Haire, and Songer 1993; Gruhl, Spohn, and Welch 1981; Gyrski, Main, and Dixon 1986; Kritzer and Uhlman 1977; Kuersten and Manning 2000; Segal 2000; Songer, Davis, and Haire 1994). For this essay, I have compiled data from 1971 to 1999 on five indicators in an effort to begin exploring the integration of women into several layers of the American judicial hierarchy.

## The Eligibility Pool Theory and Data on Women in the Judiciary

One of the more prominent explanations for the slow integration of women into political institutions, particularly the U.S. Congress, is the "pipeline" theory. In the American electoral arena, there is a hierarchy of political offices that serves as a career ladder for elected officials. In other words, the typical career path for politicians is law school, private practice, then serving in local and state offices, and then running for Congress. Thus, once women begin attending law school and serving in these lower-level political offices in greater numbers, only then will we see serious increases in the number of women serving in the House and eventually the Senate (see, for example, Burrell 1994; Carroll 1994; Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Simon and Palmer 2000). A similar explanation has been offered for the dearth of women in the judiciary, known as the "eligibility pool" theory (Cook 1988; Martin 1997). The primary idea behind both the pipeline and eligibility pool theories is the same: there will be a time lag between increases in the number of women lawyers and increases in the number of women serving in judicial institutions.

Entry into the judicial hierarchy, however, is not nearly as open as the entry into the legislative hierarchy. While law is

**Figure 1**  
**Percent of Law Degrees Awarded to Women, Women Lawyers, and Women State Supreme Court Justices**



the most common career route for those who run for Congress (see, for example, McGlen and O'Connor 1998), a law degree is a prerequisite for judicial service. Until the 1960s, women were virtually barred from practicing law. While many of the nation's best law schools had formally eliminated their male-only admissions policies in the late nineteenth century, they admitted very few women for the next 70 years. Harvard did not admit women until 1950 and then held the number of women admitted at three to four percent well into the 1960s, even though applications from women nearly quadrupled (Epstein 1993, 52–53).

As Figure 1 shows, however, the percentage of law degrees awarded to women skyrocketed in the early 1970s.<sup>3</sup> By 1991, women earned well over 40% of law degrees. Women have, in a very short time—less than twenty years—nearly reached parity with men in law school attendance.<sup>4</sup>

However, the law profession has not mirrored women's dramatic increase in law school attendance. Figure 1 also shows that, although women received 44.7% of law degrees in 1997, only 26.7% of lawyers were women.<sup>5</sup> After graduating from law school, women are less likely to enter private practice than men and disproportionately tend to become government lawyers (Bowman 1998/99; Epstein 1993). In addition, women are much more likely to drop out of private practice seven to 10 years after law school, and there is evidence that this trend is becoming more prominent (see Bowman 1998/99, 159–65). The implication is that women leave the profession just as they become eligible for partner status, and they are doing so in increasing numbers. In 1999, only 15.6% of partners were female (National Association for Law Placement 2000; see also French 2000).

Unfortunately, complete time-series data on women who serve in the lower levels of state judiciaries are difficult to compile, but data on the number of female state supreme court justices are easily obtainable.<sup>6</sup> As Figure 1 shows, the percentage of female justices began a slow and steady rise in the early 1970s, when there were virtually no women on state supreme courts. In 1999, 24.2% of state supreme court justices were female, only three states had no women on their supreme courts (New Hampshire, South Dakota, and Wyoming), and 22 states had at least two women on their supreme courts. Michigan and Minnesota have even had female majorities. If these trends continue, women should reach parity with men within the next 15 to 20 years. On the other hand, if the number of women dropping out of private practice continues to rise, this could have ramifications for the speed at

which women gain membership to state high courts.

President Kennedy was the first president ever to announce publicly a commitment to appointing women to the national bench, but he only appointed one woman, Sarah Hughes, to the district courts (Goldman 1997, 180). Florence Allen served for 25 years as the only woman on the court of appeals. After Allen retired in 1959, it would be nine years until another woman, Shirley Hufstедler, received appointment to the court of appeals. As Figure 2 shows, the number of women in the federal judiciary, particularly the district courts, does not follow the same kind of steady increase exhibited in state supreme courts.<sup>7</sup>

President Jimmy Carter brought about the first real increase in the number of women on the federal bench. In 1978, the Omnibus Judgeship Act created 152 new judgeships, 40 of which were filled by female appointees (Martin 1982, 308). Carter made it very clear that he was committed to appointing women and minorities and reforming the nomination selection process. He once remarked that, "If I didn't have to get Senate confirmation of appointees, I could tell you flatly that ... 40 percent would be women" (Goldman 1997, 282). Under Carter, the percentage of women in the federal judiciary increased from 1.4% to 7% (Goldman 1997, 282).

Although the numbers of female federal judges continued to slowly rise under the Reagan and Bush administrations, the next substantial increases occurred under the Clinton administration. Despite the Senate's taking, on average, three months longer to appoint women and minority nominees than white male nominees (Biskupic 2000), Clinton appointed more women to the federal bench than all of his predecessors put together. During his first term, he appointed 42 white women, seven black

women, and two Hispanic women. Clinton also added the second woman to the U.S. Supreme Court, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Today, women make up 14.5% of district court judges and 14.9% of circuit court judges, and one woman serves as the chief judge of the Tenth Circuit.<sup>8</sup>

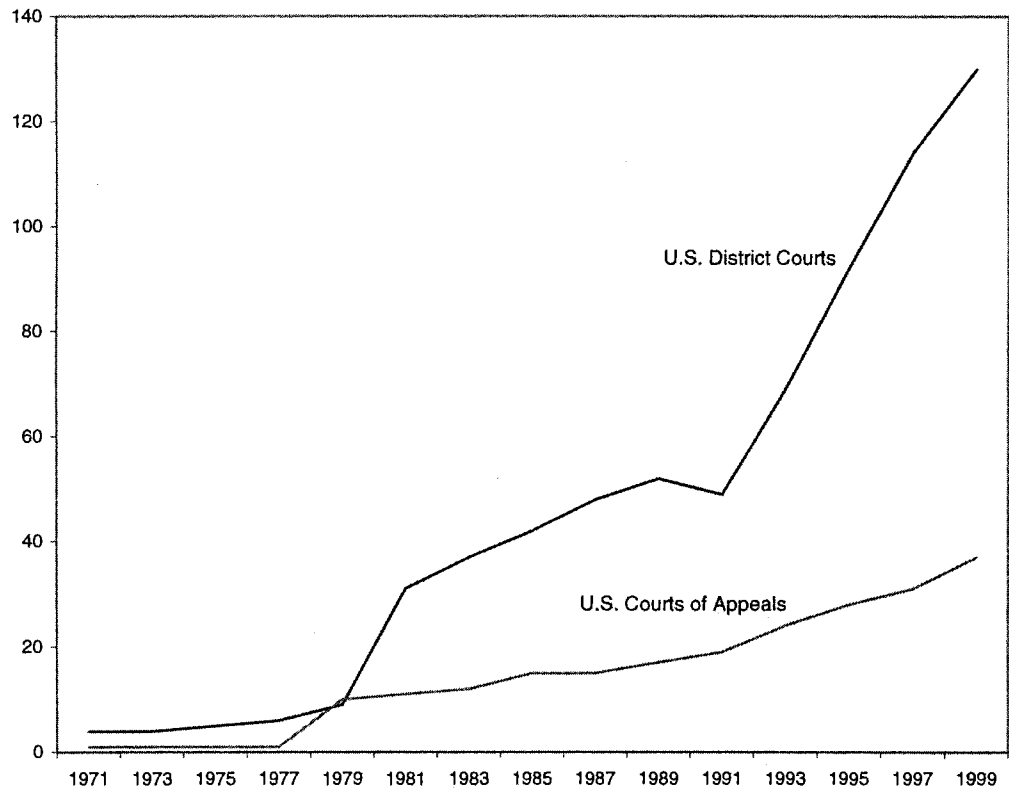
### The Impact of Women on the Bench

The question remains: Once women are on the bench, does it make a difference? What is the impact of increasing numbers of women judges? There is a general consensus that their impact is greatest in one particular area of law: sex discrimination. Research on state supreme courts, the U.S. courts of appeals and the U.S. Supreme Court has consistently shown that female judges tend to be the strongest supporters of women's rights claims, regardless of their ideology (Allen and Wall 1987; Cook 1981, 1988; Crowe 2000; Davis, Haire, and Songer 1993; Kuersten and Manning 2000; Martin 1990; Songer, Davis, and Haire 1994; but see also Segal 2000; Walker and Barrow 1985). Moreover, even a single woman justice may have a noticeable impact on case outcomes; the mere presence of a woman on the bench is one of the best predictors of decisions in favor of women filing sex-discrimination claims (Gryski, Main, and Dixon 1986; O'Connor and Segal 1990).

Substantially less consensus exists as to whether women judges employ different methods of legal reasoning or resolve cases using a "feminine jurisprudence." Drawing from Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* (1982), some scholars argue that women judges, because of their unique feminine experiences, would reject "an adversarial, dichotomous, zero-sum game perspective of the issues" presented in a case, and instead "suggest innovative resolutions that offer concessions to both sides" (Behuniak-Long 1992, 427). Thus, the integration of women into the American judiciary might result in the development of this difference jurisprudence (Finley 1989; Gilligan 1982; Karst 1984; Menkel-Meadow 1985; Sherry 1986).

Much of the research on whether women in the judiciary speak in this different voice has focused on Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. Early assessments suggested that, indeed, Justice O'Connor's "emerging jurisprudence ... exhibits a characteristically feminine perspective in its emphasis on contextual decisionmaking," particularly reflected in her tendency to write concurring opinions (Sherry 1986, 604;

**Figure 2**  
Number of Women in the Federal Courts



see also Behuniak-Long 1992; Sullivan and Goldzwig 1996). On the other hand, others have argued just the opposite: there is very little evidence that Justice O'Connor speaks in this "different voice" (Aliotta 1995; Davis 1993; Estrich and Sullivan 1989; Halatyn 1989; Maveety 1996; Van Sickle 1998).<sup>9</sup> In addition, research on the U.S. Courts of Appeals Ninth Circuit found that the men on the court spoke in a different voice as often as the women (Davis 1992-93), and a study of the Texas Supreme Court also found little evidence of a distinct difference jurisprudence among the four women who served from 1997 to 1999 (Abbate 2000). At any rate, there is clearly less consensus in this body of literature over the questions of whether women judges both exhibit a "different voice" and make substantive changes to traditional legal reasoning.

### Conclusions

So what do we know about women in the American judiciary? It seems clear that we are just beginning to explore several important questions. First, the eligibility pool theory does not entirely explain the slow integration of women into the court system (Cook 1981; Martin 1997). Women's rate of dropping out of private legal practice—one of the traditional occupational routes to the bench—could effect the eligibility pool for the judiciary in many ways. One possibility is that the number of women who could be tapped for potential judgeships is smaller than it could be. Another possibility is that women follow different career paths to the judiciary, and there seems to be some evidence for this. Women judges who serve on state supreme court are typically younger



than their male counterparts, are less likely to have prosecutorial experience, and less likely to have prior political experience, such as holding a state legislative office (Martin 1982; Martin and Pyle 1999). But women on federal courts are far more likely than men to have prior state judicial experience (Goldman 1995, 1997; Goldman and Slotnick 1997; Martin 1982). In other words, it appears that the judicial pipeline for women tends to follow a different route than the pipeline for men.

Second, given the low numbers of women in the judiciary, there are very little data on the impact of selection methods. Unlike the federal judiciary, states use a wide variety of methods to select their judiciaries, from partisan elections to merit selection and gubernatorial appointment. We are just beginning to explore how these different methods may impede or foster the integration of women. Within the existing literature, however, there is little consensus over which methods provide women with an equal or better chance of serving on state judiciaries (see, for example, Alozie 1996; Fund for Modern Courts 1985; Githens 1995). One study, however, found that in states with all-male supreme courts, women had a strong chance of being selected to fill a vacancy, regardless of the selection method (Bratton and Spill 2000). Once a state had a woman on its supreme court, though, the chance that another woman would be selected substantially dropped,

particularly in states that used an appointment method of selection. Thus, it appears that at both the state and federal levels, increasing the number of women judges depends heavily on the commitment of the chief executive. All of this suggests that numerical gains by women in the judiciary are not linear or constant; in some instances, they may actually create a certain amount of backlash.

Once women are on the bench, however, there is strong evidence that they are much more sympathetic to sex-discrimination claims. The presence of even one woman may foster an increase in a court's support for women's rights claims, which suggests that women have the ability to change the behavior of their male-colleagues. On the other hand, there is less evidence that women judges develop new systems of reasoning and jurisprudence, at least in terms of Gilligan's different voice theory. Still, the entry of women into all levels of the legal system has had a profound impact on the profession and the legal rights of women, for it has been women attorneys and judges who have brought sex discrimination from inside and outside the courts onto the legal and political agenda (see, for example, Abrahamson 1993; Angel 1991; Bowman 1998/99; Schafran 1985). For this reason alone, it is important that we continue to explore women's integration into the judiciary and their potential impact on legal institutions and practices.

## Notes

\* This essay grew out of a paper presented at the Women and Politics Conference, cosponsored by the Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission, American University, and the Women and Politics section of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., 2000. The author wishes to thank her undergraduate research assistant, Elizabeth Myers, for her assistance in the collection of the data used in this essay.

1. See Bowman (1998/99) for a list of biographies of these early women lawyers.

2. Genevieve Rose Cline had been appointed to the Federal Customs Court by President Coolidge in 1928 (Goldman 1997, 51).

3. These data were compiled from the National Center for Education Statistics, *Chartbook of Degrees Conferred, 1969-70 to 1993-4*, "Table 5—Percent of bachelor's master's, first-professional, and doctor's degrees conferred to women." The data for 1995 and 1997 are from National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics*. The data for 1999 are not yet available.

4. The number of women in the Japanese legal profession also appears to be increasing at a steady pace. In 1995, 19.8% of those who passed the Japanese Bar exam were women. In 1999, 28.7% of those who passed the Bar exam were women, a 10% increase in just five years. The Japanese legal system provides an interesting contrast to the U.S., in that the Japanese Bar is substantially smaller than the American Bar. For example, in 1998 in Japan, 812 people passed the Bar (25% of which were women). That same year in the state of Texas alone,

1,580 people passed the Bar (42% of which were women). The data from Japan are from the Ministry of Justice and the Supreme Court of Japan. The data from Texas are from the State Bar of Texas, *Class of November 1998: Employment Report*, available at [www.texasbar.com](http://www.texasbar.com).

5. These data were compiled from the series, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, "Employed Civilians, by Occupation, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin." The numbers in Figure 1 are actually from the category "Lawyers and Judges," because the *Statistical Abstracts* did not split this category until 1988. The percentage of judges, however, was typically only .01 to .02, and thus "Lawyers and Judges" is essentially a measure of lawyers. The data prior to 1977 are not available, as the abstract did not have Lawyers and Judges as a category for female occupations. The data for 1999 are not yet available.

6. These data were compiled from the Council of State Government's series, *State Elective Officials and the Legislatures*.

7. All of the data are from *The American Bench*, except for 1981 which is from the *National Roster of Women Judges, 1980*, (Larry Berkson and Donna Vandenberg. Chicago: American Judicature Society), and 1983 which was constructed from Goldman (1997). *The American Bench* is not available for these years.

8. There are currently 330 women judges in Japan (This number is from the Ministry of Justice and the Supreme Court of Japan).

9. Considerably less work has been done on Justice Ginsburg, but preliminary assessments suggest that her jurisprudence does not exhibit a different voice either (Bonneau and Baker 1998; Varnan 2000).

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# Women's Leverage on Social Policymaking in Japan\*

## Introduction

Japan's social policy has been categorized as a "residual" system, not only because of its low public expenditure (Hill 1996, 21) but also because of the weakness of its institutional form, which relies on private measures (Bryson 1992, 106–10). According to Esping-Anderson's three welfare-state regimes—social democratic, liberal, and conservative, classified by the criteria of decommodification and cross-class solidarity (1990, 21–29)—the Japanese welfare system "combines—in fairly equal measure—key elements of both the liberal-residual and the conservative-corporatist" models (1997, 187).<sup>1</sup> Japan, at the same time, had followed the pattern of "a paternalist welfare state, in which male bureaucrats would administer regulations and social insurance 'for the good' of breadwinning industrial workers and their dependants" (Skocpol 1995, 12). Indeed, the Japanese social insurance system is bound by Bismarck's legacy (which basically qualified male employees as eligible for insurance coverage), and its policymaking has been dominated by males: ruling-party politicians, top bureaucrats, and representatives of pressure groups (See Nakano 1997, 13–63, 81–85, 89–94).

In recent years, however, circumstances surrounding Japanese social policy have changed remarkably. Social policy is now one of the most important issues in Japanese politics,<sup>2</sup> and in December 1997, the Japanese government established a new social welfare system for the elderly, the Long-Term Care Insurance Law (LTCI), which has been in effect since April 1, 2000. The LTCI system promises universal coverage for all elderly Japanese in need of care. Half of its financing comes from mandatory insurance premiums paid by those aged 40 or older, and the other half comes from the government, whereas the previous system was financed entirely by tax revenue. Social welfare corporations—which were charitable organizations strictly regulated by the government—formally monopolized the previous welfare service's provisions to the elderly. In order to fulfill the growing need for care services for the elderly, however, the new system allows all welfare providers, including for-

profit companies as well as nonprofit organizations, to offer these services, as long as they meet specific standards. The new system aims both to improve the quality of care for the elderly, and to reduce heavy burdens placed on family caregivers, particularly women, who often have been exclusively responsible for caring for their elderly relatives under the patriarchal notion that women should remain at home. Moreover, women themselves initiated this change to a maternally-oriented welfare system (Skocpol 1992, 30–62), as they recognized that the problem of caring for the elderly was predominantly a women's issue and thus championed policy reform.<sup>3</sup>

In this article, I focus on the outstanding leverage of women on social policymaking, and discuss women's influence from three aspects: the resources, the strategies, and the channels for lobbying. In doing so, I enumerate vivid examples of women's collective challenges to the patriarchal policy community.<sup>4</sup> I base my report on case studies<sup>5</sup> of two action groups that exerted their leverage on Japanese policy.

One of these organizations is the Women's Association for Improving the Welfare of the Elderly (henceforth, the Welfare Association), which is organized on a nationwide scale; the other is the Life Club Cooperative Society in Kanagawa (henceforth, the Kanagawa Club), which is based in a prefecture. The two groups contributed different perspectives to the establishment of the new system. While the former initiated the concept of "socializing care"—which underpinned the universalist approach of the new system—and succeeded in setting an agenda for policy change, the latter exemplified a model for the new type of service provider engendered by the new system. This model sought to combine the public character of welfare services, grounded in social solidarity, with the market orientation necessary for practical and effective care service management.

The political involvement of these women also provided Japanese people with a lesson in democracy: women's political actions basically consist of direct participation. In the U.S. and Europe, citizens' interest groups<sup>6</sup> are increasingly seen as political insiders, and scholars regard their direct actions as political institutions in their own right (e.g., Costain and McFarland 1998; McAdam, McCarthy, and

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Zald 1996; Parry, Moyser, and Day 1992; Ridley and Jordan 1998).<sup>7</sup> Japanese political scientists, however, have not yet developed an interpretive framework for analyzing citizens' direct actions. Most Japanese researchers seem reluctant to adopt a positive approach when they examine the impact of citizens' collective activities on policymaking, and remain doubtful about the feasibility of harmonizing direct political participation and a representative system. Nonetheless, the women's direct actions have obviously changed the Japanese political scene. Their activities expanded the public sphere and democratized political institutions (Cohen and Arato 1994, 565).

### Care for the Elderly and Middle-Class Women

The previous social welfare system for the elderly, established in 1963, was designed for low-income people without kin. Elderly people in need of care were eligible as long as they met the conditions set out in a means test. Elderly applicants from middle-income households received little if any public services, even if they suffered from more serious physical or mental disabilities than the low-income elderly did. The previous system, in other words, operated under a traditional Japanese assumption, specifically the belief that many problems of daily life could be resolved with the aid of extended family or close-knit communities, relying, above all, on the work of women.

By the early 1980s, however, demographic and social changes had led to an erosion of traditional social patterns. As the elderly population grew, urbanization brought an overwhelming increase in middle-income households and the number of nuclear families. At the same time, women's increasing educational achievements and workforce participation helped transform their collective social role and consciousness. Such changes gave rise to new social welfare demands, with middle-class households pressing the government for assistance in caring for elderly parents and young children. Deciding who should take care of disabled elderly family members, in particular, has been one of the most serious issues that middle-class households have had to face. It was clear that the previous system no longer met the demands of an urbanized society. The Japanese government, however, was not only reluctant to respond to society's demands, but it also enacted reforms that seemed to be taking social policy in a reverse direction.

In 1981, the Japanese government introduced cutbacks in public service expenditures. The cuts were ideologically based on Japanese neoliberalism (Otake 1999, 373–96), which emphasized economic liberalism combined with traditional Japanese virtues. The government introduced two new directions in social welfare policy: an annual expenditure control within a system of budget ceilings, and a campaign for a “Japanese-style welfare society.” The latter aimed to revive the idea of the extended family and community solidarity in order to use family members and the neighborhood as the primary welfare resources (Campbell 1992, 220). In essence, the government intended to offset the shortage of public welfare services caused by its spending cuts with the hypothetical self-help efforts of families and communities. However, the cutbacks made access to public services much more limited for the middle-class elderly, which middle-class women felt was extremely unfair. The

mismatch between the reality of people's living situations and the party line of public policy spurred women to act.

In 1982, a group of disenfranchised women—forced to leave their work and give up social activities outside the home because of caregiving obligations—held a symposium in Tokyo, hoping to begin a campaign against the notion of a Japanese neoliberal welfare society. The response to the symposium was even more enthusiastic than the organizers had expected, and the sponsoring group thus decided to set up an association with the objective of improving conditions for the aged in society. In 1983, 298 of those women organized the Welfare Association, and by 1998 its membership had grown to 1,500.

Another grievance with the previous system was that it did not meet people's needs in terms of the quality of care provided. Public service recipients were not allowed to choose the type of services they desired, but had to go along with the programs that the government designated for them. The authorities' convenience—not users' needs—dictated how public services were managed. As the social welfare corporations fed entirely off of government subsidies and managed themselves in compliance with government guidance, there was little competition among providers, and welfare corporations had no incentive to improve their services.

Some members of the Kanagawa Club—which was founded in 1971 as a cooperative society (co-op) that purchased organic or nonchemically-treated foods at reasonable prices—were clearly aware of this problem. They were highly sensitive to social problems affecting their daily lives, and their experience in improving their own living standards through co-op activities made it difficult for the club members to tolerate poor-quality social services. Thus in 1985 the members established a welfare service enterprise that would provide high-quality services for the elderly—the kind that they themselves would hope to receive. The club's network of nonprofit home care services now comprises 39 satellite groups with 2,314 members providing home-help services, day care services, meals-on-wheels, and transport services for the disabled elderly in Kanagawa Prefecture.

The demands of the Welfare Association and the Kanagawa Club go beyond the need to maintain a basic standard of living, or aspirations to improve quality of life. Their demands center more around social and cultural issues than material ones (Berry and Schildkraut 1998, 137). The policymaking community, however, is so geared toward pursuit of economic growth that it has scarcely considered social issues. This rigidity in policymaking has forced women to press their claim through collective activities that have developed outside of established political institutions.

### Collective Activities of Unemployed Married Women

Middle-class, unemployed married women constitute the majority of the members of these two groups. However, the Welfare Association includes professional women of social influence, such as commentators, journalists and scholars; the Kanagawa Club lacks distinguished female public figures. Most members of the Welfare Association are in their fifties and sixties, while most members of the Kanagawa Club are in their thirties and forties. The two groups share a common pattern of “bottom-up” decision

making that proceeds according to the initiative of a small group. The Welfare Association has prefectural branches, which are divided into small groups that allow members to discuss subjects of interest comfortably. The conclusions of the small groups' discussions are then passed on to headquarters. The members of the Kanagawa Club are also divided into small groups of fewer than 10 people. Each small group regularly holds meetings to discuss problems related to its members' everyday activities. The headquarters staff pools small groups' opinions and proposals to shape the club's annual action plan. Their decisions adhere to consensus rule rather than majority rule: members carefully listen to others' opinions, and every member gets a chance to speak freely.<sup>8</sup>

The relationship among members of each of the two groups is more horizontal than vertical, as the opinions of leaders and regular members carry equal weight and initiative belongs to the members as a whole rather than an oligarchy of leaders. Although the Welfare Association retains some well-known women among its members, these women do not necessarily steer the decisions of the other members. All members share the responsibility for organizing campaigns and events. The only difference in members' respective roles might be that well-known women are more concerned than others about the group's publicity.

The first Japanese example of this kind of women's movement, in which unemployed married women take initiative, was a mothers' group set up in Tokyo's Suginami ward in 1954 to campaign against atomic bombs. By the 1970s, grass roots movements of unemployed married women had become a significant force in Japanese society, and they flourished further in the 1980s (Tanaka 1998, 112; EPA 1997, 6).<sup>9</sup> While the unemployed, married women's grass roots movements are widespread, women's movements influenced by the second wave of Western feminism—which focused on securing equal rights and opportunities for women—have been less prevalent in Japan than in North America and Europe. "Women's Lib" movements burst onto the scene in Japan in 1970, but despite a streak of popularity, they lost their potency by the end of the decade. Mikanagi points out that one of the reasons for the stagnation of practical activism in Japanese feminism was that the majority of Japanese women, whose labor-market participation had always lagged far behind that of women in Western countries, were not conscious of the unfairness inherent in the gender division of labor (1999, 69). Many Japanese women, economically dependent on their husbands, had rarely experienced sexism or sexual harassment. As unemployed, married women, in fact, they had not been exposed to the inflexible assumptions and practices of the male-oriented socioeconomic system. Women's thought processes have allowed them to focus on their everyday concerns. However, they also have found enough time to engage in noneconomic activities, and it is important to note that often they are well educated.<sup>10</sup> Their intellectual energy, which cannot be confined to the home, stimulates them into social and political activities, and encourages them to form nonhierarchical relationships with other members of women's groups. Such well-educated women may no longer be perceived merely as the organizational rank and file, content to follow the leadership of a few key opinion makers.

### **Women's Challenges to the Entrenched Policy Community**

The collective activities of ordinary people generally "lack the stable resources" (Tarrow 1998, 5) of money,

organizational power, and access to political powerbrokers that an established lobby can draw on. Cress and Snow group the resources that mobilize powerless people into "four categories: moral, material, informational, and human" (1998, 81). The women's groups considered in this study faced a shortage of material resources, but they made very good use of informational and human resources; they employed knowledge and expertise that they had accumulated through their practice in daily lives. How did they develop their intangible resources?

The Welfare Association conducted two nationwide surveys, one on the current state of government-provided welfare services, the other on the actual conditions of caregiving at home. They found that, although the range of available public welfare services for the elderly was fairly extensive, many residents had limited access to these services. The surveys revealed the extent of social isolation that caregivers often experienced, and they indicated that the heavy burdens of care put the families under great strain, and could even lead to abuse of the elderly in their care. These findings were perhaps the first public acknowledgment of the scope of the problem of care for the elderly, and the first time that anyone pinpointed specific defects in the social welfare policy. Using these surveys, the Association proposed that society as a whole—rather than individual families—should support and care for the elderly, a concept they called "socializing care."

On the other hand, the Kanagawa Club developed its welfare provision model—the "Mutual Support Group"—from the principle underlying its co-op activities: The realization of an improved quality of life through mutual support at the neighborhood level. In order to be as flexible as possible in responding to users' needs, the Club's enterprise intended to offer services during both the night and holiday periods, when public service facilities are usually closed. It also introduced a unique working approach, based on cooperative management and derived from the group's purchasing system, which obtains higher-quality goods at lower prices by eliminating brokers and buying directly from producers. People who want to work as caregivers are required, according to their financial means, to invest money in this enterprise in order to build up its capital funding. These investments give the enterprise's members the right to be treated as comanagers who not only work for the enterprise but also share responsibility for its management and direction.

The goal of this comanagement system is not to make a profit but to provide necessary and useful services at reasonable prices. The enterprise, however, needs to generate enough income to cover its overhead. If it goes into the red, it must make up deficits with its capital. Any surplus earnings are plowed back into the enterprise. The worker/managers have to be serious about management in order to offer better-quality services at lower prices, and thus compete with rival public service providers. This means that market forces now directly influence welfare services, consequently forming a "social market" (Brown, Kenny, and Turner, with Prince 2000, 98–99). The comanagement system contributed to transforming unpaid mutual aid in caregiving into paid work, and as a result, it created new job opportunities for unemployed married women who had previously performed uncompensated labor.

The Welfare Association and the Kanagawa Club presented their respective systems to the government as viable alternatives to federal policy. Despite their similari-

ties in resource mobilization, the two groups differed in the strategies they used to persuade the government to adopt their alternatives.

The Welfare Association, as part of its campaign to raise public awareness of the crisis in care for the elderly, presented the results of its surveys at a symposium held during the group's annual meeting. The group's chairperson was Keiko Higuchi, a leading women's issues commentator who used her media status to publicize the need for a new policy on care for the elderly. At the same time, several well-known journalists who were members of the group—such as Yukiko Okuma, an editorial writer for the nationwide newspaper *Asahi Shimbun*, and Sachiko Murata, a social affairs editor for the national television network N.H.K.—decided to publicize the reality of caregiving at home. The plight of family caregivers came into the public eye with headlines like “Nursing Hell.” The campaign for socialized care gradually gained support from the mass media, leading the public to accept the necessity of such a solution.

The ability of the Kanagawa Club to provide better welfare services and a superior performance to that of public providers, on the other hand, drew the attention of some core Ministry of Health and Welfare (MHW) bureaucrats, the planners of social policy. In 1994, when the Kanagawa Club applied for corporate status for its new welfare service enterprises, it was given the opportunity to initiate discussions with top welfare bureaucrats. Approval of incorporation is normally awarded by the prefectural administration. In this case, the approval procedure became so complicated that the welfare ministry, which reserves the right to intervene in disputes over welfare enterprise incorporation, took the issue away from the prefecture.<sup>11</sup> At this point the government was discussing plans for a new social welfare system, and the Kanagawa Club served as a useful example for the bureaucrats who were exploring new forms of service provision.

The bureaucrats, who had already noted the inefficiency of existing social welfare corporations and the decline since the mid-1980s in the standard of care provided by those services (Eto 2000, 28), had been struck by the possibilities offered by the Kanagawa Club. During the lengthy approval procedure, members of the Kanagawa Club held detailed discussions with the bureaucrats to explain their welfare activities, and after their incorporation was authorized, the MHW dispatched a young welfare bureaucrat to monitor the enterprise's operations for a period. The welfare ministry became increasingly convinced of the merits of the “social market model.”

The difference in approach of the two groups is a reflection of the different characters of their memberships. Because some of its members happened to be journalists, the Welfare Association was able to adopt a strategy of influence, using mass media aimed at raising awareness of its cause among the general public and policymakers (Cobb and Elder 1983, 141–50; Lipsky 1968, 1151–53). According to Higuchi, society at large had gradually accepted the group's central thesis as a common-sense idea (1993, 1). As for the Kanagawa Club, its “vital sense based on the lifeworld” (Sato 1994, 108–20) was not only endorsed by those who used its welfare services, but it also won respect from government policymakers.

The Japanese social policy formulation process begins with bureaucrats drafting a bill, which they send to an advisory council for deliberation. The advisory council, which comprises representatives only of interest groups

that are affected by the bill along with experts in the field, aims to balance differing objectives among the various interest groups. Once the advisory council completes its deliberations, it fleshes out the framework of the bill, then sends the draft to the ruling party, which tries to create compromise agreements between the claims of pressure groups and the agendas of the relevant ministries. Following the ruling party's approval of the bill, the cabinet submits the bill to the Diet. This process has become formalized, with a fixed lineup of typical participants, and it appears to be an exclusive community. Yet, while the crucial input for policymaking usually comes from the welfare bureaucrats, the advisory council also plays an important role in incorporating alternative opinions in a draft. The two women's groups made very effective use of this political institution in their lobbying.

In 1989, the welfare ministry appointed scholars and experts to research a proposal for a new social welfare system for the elderly. Three women among the appointees—Higuchi, Okuma, and university professor Takako Sodei—were members of the Welfare Association. Higuchi and Sodei subsequently served on the advisory council, established in 1995, which developed a draft of the new system. In advisory council discussions, these two strongly opposed other committee members' proposal to award cash benefits to family caregivers. Higuchi and Sodei argued that such cash payments would mitigate against reducing the heavy burdens placed on domestic caregivers. The proposal to offer cash benefits was eventually withdrawn.

In 1996, immediately after the advisory council concluded its deliberations about the proposed new system, the Welfare Minister held a public forum to ask those who were interested in the new system for their opinions concerning the draft, which incorporated the philosophy of the “social market model.” Two members of the Kanagawa Club, Kyoko Matagi and Yasuko Ogawa, were invited to address the forum and they presented the benefits of their welfare enterprise system to the audience. The general public thus gained an even greater awareness of the effectiveness of their model.

## Conclusion

The nature of collective activities by citizens in Japan underwent a dramatic change in the 1980s (Kurihara 1999, 339–46). Japanese social movements before that time were characterized by their uncompromising opposition to the established political regime. Subsequent movements, however, have rejected a straightforwardly confrontational stance. Instead, they prefer to propose alternatives to the status quo.<sup>12</sup> One of the factors behind this shift was the government's 1981 cutback in spending on public services, which forced many people to take steps to improve their situation by themselves. Increasing self-reliance convinced activists that public policy was not always properly conceived to fulfill people's needs, so they would be better off proposing their own programs. By that time, activists had developed sufficient skills to enable them to develop effective alternatives.

The two women's groups provide characteristic illustrations of this broader post-1980s trend. Cutbacks in social services led them to become involved in the creation of new policy. They drew attention to paternalistic defects in social policy, which male policymakers had overlooked. Women not only pressed the government to find a solu-

tion, but also offered their own alternatives, which had been shaped out of their everyday experiences. They succeeded in building their alternatives into the framework of new social policies. But their approach is much more pragmatic than the ideological style of male activists. The women's groups used the Japanese political apparatus in order to achieve their goals. In addition, the key to their success lay in their "feminine" thinking, and "the resource of time and money that their status offers them" (Ueno 1997, 276) sustains their activities. The extent of their impact on society and politics, therefore,

## Notes

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1. However, Esping-Andersen avoids specifically classifying Japan as one of these three regimes because its welfare system "is still in the process of evolution" (1990, 187).

2. Thirty-three percent of the general annual expenditure, with the exception of government debt-related spending and spending by local governments, consists of social service expenditure for health care, public pensions, and social welfare ("White Paper of the Prime Minister's Office" 1999).

3. Two other factors contributed to this policy change: demographic and socioeconomic changes (see Peng 2000, 87–114), and changes in government rule that led to the destabilization of the established policy community. The fundamental policy underlying the new system originated during a period that saw the initiation of anti-LDP coalition governments in 1993, and three-party coalition government—including the LDP—in 1996 (See Eto 2000, 21–50). These "power shuffles" (Otake 1999, 11) encouraged women to become more involved in policymaking.

4. The percentage of female policymakers in the Diet remains low, with women accounting for 17.1 percent of Upper House members and 7.35 percent of Lower House members as of June 2000. Mikanagi accounts for the obstacles to Japanese female participation in policymaking (1999, 123–68). Iwamoto also describes how the male-dominated bureaucracy, which strongly influences policymaking in Japan, had excluded women from participation in its higher ranks (1997, 8–39).

5. The case studies are based on interviews conducted by the author with these groups' members. I have also drawn on the groups' materials, including bulletins and newsletters, which are unlisted in the references. Regarding the Welfare Association, see Eto 2001.

6. Political scientists tend to observe citizens' action groups in terms

has been underestimated by orthodox feminists in Japan.<sup>13</sup> Yet their activities obviously have feminist implications, insofar as they widened the political influence of women and improved the conditions of women's lives. Their direct actions corrected some of the inadequacies of a representative democracy that did not—and does not—always function on behalf of politically powerless people (Sugita 1997, 181–91). We are confident that this female leverage has contributed to the revitalization of Japanese politics.

of "interest groups," while sociologists generally view these as "social movements." According to Burstein, however, there is "no fundamental discontinuity" between the roles and functions of citizens' interest groups and those of social movements (1998, 45).

7. When citizens' mass protest groups first gained prominence in the U.S. in the 1960s, and in Western Europe in the 1970s, they were also "seen as lying outside the bounds of normal politics" (Dalton 1993, 8).

8. This decision making pattern is common to community volunteer groups' activities in Japan (Nawata 1998, 115–18).

9. The main concerns of these groups are lifestyle issues, such as welfare, health care, education, environmental protection, and community revitalization.

10. The percentage of female high school graduates who advance to junior colleges or four-year colleges has risen to a record high of 47.6 percent, while the corresponding figure for male students is 37.2 percent. This upward trend began in 1989. However, approximately 40 percent of women with higher education later resign their jobs due to marriage or childbirth. The corresponding percentage among college-educated women in the U.S., France, and Germany is roughly 20 percent (the Cabinet Office in Japan, in 1998).

11. Most social welfare corporations are generally founded by religious, educational, and health care organizations. This was the first time that a citizens' group had applied for this status.

12. This shift in orientation corresponds to the shift that occurred in the United States. As Berry explains, protest-oriented movements decline in power after "achieving their immediate goals," whereas citizens' groups that "were never protest oriented," such as consumers' groups, environmental groups, and many other kinds of citizens' lobbies, "have enjoyed unprecedented prosperity in the last 25 years." He adds that, "never before have they been so firmly institutionalized into the policymaking process" (1993, 31).

13. How feminists regard the unemployed married women's movements varies according to their ideological viewpoints. For example, so-called "ecological feminists" are rather in favor of them.

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# Women's Policy Leadership in the United States

Today's policymaking process encompasses a broad range of participants: legislative, executive, and judicial office holders; members of the bureaucracy; and leaders of nongovernmental organizations, including nonprofit and volunteer organizations, private businesses, and interest groups. During the past three decades, women have become significant players in American policymaking, though their success rates have been uneven. Since local jurisdictions have provided better opportunities for women to influence the policy process, I ask the question: What roles do women play as policy influentials and leaders in local government decision making?

## Definitions and Fallacies

I must clarify several points at the outset. First, the discussion of "women qua women" implies that all women hold the same views and that it is possible to view women as a single force in politics and

policy. This is a fallacy that we need to put to rest before we can truly understand women's leadership roles in politics. Women reflect as broad a spectrum of views as do men. Often,

discussions of women's roles in politics exclude all women but those who support and advocate the organized women's rights movement. However, there are women outside of this movement who speak for a variety of disparate causes, and may also serve as elected office holders.

A second fallacy relates to the idea that one can separate governmental units and institutions. It is increasingly difficult to differentiate "levels" of government. "Jurisdictions of all types—nation-states, states, provinces, cities, counties, and special districts—are losing their borders" (Strange 1996). A discussion of local governance and the role of women in leadership positions in these jurisdictions is to some degree a discussion of participation and leadership in a perhaps artificial or incomplete construct.

A third fallacy relates to the bureaucracy. Bureaucrats are not automatons who blindly carry out administrative and legislative mandates. Often, people do not fully appreciate or understand the significant leadership roles that members of the bureaucracy may play in setting policy

agendas and implementing public policies. Many bureaucrats are women who may be "hidden" players, and because they are not seen, they often are not recognized as playing leadership roles in the development of public policy.

Finally, it is essential to remember that leadership in politics must itself be understood as taking place in nongovernmental as well as governmental institutions. In some cases nongovernmental institutions develop policies to which governmental units are forced to respond. For example, environmental pollution often leads to public demands for clean-up efforts. Such was the case after the Exxon Valdez oil spill, when the federal government moved in to help repair the environmental devastation.

Nonetheless, women wield significant power in American political decision making—in the apparent public sector at all levels of government, as well as in the private nongovernmental sector. Women are a force, albeit not a unified force, with which policymakers must contend. It is important to remember that women compose a majority of the voters in almost all elections in the United States.

In recent years, women have had their most visible electoral successes in the arena of local politics. Though women's electoral successes have been on the upswing, women have not been too successful in national congressional races. In 2001 there were 13 women in the U.S. Senate and 59 members in the House of Representatives. Women have been most successful campaigning in special district, school district, city and town, and county elections. For example, in 1999, women may have caused the defeat of Missouri's Proposition B, a measure that would have allowed citizens to carry concealed weapons. In fact, in the districts of St. Louis County that voted most heavily against this proposition—all of which had heavy female voter turnout—women were the victors in 15 of the 17 school board elections with female candidates.<sup>1</sup> Women have also been successful as political insiders, working through interest groups to influence public policy in the local arena, where access to elected decision makers is often less restricted than it is at the national level.

## Participation and Leadership

As noted above, we should view participation and leadership in local politics in

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terms of three elements: elective office, the bureaucracy, and, nongovernmental organizations. Though it is difficult to separate the layers of government and scrutinize only local government, it is certainly possible to focus attention on local units. And, despite women's not sharing uniform attitudes and perspectives on policy issues, and not necessarily voting as a bloc, it is reasonable to examine the role that women play in influencing public policy in local settings.

### *Elected Office*

Women have been increasingly successful in their campaigns for public office in local jurisdictions. However, some regions are more prone than others to have elected women office holders. Despite national trends and an increasing homogeneity in national culture fostered by the mass media and education, southern states are not as likely to elect women to public offices as are eastern and western states. Mississippi, Kentucky, Arkansas and Tennessee had the lowest female voter participation rates of any of the 50 states in the first half of the 1990s.<sup>2</sup> The states with the highest female participation rates tend to be in the North and the West. Thus, Montana, Oregon, South Dakota, Wyoming and Minnesota showed the highest female voter turnouts in 1992 and 1994 (Institute for Women's Policy Research 1996, 44). There are also more female elected officials in northern and western states than in southern states.

Women hold many executive, managerial, and administrative positions in local governments (Center for Women in Government 2000). In 2000, 203 of the 978 American cities with more than 30,000 residents had female mayors. By the year 2001, 12 of America's one hundred largest cities had women mayors.<sup>3</sup> In 1992 there were 493,830 elected officials of local governments in the United States. This number includes mayors, city managers (who are appointed), town and city council members, school board members, and so on. Women filled more than 100,000 of these positions. Just under 25 percent of white elected officials were women and over one-third of minority elected officials were women.<sup>4</sup> These numbers represent a dramatic shift in female office holding from two decades earlier. (These data are almost 10 years old. There are more women holding elected office today as the figures for mayors, school board members, etc. illustrate.)

Women who are chief executives of their jurisdictions are by definition holding leadership positions. Women in legislative bodies present a different picture. However, women in legislative bodies increasingly hold leadership positions. Legislative leadership is a function of several factors including majority party status, policy expertise, friendship networks, and seniority. As more women incumbents are re-elected to seats in city and county councils, they are more likely to become the chairs of important committees. (In nonpartisan councils, party status is not necessarily a condition for committee leadership.)

One may make this same observation about state legislative politics and congressional politics. In 1999, the State of Washington had the highest percentage of women in state legislative leadership positions with 44.4 percent of all leadership positions held by women. Connecticut followed with 42.9 percent, then New Hampshire (37.5 percent) and Maine (33.3 percent).<sup>5</sup> If one looks at policy leadership—i.e., committee chairs—the

state that ranks first in female leadership is Washington (78.8 percent), followed by Colorado (45.8 percent), Maine (41.7 percent), and Vermont (37 percent)<sup>6</sup>—all northern and western states. The states that rank lowest in female leadership are South Carolina (3.6 percent), Pennsylvania (2.8 percent), Mississippi (2.7 percent), and Arkansas (2.6 percent)<sup>7</sup>—all southern states with the exception of Pennsylvania. Comparable data are not available for local councils, but there are proportionately many more women in local councils than in either state or federal legislative bodies and thus more opportunities for women to serve in local leadership positions.

Many politically successful women—defined in this instance as women who win elective office—focus their attention on issues that are broadly defined as children's and families' concerns. Women are often found chairing education committees, welfare committees, and childcare committees. Budget or public works committees are rarely within the purview of female legislators (Dolan 1997). Also, there is a body of literature that shows that women legislators are more likely to be politically liberal than are men in similar positions, and another body of literature suggests that even when women are not in leadership positions in legislative bodies they are often able to raise questions, focus the debate, and be seen as cue givers on issues that are of particular concern to the advocates of women's and children's rights.<sup>8</sup> For example, Darcy, Welch, and Clark observe that women in legislative bodies are often responsible for making men "more liberal," and suggest that with more women serving in legislatures "we might see ... men moving in a more liberal (direction)" (1987, 154). Reingold, in her study of women legislators in California and Arizona found that men and women often support the same issue positions (2000, 241).

The successes of women as agenda setters and cue givers in legislative politics are reflected in the advances made in child care services; women's health services; and equal educational opportunities for women, which arose from federal legislation that mandated equal opportunities for women. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 was one of the earliest laws to require school districts to provide the same opportunities for girls and boys. Though compliance with this law remains uneven, local school districts are gradually moving into accordance with the law.<sup>9</sup>

Though nationally, men still hold the majority of elected school board positions, the percentage of women on these boards has increased across the country over the past 20 years. According to the National School Boards Foundation, in 1996, Arizona had nine all-female local school boards; in Ohio, there were 20 school boards with all-women membership; and the city of Tacoma, Washington, had an all-female school board.<sup>10</sup> In addition, nongovernmental organizations representing the interests of women and girls—such as the National Organization of Women, Business and Professional Women, and the American Association of University Women—and local administrative officials, many of whom are women, worked in conjunction with elected local school district officials to implement Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and its regulations.

### *Women in the Bureaucracy*

Bureaucrats often play a central role in the policy processes of agenda setting and implementation, and may

also be leaders in program development. Therefore, male and female bureaucrats should not be ignored when we discuss political leadership.

Local governance provides many opportunities for women to lead in policymaking. During the 1993–1994 academic year, 34 percent of public school principals were women, up from 25 percent in 1987–1988 (also during the 1993–1994 school year, 54 percent of private school heads were women) (Fiore 1997, iii). The trend appears to continue with increasing numbers of women reaching top levels of school administration. In 1997, for example, women composed 51 percent of Washington State's elementary school principals, and almost 30 percent of its high school principals.<sup>11</sup> Women are also becoming school superintendents. By 1997, 26 percent of Delaware's district superintendents were women; in Nevada, California, Arizona, and Rhode Island over 20 percent of these positions were held by females.<sup>12</sup> In Washington State, 52 percent of school district central administrators are women, including 35 percent of all assistant superintendents and 15 percent of superintendents.<sup>13</sup>

School district employees—who are in the administrative parlance, bureaucrats—make the most important decisions regarding educational policy and development. Even when there are federal or state regulations with which school districts must comply, local decision makers retain a good deal of discretion, which is often programmatic (Wilson 1989, 327–28).

Since women tend to focus their attention on human service issues—particularly policies that concern women and children—welfare, education, and health bureaucracies attract women to their ranks. It is not unusual to find women directing child protective service agencies, foster care services, or public assistance programs. Thus the policy areas that require the most expensive local services are ones in which women often assume leadership positions. Women are responsible for the “on the ground” decisions that affect the quality of services, and they are the local experts who provide policy input to executive and legislative decision makers.

Women have parlayed their local expert status into policy leadership opportunities, such as advisory positions to chief executive officers. In 1999 over one-quarter of state department heads and almost 40 percent of top advisors to governors were women (30.6 percent of Chief of Staffs; 36 percent of Executive Assistants; 35.2 percent of Legal Advisors; and 35.6 percent of Policy/Budget Directors). Governors appointed women to state-level policymaking positions too. In 1999, women received almost 30 percent of these appointments, an increase from 28.3 percent in 1997 (Center for Women and Government 1999).

### *Nongovernmental Organizations: Commercial and Volunteer Sectors*

Early in January 2000, the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce selected a woman to be its President. This may seem like a singularly insignificant event, but the head of a state Chamber of Commerce has a good deal of influence over the state's policy agenda. In addition to Delaware, Alaska, Maryland, and New Jersey also have women at the helms of their state Chambers of Commerce.

Women's increasing share of power in chambers of commerce reflects the changing role of women in local

business. In 1996, over one-third of all businesses in the United States were owned by women (Institute for Women's Policy Research 1996, 48); by 1999 this number had jumped to 38 percent and these businesses employed about one-quarter of all American workers.<sup>14</sup> By the late 1990's, women started businesses at twice the rate of men.<sup>15</sup> According to data published in 1996 by the Department of Commerce and the U.S. Census Bureau, women-owned businesses outstrip overall business performance in revenue and employment growth.<sup>16</sup> While small businesses such as these often act as the backbone of towns and small cities, they also provide the stimulus for urban growth and development. When economic conditions are not favorable to smaller enterprises, they disappear, and in so doing they may inadvertently weaken the economic infrastructure of a community. Consequently, local elected officials cannot ignore the interests of small, locally-owned enterprises, as empty buildings lead to isolation and discourage further utilization of commercial space. When this occurs, employment opportunities disappear and tax revenues decline.

Other nongovernmental organizations join the local policy process. Organizations supporting environmental protection, education, health care, and women's rights are just a few types of groups that influence public policies. Many of these are led by locally influential women, who have traditionally been the mainstay of the American volunteer sector. They help set policy agendas and are often involved in program development and implementation.

Consider the roles of local health organizations and women's organizations in blocking the mergers of community hospitals with Catholic hospitals. Such mergers are often proposed to deal with the high costs of health care and the inability of communities to support multiple hospitals. However, the Catholic Church opposes birth control and abortion, so when hospitals merge, reproductive services are jeopardized. In many communities, proposed mergers have failed in part as a result of the activities of local medical associations—including providers of women's health care—as well as the lobbying efforts of reproductive rights organizations such as Planned Parenthood, and women's rights groups such as the National Organization for Women and the Feminist Majority. Wilmington, Delaware, Baltimore, Maryland, and Kingston, New York, are three such communities where women helped to halt hospital mergers. Of course there are communities where hospitals have merged and efforts to retain reproductive services have failed. Catholic Healthcare West purchased South Valley Hospital in Gilroy, California, and all Catholic-opposed reproductive services ceased.<sup>17</sup>

Women's rights groups, pro-choice groups, traditional women's organizations such as the YWCA, the Girl Scouts and the Junior League, and grassroots mobilizations and local unions actively engaged in the campaign that led to the passage of the federal Violence Against Women Act in 1994. This legislation provides funding for shelters for battered women, a National Domestic Violence Hotline, training for state and national judges, interstate enforcement of protective orders, and civil rights remedies for victims of domestic violence.<sup>18</sup> Prior to the enactment of this legislation, women's local organizations politically defined the issue of domestic violence, and placed the issue on public policy agendas. Women's groups have been the primary developers of shelters for battered women and children. In fact, the first battered women's

shelter opened in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1974, 20 years before the passage of the Violence Against Women Act (Gelb and Palley 1996, 26).

Women's rights groups also have been active in promoting equal educational opportunities for girls. School districts that at one time did not have policies that promoted science and math for girls now have programs to actively encourage girls to take such courses. School athletics was traditionally dominated by males, but now schools provide athletic opportunities for girls. Though Title IX of the Education Act of 1972 mandated equal educational opportunities for girls, it was the local school districts that implemented the law. Women's rights groups, women administrators, and parent activists led the move-

ment to foster the equality that the law mandated. Although the road to actual implementation of the law was uneven, Title IX is a reality thanks to local women's leadership (Gelb and Palley 1996).

## Conclusion

Certainly, women are active participants in local politics. They are engaged in electoral politics, bureaucratic politics, and in nongovernmental organizations. Decision makers ignore women at their own peril. However, despite women's empowerment and accession into leadership roles, they do not yet have power commensurate with their numbers.

## Notes

\* An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Korean Association for Public Administration Conference on Government and Women's Participation, March 7, 2000, and as a Keynote Address at the New Zealand Political Studies Association Conference, June 28, 2000.

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2. "Study: Women Growing Force in American Politics," *Reuters News Media*, 20 November 1996.

3. "Gender Gap in Government." <[www.gendergap.com/governme.htm](http://www.gendergap.com/governme.htm)>.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Center for American Women and Politics. <[www.cawp.rutgers.edu/facts](http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/facts)>.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

8. See, for example: Janet Boles, "Local Elected Officials and Policymaking: Movement Delegates or Feminist Trustees?" Paper presented at the Annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, September 1991; Barbara C. Burrell, *A Woman's Place is in the House: Campaigning for Congress in the Feminist Era* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994); Robert Darcy, Susan

Welch, and Janet Clark, *Women, Elections and Representation* (New York: Longman, 1987).

9. <[www.aauw.org/1000/title9bd.html](http://www.aauw.org/1000/title9bd.html)>

10. Judy Saks, "Local Heroes: The People Who Run for School Board." <[www.familyeducation.com/article/0,1120,1-2629,00.html](http://www.familyeducation.com/article/0,1120,1-2629,00.html)>.

11. Mimi Wolverton, "The School Superintendency: Male Bastion or Equal Opportunity?" *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal* 2 (1999): 2.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*

14. Paulette Thomas, "Closing the Gender Gap," *The Wall Street Journal*, Interactive Edition, 24 May 1999. <[www.interactive.wsj.com/public](http://www.interactive.wsj.com/public)>.

15. Norelle Knox, "Women Entrepreneurs Attract New Financing," *New York Times*, 26 July 1998, sec. B.

16. Sabra Chartrand, "Women and Minorities Now Account For Biggest Jump in Startup Companies," *New York Times*, 6 October 1996, Cybertimes Extra.

17. *Kaiser Daily Health Report*, 5 January 2000.

18. Robin Abb and Margaret Sewell, "Ending Gender-Based Violence a Priority," *Now Times*, January 1995.

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