

Women and News: Fact Sheets and a Narrative Overview of the Research

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Fact Sheet I. Why Does Politics Look Like a Man's Game?: Gender, Knowledge, the News and Political Participation

SOME FACTS ABOUT POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE AND NEWS INTEREST BY GENDER

- Men follow political news more closely than do women – and in the case of economic and international relations stories, much more closely (Pew 2006, 2007). Differences in news attention begin in childhood, as early as 4th grade (Garramone & Atkin 1986; Atkin 1981; Greenstein 1961).
- Interest in political news links to political knowledge, and both link to participation, such as voting, following/supporting campaigns, volunteering, contacting officials, etc. (MMC 2007; Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Graber 1988; Zaller 1992).
- Men express more interest in news about political figures and events in Washington, sports, business and finance, military/war news, and international affairs; women express more interest in health, crime, weather, culture and arts, religion, entertainment, celebrities, and local and community people and events (Pew 2007). However, women are just as attentive as men to certain kinds of political news, especially court decisions (Pew 2006) and natural and human-made disasters, including stories about crime, dangerous weather and diseases (Pew 2007).
- National polls show men know more than women about politics and political figures (Delli-Carpini & Keeter 2000; Pew 2006, 2007; Jamieson 2000; Mondak & Anderson 2004; see table).
- In the critical 2002–3 period of decisionmaking about war with Iraq, more women than men thought Saddam Hussein was concealing weapons of mass destruction (Gallup 2002; Univ. of Wisc. 2003). Male Fox News watchers were also disproportionately likely to believe this (PIPA 2003).
- Men and women are equally knowledgeable about local politics, with more women able to name the school superintendent (Delli-Carpini & Keeter 2000). Women know more about health issues and diseases, but men are more likely to follow health *policy* (Brodie et al. 2003).

SOME DIFFERENCES IN THE POLITICAL BEHAVIOR OF MEN AND WOMEN

- Women vote at rates equal to or exceeding men's (Inglehart & Norris 2003; Jamieson 2000), and are as likely to attend city council and school board meetings (Conway 2001); but men are more likely to serve on a local governing board (Burns, Schlozman, & Verba 2001).
- Men are more likely to join groups taking a stand in politics, and are much more likely to contact their representatives. Men give more money to campaigns, and give more often (Burns, Schlozman, & Verba 2001; Brown Jr, Powell, & Wilcox 1995; Francia et al. 2003).
- Women constitute 51% of the U.S. population, 16% of Congress, 24% of state legislatures, 13% of big city mayors, 18% of governors of states, and 11% of the Supreme Court (CAWP 2007).

SOME EXPLANATIONS FOR DIFFERENCES IN KNOWLEDGE, NEWS INTEREST AND POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

- In contrast to men, women are socialized from infancy to believe that they should prefer the private to the public sphere (Williams 2000; Valian 1999; Bem 1988; Sapiro 1983; Duverger 1955).
- Women see few women in political office and therefore believe that politics is not for them (Atkeson & Carrillo 2007; Burns, Schlozman, & Verba 2001; Kahn 1996; Sapiro 1983). Like low-wage men, women feel less able to influence politics and pay less attention than do high-wage men (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady 1995).
- Female candidates for high political office make women (but not men) significantly more likely to express interest in politics and the campaign, follow the campaign and express likes and dislikes about other political candidates (Burns, Schlozman, & Verba 2001, 347-8). In states with no female senator or candidate, only 51% of women can name a senator, compared to 79% of women in states with a female senator or candidate (Burns, Schlozman, & Verba 2001, 343).
- Women, like others less knowledgeable about how political systems work, are less likely to be receptive to and able to process new political information (MMC 2007; Bennett & Bennett 1993; Neuman, Just and Crigler, 1992; Zaller 1992; Graber 1988). Research shows that TV news can be effective in increasing levels of political knowledge (Neuman, Just, and Crigler 1992).
- Women tend to have lower incomes than men due to both a persistent wage gap and to greater family caretaking responsibilities and therefore, have fewer of the resources that stimulate political interest and participation (Williams 2000; Burns, Schlozman, & Verba 2001; Waldfogel 1994).
- Women may be less likely than men to pursue political office because they are concerned about balancing work and family, they are less likely than men to be asked, they fear harsher treatment in

ATTENTION TO TYPE OF NEWS BY GENDER

	Men	Women	Difference
<i>Average percent following this type of news "very closely":</i>			
Sports	24	18	- 6
Financial/Business	36	31	- 5
International Policy/Politics	21	16	- 5
Political Scandal	21	18	- 3
Domestic Politics	23	20	- 3
Campaign Related	22	20	- 2
Domestic Policy	26	24	- 2
Legal, inc. Court Decisions	23	24	+ 1
Physical/Science/Health	22	24	+ 2
Personality/Entertainment	14	16	+ 4
Human-made Disaster/Accident	36	40	+ 4
Natural Disaster	35	39	+ 4
Crime	27	33	+ 6
<i>Source: Pew 2007.</i>			

the news media, or they perceive the political realm as unfriendly to them or their policy issues (Williams 2000; White House Project 1998, 2000; Kahn 1996). Alternatively, the difference may arise because of the greater willingness of men to run for public office, the tendency of incumbents to nearly always win, and the fact that the vast majority of incumbents are male (Palmer & Simon 2006; Lawless & Fox 2005; Moncrief, Squire, & Jewell 2001).

MEN’S AND WOMEN’S POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE: A SAMPLE

	Men	Women	Difference
Which countries have nuclear capacity?***	43	20	-23
Did stock market recently go up or down?***	70	48	-22
Who is Vladimir Putin?*	42	23	-19
Does the House have GOP majority?*	74	56	-18
Did a gun control bill pass the House?***	35	30	-5
Year Clinton’s impeachment trial ended?***	41	45	+ 4
Who is Ellen DeGeneres? (post-coming out)	56	67	+ 11
Classified as “High Political Knowledge”****	45	25	-20
<i>Sources: * = Pew 2006, ** = Pew 2000, *** = Pew 2007</i>			

Fact Sheet II. Gendered Genres: Women in the News Business and in the News Audience

SOME FACTS ABOUT WOMEN IN THE NEWS AUDIENCE

- Women are a highly sought audience for all forms of media. Women make 80% of all purchasing decisions, and are therefore a prime target for advertisers (Gannon 2007). Arbitron Research explained, “Women are an increasingly desirable target for advertisers and programmers alike... [They are] contributing more to household incomes and making more household spending decisions than ever” (Arbitron/Joint Communications 2001, 2).
- Pew reports that media consumers live in a world of “his and hers,” meaning men and women get news from different places (Pew 2006).
- In 2006, NPR was the only outlet where women made up half the news audience (Pew 2006). In 1996, there was a 25% gender gap in NPR listeners: 16% of men and 11% of women surveyed said they listened to NPR (Pew 2006). The gender parity in the NPR audience may be due to NPR’s news framing and presentation style, their relatively even gender balance of reporters and editors, or other factors.
- Media sources have begun to develop separate pathways for women, such as “mommy blogs.” Political coverage in “hers” sources is uneven; some sources work politics into “soft news,” while other outlets avoid politics altogether. For example, GreenStone Media, an attempt to develop a talk radio format for a female audience, did not include politics and ended operations in August 2007 (Greenstone 2006; Heslam 2006).
- Some research finds that soft news programs, which are more heavily viewed by women than hard news, can arouse interest in and inform the audience about political issues. For instance, Baum (2003) finds that soft news programs caused Americans to pay more attention to recent foreign policy crises than they did to major U.S. interventions in Korea and Vietnam in the 1950s–70s). However, others caution that the softening of hard news programs and overly critical journalism are shrinking news audiences (Patterson 2000).
- Some literature speculates that seeing members of your identity group heightens engagement in news (Gandy 2001; Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001). Whether conscious or not, media depictions of politics as a “man’s game” seems to lead women to disengage with political news (see Fact Sheet 1).
- Media have both an “authority-setting” and “agenda-setting” effect (McCombs & Shaw 1972, Kingdon 1984; White House Project 2001). Research finds that Sunday morning talk shows present authority as decidedly male; only 11% of all guests (considered to be experts in politics, policy, or international relations) and only 7% of repeat guests were women (White House Project 2001; see also Media Matters 2007; FAIR 2005; White House Project 2005). Another study found that two-thirds of all local news sound bites were by men, with less than one-third by women (MMC 2007), probably because men are still more likely than women to be found in positions of authority.

SOME FACTS ABOUT WOMEN IN THE NEWS BUSINESS

- Men continue to dominate the news business as directors, editors, and publishers (see table), even though women constitute 65% of all undergraduate and graduate journalism and mass communication students (Creedon & Cramer 2007, 6). A new study found that two-thirds of deans, directors and department heads of journalism and mass communication schools and programs are male (ASJMC 2007).
- Far fewer opinion pieces by women than men are published in newspapers, probably due to a combination of factors, including male editors more often soliciting pieces from male writers, fewer submissions from women writers coming in, and unconscious discrimination in choosing pieces (Estrich 2005, Pollitt 2005).
- Women in the newsroom appear to make a difference in both the content of news and in the bottom line (Media Management Center 2006; Catalyst 2004; Nicholson, forthcoming; Craft & Wanta 2004). Women in newsrooms, like women in other nontraditional fields such as science and politics, often think about things differently, do things somewhat differently, draw different conclusions, and in short bring an important “value-added” to the news (Rhode 2002; Swers 2002; see also Zimmer 2007 and Nicholson, forthcoming).

SOME EXPLANATIONS FOR WOMEN’S LACK OF ADVANCEMENT IN THE NEWS BUSINESS

- Work/family conflict continues to be a problem for all news personnel, but especially women, as women still do the bulk of child care and housework (API & Pew 2002; Williams 2000; Hochschild 2003).
- An alternative explanation is that sexual harassment, gender schemas, gender gaps in pay, and other unconscious discrimination continue to limit women’s opportunities for advancement and make women less happy in their news-business jobs than similarly situated men (Creedon & Cramer 2007; Pollitt 2005; API & Pew 2002; Valian 1999; NewsInc 1991; see also Craft & Wanta 2004 on differential treatment of women reporters by male and female managers). The explanations could also be combined: such sex-based differences in workplace environment, culture, and opportunities may further exacerbate work/life conflict and intensify the competing demands of family (Hewlett 2007; Crittenden 2002; Williams 2000).

WOMEN IN THE NEWS BUSINESS BY MEDIA TYPE AND POSITION

	Women	Men
Television:		
Commercial news directors	24%	76%
Personnel in commercial news operations	39	61
Radio:		
News general managers	13	87
News directors	26	74
Personnel working in radio news	22	78
Newspapers:		
President/Publisher/CEO at large newspaper	18	82
Editor/Exec. Editor/Senior VP/VP News	26	74
Newspaper personnel	48	52
Salaries:		
Median salary for journalists in all news media	\$37,731	\$46,758
<i>Sources: Dates 2007, Cramer 2007, Nicholson 2007, Media Management Center 2006, 2001.</i>		

Fact Sheet III: Good for Democracy, Journalism, *and* the Bottom Line?: New Media, Old Media and Opportunities for Change

SOME FACTS ABOUT WOMEN IN CONVENTIONAL POLITICAL MEDIA

- Male dominance of news reflects men's greater likelihood of holding positions of authority, yet differences among outlets suggest that the imbalance can be moderated without compromising substance. In a study of 16,800 randomly selected news stories across time and 45 different news outlets, more than 75% of stories contained male sources, while only 25% contained female sources (Project for Excellence in Journalism 2005). Women were most likely to be cited in lifestyle stories, and least likely to be cited in foreign affairs stories (Ibid). Newspapers were the most likely to cite female sources (41% of stories cited women) while cable news was least likely (only 19%; Ibid). Across all media, there was a much greater likelihood of quoting two or more men than two or more women in a single story (Ibid). Another study found that two-thirds of all local news sound bites were by men, with less than one-third by women (MMC 2007).

SOME FACTS ABOUT WOMEN IN NEW POLITICAL MEDIA

- According to Pew Internet, 67% of Americans go online, with users evenly divided between the sexes. However, men and women differ dramatically in their online usage. Men are more avid consumers of online information (e.g., news, weather, sports, politics, finance, software, etc.). Women like the Internet for the human connections it promotes: "More women than men send and receive e-mail, and they use it in a richer and more engaging way" (Pew Internet 2005, iii).
- The blogosphere holds hope for overcoming some of the gender imbalance in traditional media by decreasing the cost of entry—yet there are substantial gender disparities in the new media world as well. Of the top 90 political blogs, one observer found that 42% are edited and written by men only, while only 7% are by women only (Goodman 2007). "Another 45 percent were edited or authored by both men and women, though the 'coed' mix was overwhelmingly male" (Ibid).
- In terms of readers, men appear to be more interested than women in blogs: half of men and a third of women report visiting political blogs. (NYT/CBS 2007).
- Blogs link back and forth to each other throughout the day. Some ratings services use these links to establish the popularity of particular blogs (TTLB 2007). The table gives statistics and a gender breakdown of the editors/lead writers for some top political blogs.

SOME FACTS ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

- Certain demographic and political trends lend hope for increasing equality, including rising rates of college and post-college education for women, slowly increasing numbers of women in politics as elected and appointed officials, and recent high profile advances by women (Hillary Clinton as the first female party frontrunner for president; Nancy Pelosi as first female Speaker; and increased discussion of women as leaders due to election of women presidents/PMs in several other countries in past few years) (WHP, forthcoming; U.S. Census 2007; CAWP 2007).
- Survey research shows that people are less interested in news about politics than they are in news about how to deal with policy issues such as education or health care costs (Rosenstiel et al. 2007). If more of politics looked like community problem solving rather than partisan argument, it is possible that women might be more engaged. After all, as many women as men attend local political

meetings like city council and school board (Conway 2001; Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001).

- Many of the changes that media sources could make to appeal to women are also recognized as practices that make for better journalism, including transparency, more diversity among managers and reporters, and less hierarchy in newsrooms (see Nicholson, forthcoming).
- Appealing to women consumers and having more women in positions of leadership can help the bottom line for news businesses (Catalyst 2004).

TOP POLITICAL BLOGS: RATINGS STATISTICS AND GENDER BREAKDOWN

Blog Name (alpha.)	Lead Person(s) (M or F)	TTLB Rating/ Links [^]	Nielsen BuzzMetrics Rating/Cites*
Captain's Quarters	Ed Morrissey (M)	9	21
Crooks and Liars	John Amato (M)	17	13
DailyKos	Markos Moulitsas Zúniga (M)	2	7
Drudge Report	Matt Drudge (M)	(not ranked)	(not ranked)
Fire Dog Lake	Jane Hamsher (F)	49	(not ranked)
Eschaton	Duncan Black (M)	20	(not ranked)
Huffington Post	Arianna Huffington (F)	4	(not ranked)
InstaPundit	Glenn Reynolds (M)	6	22
Little Green Footballs	Charles Johnson (M)	5	25
Michelle Malkin	Michelle Malkin (F)	3	16
Power Line	John Hinderaker (M), Scott Johnson (M)	7	47
Real Clear Politics	John McIntyre (M), Tom Bevan (M)	19	(not ranked)
Talking Points Memo	Joshua Micah Marshall (M)	12	12
Volokh Conspiracy	Eugene Volokh (M) , Alexander Volokh (M)	18	67
Political Animal/ Washington Monthly	Kevin Drum (M)	32	28
Wonkette	Alex Pareene (M), Ken Layne (M)	44	43

[^] TTLB ratings as of 8/3/07, based on links to that blog; * Nielsen BuzzMetrics ratings as of 9/7/07, based on citations of that blog. Sources: TTLB 2007; Nielsen BuzzMetrics 2007; individual blogs' sites.

Women and News: A Narrative Overview of the Research

ARE MEN JUST MORE INTERESTED IN POLITICS?

Decades of data make it look as if women care less about politics than men. While women vote at rates equal to or even exceeding men's rates (Inglehart and Norris 2003; Jamieson 2000; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), political scientists find that voting is an anomalous form of participation (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995, 23-4; Skocpol and Fiorina 1999). It is relatively low-cost, carries few tangible benefits, and is not a good predictor of other forms of participating. In most of these other forms, men predominate. Men give money to campaigns more often, and they give higher amounts (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Inglehart and Norris 2003; Brown Jr., Powell, & Wilcox 1995; Francia et al. 2003). Despite logging more paid hours in the labor force, men are more likely than women to serve on a local governing board (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001). Men are significantly more likely to contact their elected representative to express a policy opinion or ask for constituent service, and are more likely to join organizations that take stands in politics (Ibid). And men are much more likely to run for office themselves. Men continue to dominate electoral politics as candidates and incumbents (Lawless and Fox 2005; Moncrief, Jewell & Squire 2000). Although women constitute 51% of the U.S. population, they make up only 16% of Congress, 24% of state legislatures, 13% of big city mayors, 18% of state governors, and 11% of the Supreme Court (CAWP 2007). Men still hold, on average, over three-quarters of all legislative seats nationally, and have been 100% of our presidents. Although the gender differences in political participation for ordinary citizens are not huge, they are meaningful and persistent.

The same gender trends appear to hold true for news. Men follow political news more closely than do women—and in the case of some news areas, including economic and international relations stories, much more closely (Pew 2006, 42-43; Pew 2007a; Pew 2007b). Differences in news attention begin in childhood and show up in research as early as the fourth grade (Garramone & Atkin 1986; Atkin 1981; Greenstein 1961). In self-reported studies of news interest, men show more interest than women in stories about political figures and events in Washington, sports, business and finance, military/war news and international affairs; women express more interest than men in news about health, crime, weather, culture and arts, religion, entertainment, celebrities, and local and community people and events (Pew 2007a). For the past twenty years, Pew has tracked gender gaps in interest in individual news stories. Their largest recorded gaps exceed fifteen percentage points, on both sides. Stories where the gap favored men (with more men than women closely following the news) are in the arenas of sports, war and military matters, business and financial news, and international relations. By contrast, stories where the gap favored women tended to cover health news, school shootings, celebrity deaths and endangered children. However, women are just as attentive as men to certain kinds of political news, especially court decisions (which often concerned abortion rights [Pew 2006]) and natural and human-made disasters, including stories about crime, dangerous weather, and diseases [Pew 2007]).

Because men are more interested in some political topics, it is not surprising that they have more

political information than women do. National polls show men knowing more than women about politics and political figures (Delli-Carpini & Keeter 2000; Pew 2006, 2007; Jamieson 2000; Mondak & Anderson 2004). Communications and political science scholars, however, have pointed out that up to half of the observed gender gap may be a factor of survey measurement error (particularly since women are more likely to admit that they don't know an answer, while men are more likely to guess, apparently particularly if the interviewers are mostly women; see Mondak and Anderson 2004; Jamieson 2000, Chapter 9). Scholars have suggested that the gender information gaps may arise from underlying discrepancies in basic political knowledge; those with more initial knowledge about politics and how the political system works are more likely to be receptive to and be able to process new information (Palfrey and Poole 1987; Tichenor, Donoghue and Olien 1970; Jamieson 2000; Neuman, Just, & Crigler 1992; Zaller 1992; Graber 1988, Junn 1991). Differences between men's and women's starting points of political knowledge may thus lead to further gaps where men are more interested in and able to process new political information.

Such differences in political knowledge and subsequent information uptake can have important policy implications. For instance, in the critical policymaking period of the 2002–3 buildup to war with Iraq, more women than men thought Saddam Hussein was concealing weapons of mass destruction (USA Today/CNN/Gallup 2002; University of Wisconsin Survey Research Center 2003). Clearly, such a belief did not arise only from gender differences in political attentiveness; men who watched Fox News were also disproportionately likely to believe this (PIPA 2003). Yet the gender differences in knowledge are worrisome as they diminish the quality of public deliberation as well as decrease overall participation and engagement. Political scientists Michael X. Delli-Carpini and Scott Keeter write, "Political knowledge facilitates more effective citizenship... and engagement in politics. It enables citizens to comprehend the political world and to develop attitudes about politics... And it is critical to an effective linkage between attitudes and political behavior" (Delli Carpini and Keeter 2000, 23). Lack of knowledge and information about politics correlate with lack of participation, and vice versa. Put simply, interested and knowledgeable people participate more politically, and those who are more active gain more interest in and knowledge of politics as they participate.

Does all this mean that men are simply hard wired to like politics more? A cursory review of the evidence suggests so. Such a glib conclusion, however, unravels when we take a closer look.

GOING BEYOND THE SURFACE: WHERE THE GENDER GAP DISAPPEARS

As noted above, women pay as much or more attention than men to stories that they see as affecting their rights and the health and safety of themselves and their families. Indeed, the gender gap in political information mostly disappears for local-level politics (Delli Carpini and Keeter 2000). Women are less likely than men to be able to name the Secretary of State, but more likely than men to be able to name their county's school superintendent (Ibid, 37). Generally, women know more than men about health issues and diseases, but men are more likely to follow health *policy* (Brodie et al. 2003). Thus women know more about facts of health but less about health policies. There appears to be a disconnect between

the information that women look for and gain from the news and the arena of politics or public policy. The same trend holds for participation. Women participate enthusiastically in all sorts of community-based, nonprofit and religious groups and activities. Women are as likely as men to attend city council and school board meetings (Conway 2001, 231), but men are more likely to hold leadership positions (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001). Women have led major social movements for political changes to improve health, safety, and equality, including those for temperance, woman suffrage, settlement houses/poverty reform, children's welfare and the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) (see, for example, Cott 1987; Scott and Scott 1982; Kradtior 1971; Mansbridge 1986; Skocpol 1992; Buhle and Buhle 1978; Marilley 1996. Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001, Chapter 3, gives an excellent overview of gender and civic activity).

Surveys of church attendance find that women are more likely than men to affiliate with a church, to attend services, and to be active in a congregation (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001, 363). Men, however, are more likely to exercise congregation leadership (Ibid). There are virtually no differences between men's and women's levels of nonpolitical, nonreligious civic activity; however, men are more likely to volunteer for groups that take a stand in politics (Ibid, 81-2). Slightly more women than men give time to charity, and the sexes are equally likely to make charitable contributions, though those from men tend to be larger on balance (Ibid). Just as with news, women seem to be more selective than men about the political activities in which they engage. Clearly, however, women are not apolitical; women have steadily increased their presence in state legislatures over time (CAWP 2007). In addition, the number of women governors serving at the same time has increased from 5 or 6 in the 1980s to 10 today. Steady gains in state legislatures have slowed recently, however; various theories attribute this slowdown to work-family balancing difficulties for women public officials, negative effects of term limits for women as legislators (term effects, once thought to be good for women, actually seem to have the effect of removing incumbent women without replacing them with new women), differential treatment of women as candidates by news media, women's perception of the political realm as unfriendly to them or their policy issues, or the greater willingness of men to run for office (Palmer & Simon 2006; Lawless & Fox 2005; Moncrief, Squire, & Jewell 2001; Williams 2000; White House Project 1998, 2000; Kahn 1996).

POWERLESSNESS & REPRESENTATION

Differences in political interest and activity are, of course, complicated by other axes of identity. Many studies have investigated the impact of income and race/ethnicity on political participation (see, e.g., Verba, Schlozman, & Brady 1995; Lien 1994; Bobo & Gilliam Jr. 1990; Uhlaner, Cain, & Kiewiet 1989; see also Leighley & Vedlitz 1999 and Leighley 1995 for more information). These works have often found effects similar to those described above for gender, suggesting that the underlying factor is not demographics, but relative powerlessness. Until recently, women have also tended to receive less education—an inequality that has actually reversed in the past few decades, with more women than men now graduating from college (U.S. Census Bureau 2007). Despite women's educational gains, however,

the gender difference in political activity persists, leading some to speculate on the psychological factors involved. In contrast to men, women are socialized from infancy to believe they should prefer the private to the public sphere (Williams 2000; Valian 1999; Phillips 1991; Bem 1988; Sapiro 1983; Duverger 1955). Women see few women in office and therefore may believe, consciously or not, that politics is not for them (Atkeson & Carrillo 2007; Burns, Schlozman, & Verba 2001; Kahn 1996; Phillips 1991; Sapiro 1983). At the same time, women tend to have lower incomes than men due to a persistent wage gap and greater family care responsibilities, and therefore have fewer of the resources that stimulate political interest and participation (Williams 2000; Burns, Schlozman, & Verba 2001; Waldfogel 1994; Blau & Kahn 2000).

Interestingly, the participation and political knowledge gaps appear to shrink or even disappear *where women see other women participating in politics* (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001, Chapter 13). In states with no female senator (or senate candidate), for instance, 65% of men and only 51% of women can name one senator. However, in states with a female senator or female candidates for senator, 75% of men and 79% of women can name a senator (Ibid, 343). Having a female governor and/or having more women state legislators also increases women's sense of political *efficacy*, their perception of their ability to make a difference in politics and their confidence in government (Atkeson and Carrillo 2007). And having a female candidate for high political office makes women (but not men) significantly more likely to express political interest and interest in the campaign, follow the campaign in the media, express likes and dislikes about the major-party candidates for the House (whether or not these are women), and say they are "very interested" in a campaign (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001, 347-8). Women also seem to gain more politically relevant skills in all-female organizations, whether political, social or religious (Ibid, Chapter 9).

In conclusion, recent data suggests that politics looks like a "man's game" because it previously has been a man's game: a vicious cycle. Media representations of women in positions of power, such as female senators or senate candidates, seem to have the power to disrupt the cycle and increase women's interest in and engagement with politics. Representations of politics as problem-solving—more common in local politics, where both sexes pay equal attention (Conway 2001; Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001)—rather than partisan point-scoring may decrease the gender differences in political attentiveness (Rosenstiel et al 2007). And the recent data suggest that as more women enter politics as candidates and elected office-holders, they may raise the level of women's political participation as citizens. However, these are still controversial questions, and not at all resolved, especially since both race and gender are often not explored in studies of political interest (see, e.g., Mutz 2005; Patterson 2000; Prior 2005).

GENDER, SEGREGATION, AND NEWS SOURCES

A 2006 Pew report says men and women live in a world of "his and hers" when it comes to news sources. Women are more likely than men to watch local TV news and nightly network news, and are much more likely to watch network news magazines and network morning shows. Men are more likely

to read the newspaper, listen to radio news, get news online, listen to talk radio, and watch cable news (Pew 2006; see Fact Sheet 2). Looking at specific sources, more men than women watch, read, or listen to business/political/news magazines, the “Daily Show,” Rush Limbaugh, CNBC, C-SPAN, news online, talk radio, late night TV, Sunday talk shows, PBS’s “NewsHour,” and O’Reilly Factor, CNN and daily newspapers (Pew 2006). The largest gaps are for business magazines (where the readers are 71% men), the “Daily Show” (66% men), political magazines (65% men), and Rush Limbaugh (62% men, Ibid). More women than men watch, read, or listen to Fox News, local TV news, network nightly news, community newspapers, Larry King Live, TV news magazines, MSNBC, and especially morning news shows (where the audience is 64% women) and religious radio (where the audience is 66% women, Ibid).

In an effort to attract more women viewers, “his” media sources have begun to develop separate pathways for women, like “mommy blogs.” Coverage of politics in these “hers” sources is uneven; some sources work politics into “soft news,” while other outlets avoid politics altogether. For instance, GreenStone Media, founded by Gloria Steinem and Jane Fonda as an attempt at a different kind of talk radio aimed at women, purposely excludes politics, since their research found that women rated politics as their least favorite subject (Greenstone 2006; Boston Herald 2006).

Of all news outlets, only NPR’s audience is at least one-half women (Pew 2006), a sharp increase from 1996. A decade ago there was a 25% gender gap in NPR listeners: 16% of men and 11% of women surveyed said they listened to NPR in 1996 (Pew 2006). The lack of a gender gap in the recent survey may be due to NPR’s news framing and presentation style, their relatively even gender balance of reporters and editors, or other factors. For example, the lack of a gender gap arises from NPR’s particular listener demographic profile (perhaps highly educated men and women are more alike than they are different in their news source and style preferences?). Nevertheless, NPR’s success in eliminating gender differences among listeners (clearly present a decade ago) can be instructive, and further research is needed to determine the factors involved in this closing of the gap.

Regarding soft news and its ability to engage women in politics, the research is mixed. Some studies find that soft news, which is more heavily viewed by women than hard news, can be informative and educational about politics. For instance, Baum 2003 finds that soft news programs (or even non-news sources that discuss current events, such as “Oprah” or “The View”) have caused Americans to pay more attention to recent foreign policy crises than they did to major U.S. interventions in Korea and Vietnam in the 1950s–70s. In a recent study, Baum 2005 found that soft news programs have important effects on the political behavior of the less involved citizens: “politically unengaged voters who watch entertainment-oriented TV talk shows are more likely to find the opposition party candidate likeable, as well as to cross party lines and vote for him, relative to their counterparts who do not watch such shows and those who are more politically aware (Baum 2005, p. 213).

Other researchers have found that informal conversations about politics play an important role in generating news interest and in helping people understand political news and politics more generally: “Conversation about the news is a major and often overlooked correlate of comprehension, and ... interpersonal channels may play at least as important a role in the public’s awareness and understanding

of the news as exposure to the news media” (Robinson & Levy 1986, p. 160). That is, women might be more likely to show more interest in news and politics if they were more engaged in informal conversations about politics. However, critics allege that increasing soft news coverage in hard news programs and overly critical journalism are shrinking news audiences (Patterson 2000). Whether or not soft news programs can be educative and politically engaging, the clear fact is that they do not cover politics in as deep and substantive a manner as hard news. Women’s greater willingness to watch soft news programs may contribute to the gender gaps in political knowledge.

It is not only the news audience that is gendered, however; media organizations also have gender imbalances. Men continue to dominate the news business as directors, editors, and publishers (see Fact Sheet 2), and a new study found that two-thirds of deans, directors and department heads of journalism and mass communication schools and programs are male (ASJMC 2007), even though women presently constitute 65% of all undergraduate and graduate journalism and mass communication students (Creedon & Cramer 2007, 6). In terms of the voices the public hears through op-ed pages, far fewer opinion pieces by women than men are published. This is probably due to a combination of factors, including male editors more often soliciting pieces from male writers, fewer women submitting unsolicited work, and unconscious discrimination in choosing pieces (Estrich 2005; Pollitt 2005).

The lack of women in positions of news leadership may have detrimental effects for both the news sources and for women as audience members. Women in the newsroom appear to make a difference in both the content of news and in the bottom line (Media Management Center 2006; Creedon & Cramer 2007; Craft & Wanta 2004; see also Catalyst 2004 and Nicholson, forthcoming). In particular, female managers more than male managers, appear to “have attributes that motivate their followers to feel respect and pride because of their association with them; attempt to develop and mentor followers and give them rewards for good performance; [and] show optimism and excitement about future goals and new perspectives on problem-solving” (Media Management Center 2006, 13; see also: Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt 2001). Women in newsrooms, like women in other nontraditional fields such as science and politics, often think about things differently, do things differently, draw different conclusions, and in short bring important values to the table (Rhode 2002; Swers 2002; see also Zimmer 2007 and Nicholson, forthcoming). In a study of whether gender matters in the newsroom, two journalism professors found that “when a newspaper had a large percentage of women in managerial positions, male and female reporters covered a similar agenda of issues. However, in newspapers with a low percentage of women managers, male reporters covered politics more often than female reporters, and female reporters were more likely to cover education stories” (Craft & Wanta 2004, 134).

In terms of the impact of such differences on the bottom line, Catalyst’s 2004 study *The Bottom Line: Connecting Corporate Performance and Gender Diversity* demonstrated that Fortune 500 companies with high percentages of women officers experienced, on average, 35.1% higher return on equity and 34% higher total return to shareholders than did those with low percentages of women corporate officers (Catalyst 2004). While this study did not prove causation, it showed a strong correlation between companies that have diversified their senior management and strong financial benefits.

What is the source of gender imbalance in the news business? Research suggests several factors that in all likelihood work together in combination to produce the gaps we observe. Work/family conflict continues to be a problem for all news personnel, but especially women, as women still do the bulk of child care and housework (API & Pew 2002; Hochschild 2003; Williams 2000). In addition, conscious and unconscious discrimination on the job front (including sexual harassment, gender schemas, discrimination in hiring and promotions) continue to limit women's opportunities for advancement and make women less happy in their news-business jobs than similarly situated men (Creedon & Cramer 2007; Pollitt 2005; API & Pew 2002; Valian 1999; NewsInc 1991). These sex-based differences in workplace environment, culture, and opportunities may further exacerbate work/life conflict and intensify the competing demands of family, making for a vicious cycle (Hewlett 2007; Crittenden 2002; Williams 2000; Eagly & Carli 2007). Scholars who study gender stress more generally the deeply rooted cultural expectations that continue to block women's advancement, particularly limiting schemas and stereotypes about motherhood, emotionality, competency, compassion, nurturing and ambition (Eagly and Carli 2007; Valian 1999; Fletcher 1999; see also Wilson 2004).

Women also have somewhat different ways of working and interacting (particularly a preference for less hierarchy, more teamwork, and a more blended personal and professional set of relationships) that are not recognized or rewarded by men in positions of power (Fletcher 1999). Employers tend to hire and promote those who look and think like them, leading to yet another cycle that seems to empower men (and particularly white men) and, unconsciously, lead to discrimination against women and people of color (Pollitt 2005; Fletcher 1999; Valian 1999). As Virginia Valian writes after evaluating an impressive collection of data on women in various professions, on how children are reared, and on how women are perceived: "The statistical data ... suggest that women will not advance faster without a better understanding of gender schemas and how they hinder women's accumulation of advantage" (Valian 1999, 216). Sociologists Alice Eagly and Linda Carli write that it is none of these factors singly but the synergy of all together that holds women back: "It's not the glass ceiling, but the sum of many obstacles along the way" (Eagly & Carli 2007).

GENDER & MEDIA EFFECTS

Collectively, news media help shape American's political knowledge, public opinion, and the political agenda (Baum 2003; Zaller 1992; Graber 1988; Kingdon 1984; McCombs & Shaw 1972) in a process known as "media effects," studied and explained by political communications scholar Doris Graber (Graber 2006; Graber 1988). Media have both an "authority-setting" and an "agenda-setting" effect (McCombs & Shaw 1972; Kingdon 1984; White House Project 2001). The authority-setting effect is particularly relevant for this project, as some literature speculates that seeing members of your identity group in positions of authority heightens engagement (Atkeson & Carrillo 2007; Gandy 2001, 1998; Burns, Schlozman, & Verba 2001; Bobo & Gilliam Jr. 1990; see above on women's participation). If this is indeed the case (further research is needed in this area), women's lack of engagement relative to

men is not hard to understand. Research finds that Sunday morning talk shows present authority as decidedly male; of the guests on these shows, who are presented as experts in politics, policy, or international relations, only 11% of all guests and only 7% of repeat guests were women (White House Project 2001; see also Media Matters 2007; FAIR 2005; White House Project 2005). Another study found that a little over two-thirds of all local news sound bites were by men, with less than one-third by women (MMC 2007).

Male dominance of news inevitably reflects men's greater likelihood of holding positions of authority, yet women seem absent from political news in disproportionate share to their presence in positions of power. In a study of 16,800 randomly selected news stories across time and 45 different news outlets, more than 75% of stories contained male sources, while only 25% contained female sources (Project for Excellence in Journalism 2005). Women were most likely to be cited in lifestyle stories, and least likely to be cited in foreign affairs stories (Ibid). Newspapers were the most likely to cite female sources (41% of stories) while cable news was least likely (only 19%; Ibid). Across all media, there was a greater likelihood of quoting two men than two women in a story (Ibid). The research in Fact Sheet 1 suggests that the visual and aural impact of men's dominance of positions of power in news presentations may perpetuate a cycle. Conscious or not, depictions of politics as a "man's game" seem to lead women to disengage, resulting in men's continued dominance of politics.

Women's lack of engagement with political news may also be due to features of news presentation. Fact Sheet 2 shows that men and women seek news from different sources. The exact mechanisms leading women away from hard news and toward soft news are as yet unknown, but may have something to do with women's preference for greater emotional attachment with those who deliver the news. A 2007 report finds that women are more likely to develop relationships with TV anchors and feel connected to them, and that informal chitchat helps them feel that they know these newscasters as people (MMC 2007, 35). Women's news preferences may be prompted by what psychologists have called women's relational thinking, referring to a female preference for understanding the world as a "network of relationships" (Gilligan 1982). More research is needed in this area, and particularly to determine whether such relational thinking relates to women's distaste for negative political ads and negative or mean-spirited political discussion (Kern and Just 1997; Trent and Sabourin 1993; Garramone 1984). In evaluating middle-class men's and women's responses to candidate advertising, political scientists Montague Kern and Marion Just found that men admire candidates' narratives about their ability to "make it on their own." Women tend to dislike negative advertising and blame the authors of the attack (Kern and Just 1997).

LOOKING AHEAD: PROMISING AND PROBLEMATIC TRENDS

The above research and statistics paint a picture of an entrenched gender system that gives rise to self-reinforcing cycles of women's political and news disengagement. Can these cycles be disrupted? If the causes of the differences between men's and women's political knowledge are so deeply rooted, can we hold out the hope of increasing women's news attention? Certain new trends suggest that we can answer

yes to both questions, even in the face of new inequalities.

The first promising trend is a dramatic rise in women holding elective office and other positions of political power. In the past fifteen years, women have gone from 2% and 5% of the U.S. Senate and House, respectively, to 16% of both bodies, an increase of 700% for the Senate and over 200% for the House (CAWP 2007). In that same time period, the number of female state governors has increased from 3 to 9, another 200% increase (CAWP 2007). Women have won the presidencies or prime ministerships of several countries in the past two years, including Chile, Liberia, and Germany. Here in the U.S. we have had two major firsts this year: the first female Speaker of the House (Nancy Pelosi) and the first female frontrunner for a major party presidential nomination (Hillary Clinton). In the past decade, we have had both our first woman as Secretary of State (Madeleine Albright), our first woman as Attorney General (Janet Reno), and our first woman of color as Secretary of State (Condoleezza Rice). Since scholars have found that the lack of female role models seems to help perpetuate a cycle of male political leadership, the rising number of prominent women in politics may encourage more young women to view politics as a possible vocation.

At the same time, education is no longer a barrier preventing women from attaining leadership in politics or its feeder professions (law, business, education, and activism). In 2006, women were 57% of college graduates, half of law school entrants, 52% of M.A. recipients. Without other changes, however, it is not clear that education alone will enable us to close the leadership gaps (Wilson 2004; Valian 1999; Williams 2000). Men are still disproportionately represented in higher paying positions in law and business (WHP, forthcoming), and women are disproportionately represented in lower paying and lower-status positions, perhaps in large part due to work/family conflict and women seeking less demanding positions in order to have and care for children (Williams 2000; Hewlett 2007). A growing number of companies are realizing the value of retaining skilled women and are trying to institute workplace changes like flextime, telecommuting and “mommy-tracks” (Wilson 2005; Mason & Ekman 2007; Hewlett 2007). As long as such programs are reserved only or mainly for women, however, and as long as those who use them are stigmatized or thought to be not as dedicated to their jobs, women are unlikely to achieve full equality (Williams 2000; Hewlett 2007; Crittenden 2002).

Turning to new forms of political media, we see both the potential for greater equality and new inequalities. The blogosphere holds hope for overcoming some of the gender imbalance in traditional media by decreasing the costs of entry. Yet there are substantial gender disparities in electronic media. Of the top 90 political blogs, columnist Ellen Goodman and Kennedy School of Government student Katie Connolly found that 42% are edited and written by men only, while only 7% are by women only (Goodman 2007). The remaining blogs are edited or authored by both men and women together, although, Goodman notes, “the ‘coed’ mix was overwhelmingly male” in terms of having more male than female writers/editors (Ibid). Fact Sheet 3, giving ratings and a gender breakdown of the editors of some top political blogs, shows that the political blogosphere is mostly shaped by men. Perhaps because of men’s dominance of political blogs, men are more interested than women in reading blogs. In a 2007 survey, half of men but only a third of women report visiting political blogs (NYT/CBS 2007). Women may stay away from blogging because they get more negative comments and personal threats when they

post opinions or appear angry, prompting Ellen Goodman to wonder if women are “scared silent” (Goodman 2007).

Fully half of all Internet users, however, are women, and women seem to be attracted to other blogs (as evidenced by the popularity of “mommy blogs”)—just not specifically political ones. Perhaps more female bloggers would draw in more women readers; or it may be necessary for women to have greater engagement with politics before they become more involved with political blogs.

Looking at more traditional forms of media, we see some promising trends. Women have immense purchasing power (studies find that women make 80 to 85 percent of family purchases (Gannon 2007) so that women are a prime and highly sought audience for all types of news businesses (Arbitron/Joint Communications 2001). Many of the changes that media sources could make to appeal to women are also recognized as practices that make for better journalism, including transparency, more diversity among managers and reporters, and less hierarchy in newsrooms (see Nicholson, forthcoming). Appealing to women consumers and having more women in positions of news leadership could enhance journalism, help the bottom line for news businesses, and encourage more women to engage with politics. The result will be a larger audience for news and more, and more diverse, citizens engaged in politics.



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