



WOMEN, POLITICS, AND POWER

A Global Perspective



PAMELA PAXTON / MELANIE M. HUGHES

SOCIOLOGY FOR A NEW CENTURY

WOMEN, POLITICS, AND POWER

A Global Perspective

PAMELA PAXTON
Ohio State University

MELANIE M. HUGHES
Ohio State University



PINE FORGE PRESS

An Imprint of Sage Publications, Inc.

Los Angeles • London • New Delhi • Singapore

About the Authors

Pamela Paxton is associate professor of sociology and political science at Ohio State University. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan in economics and sociology and her PhD in sociology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is affiliated with the Mershon Center for International Security and the John Glenn Institute for Public Service and Public Policy and has consulted for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). She is the author of numerous scholarly articles on women in politics, which focus on statistical models of women's parliamentary representation. Her research has appeared in a variety of journals, including *American Sociological Review*, *American Journal of Sociology*, *Social Forces*, *Comparative Politics*, *British Journal of Political Science*, and *Studies in International Comparative Development*. Her current work investigates women's inclusion into parliamentary bodies in more than 150 countries from 1893 to 2003. She lives with her husband, Paul von Hippel, in Columbus, Ohio.

Melanie M. Hughes is a PhD student in sociology at Ohio State University. Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, she graduated from the University of Texas at Austin in 2001 with a degree in sociology and government. After coming to Ohio State in 2002, she wrote a master's thesis investigating new explanations for women's parliamentary representation in developing countries. She has also researched the lasting impact of colonialism on women's parliamentary representation. She has won multiple university awards, has presented her work on women in politics at several conferences, and has a number of articles forthcoming in journals, including *American Sociological Review* and the *Annual Review of Sociology*. Currently, she is working on her dissertation, which looks at intersectionality through the representation of minority women in national legislatures around the world.

Preface

Imagine your country has 100% women in its parliament or national legislature. How does this make you feel? Are you concerned that men are not being well represented or served by the government? Now add 5% men back into the legislature. Do you feel better about a 95%-5% split? What about 10% men? Are you comfortable yet?

Most readers might feel uncomfortable with a parliament made up entirely of women. But the reverse—the complete dominance of legislatures by men—is actually a reality in some countries. And where men do not completely dominate, they still hold over 90% of parliamentary seats in a wide range of countries. This book focuses on the forces that contribute to such gender inequality in politics. But the story of women’s exclusion from politics is changing. Increasingly, women are holding political positions around the world. So in addition to exploring barriers to women’s political access, we also show where and how women have been gaining ground.

We open the book by outlining the theoretical and practical reasons to incorporate women in politics formally, descriptively, and substantively. In the early chapters of the book, we track the growth in women’s political participation over time beginning with the fight for women’s suffrage (Chapter 2) and moving through women’s parliamentary representation and ascendance to leadership positions as heads of state or cabinet ministers (Chapter 3). To describe different patterns of growth in women’s representation over time, we introduce five basic historical paths to power: flat, increasing, big jump, small gains, and plateau. One point we make in these early chapters is that the West did not necessarily lead the world historically in women’s political power and is not currently in the forefront of women’s representation.

In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, we explore why women have succeeded in gaining parliamentary representation in some places and not in others. We distinguish between two broad sets of factors that produce different levels of political representation for women across the world: supply-side factors and

demand-side factors. Supply factors are those that increase the pool of women with the will and experience to compete against men for political office. Demand factors, on the other hand, are characteristics of countries, electoral systems, or political parties that make it more likely that women will be pulled into office from the supply of willing candidates. Chapter 5 includes an extended discussion of gender quotas, one of the newest developments in the field. In Chapter 6, we also introduce two important overarching influences that cross both supply and demand—armed conflict and international pressure. The central message of these chapters is that we must simultaneously understand cultural beliefs about women's place, the social structural position of women, and the political environment in which women operate, if we are to understand how women can gain political power.

But do women make a difference? Do women in positions of power change anything? Have women changed the style of politics? Chapter 7 attempts to answer these questions by assessing not only women's numbers but also their impact on policy, agenda setting, and legislative style. We argue that understanding women's influence is critical but that we face a variety of challenges in attempting to demonstrate the impact of women. We highlight additional possible sites of influence such as women's movements, we raise concerns about whether a critical mass (30%) of women is necessary for impact, and we point out that many questions about minority women's impact remain.

The next two chapters, 8 and 9, consider women and politics in particular contexts. Chapter 8 looks separately at six regions of the world, drawing out key issues and trends in each. We highlight how the political culture of Scandinavia, as well as other Western industrialized countries, has enabled women to make impressive advances in politics. In Eastern Europe, the focus is on the history and fall of the Soviet Union and the implications for women. Women's activism in movements for democracy, gender quotas, and the Catholic Church are emphasized in the section on Latin America. Turning to sub-Saharan Africa, we must first consider how colonialism undercut women's power, but we also cover land rights, nationalism, and ethnicity. Focusing on 36 diverse countries in Asia and the Pacific, we discuss a wide range of issues, including women's leadership through family connections, Confucianism, and modernization. We close Chapter 8 with a discussion of the Middle East, exploring women's activism and the limitations of Islamic family laws. In Chapter 9, we turn to the United States. In this chapter, we cover women's political involvement as congresswomen, state legislators, governors, and members of the executive branch of government. We also consider gender differences in policy preferences, voting, and other forms of political participation.

The concluding chapter asks where we are going and how we can get there. It introduces the Women Power Index—a new way to measure women’s political power. We assess lessons learned and list a number of Internet resources for further reading. We also consider what the world would look like if we lived in a truly 50/50 world, that is, if neither sex dominated political positions.

It is our purpose with this book to explore the experiences of women in politics in countries around the globe. We focus mainly on women’s participation and representation in formal political positions. But throughout the text, we also try to emphasize the importance and power of women’s informal political activities, such as participation in social movements. Further, we attempt to remind readers whenever possible that whether we look at the place of women within minority groups, or the place of minorities within groups of women, we must take special care to consider within-group inequalities.

Of course, this book would not have been possible without the support of a wide range of people and institutions. We thank Kira Sanbonmatsu, Clarissa Hayward, Mona Lena Krook, Evan Schofer, Anne Jolliff, Jennifer Green, Josh Dubrow, Sheri Kunovich, Colin Odden, Rachel Lovell, Griff Tester, and Judy Wu for helpful suggestions, comments, or advice at various points in the project. We also thank our reviewers, who provided invaluable suggestions for revision: Hannah Britton (Departments of Political Science and Women’s Studies at the University of Kansas), Dianne Bystrom (Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics at Iowa State University), Deirdre Condit (Departments of Women’s Studies and Political Science at Virginia Commonwealth University), Valentine Moghadam (UNESCO), Barbara Ryan (Departments of Sociology and Women’s Studies at Widener University), and Kathleen Staudt (Department of Political Science at the University of Texas at El Paso).

Special thanks go to Vinnie Roscigno, who shepherded our manuscript through its infancy to its completion and provided excellent suggestions throughout the process. We are also grateful to the other series editors, Joya Misra, Gay Seidman, and York Bradshaw, and to Jerry Westby, Ben Penner, Camille Herrera, Elise Smith, and Tracy Alpern, at Sage Publications, as well as copy editor Cheryl Duksta. We also thank the National Science Foundation, the Mershon Center for International Security at Ohio State University, the Coca-Cola Critical Difference for Women program, and the Department of Sociology at Ohio State University for their support of this project. Finally, we thank our friends and families for their encouragement and support and the female politicians of the world for inspiring us to write this book.

Contents

List of Figures, Tables, and Maps	viii
About the Authors	xiii
Preface	xiv
1. Introduction to Women in Politics	1
Arguments for Women's Representation in Politics	3
A Brief Overview of Women's Participation in Politics	16
Orienting Theories	19
2. Women Struggle for the Vote:	
The History of Women's Suffrage	29
Suffrage in the United States	32
Suffrage Movements Outside the United States	47
The International Women's Movement	57
Women's Suffrage After 1945	59
3. Women Struggle for Representation:	
Accessing Positions of Power	63
First Female Members of Parliament	64
Women Access Parliaments: Patterns of Representation	67
Women in Top Leadership Positions	80
Women in Cabinet Positions	96
4. Explaining the Political Representation of	
Women—Culture and Social Structure	101
Beliefs Have Consequences: Culture	103
But Who Will Run? Social Structure	121
5. Explaining the Political Representation of	
Women—Politics	133
Democracy	134
Electoral Systems	137

Characteristics of Political Parties	142
From Candidate to Legislator	147
Quotas	151
6. Explaining the Political Representation of Women—Overarching Factors	167
Armed Conflict: Devastation yet Hope?	168
International Influences	177
7. Do Women Make a Difference?	191
Thinking Differently: Women's Views on Women and Their Policy Priorities	192
Acting Differently: Women's Voting Patterns and Bill Sponsorship	194
Acting Successfully: Women's Legislative Effectiveness	198
Legislating Differently: Women's Legislative Style	204
Do Numbers Matter? Critical Mass and Women's Impact	207
Women's Movements and Women's Policy Machinery as Alternate Sources of Influence	212
In Summary: What Do We Know?	214
8. All Regions Are Not Created Equal	217
The Geography of Women in Politics	217
Western Industrialized Countries	219
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	223
Latin America and the Caribbean	228
Sub-Saharan Africa	237
Asia and the Pacific Islands	244
Middle East and North Africa	252
9. Middle of the Pack: Women and Politics in the United States	257
Women in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives: Growing Slowly	258
Women in the States	262
Women and the American Presidency	267
Explanations	273
Donkeys and Elephants: The Influence of Political Parties	286
The Rise and Fall of the Equal Rights Amendment	291
Gender Gaps in American Politics	295
International Comparisons	306

10. Where Do We Go From Here? And How Do We Get There?	309
Where Are We Now?	309
Where Are We Going?	312
How Do We Get There?	314
In Conclusion: What Would a 50/50 World Look Like?	317
References	318
Glossary/Index	349

Figure 9.8	Male and Female Candidates Emerge From Pool of Possible Candidates	282
Figure 9.9	Percentage of Seats Held by Democrats Compared With Percentage of Democratic Seats Held by Women, 2006	288
Figure 9.10	Percentage of Seats Held by Republicans Compared With Percentage of Republican Seats Held by Women, 2006	289
Figure 9.11	Cumulative Number of Female Governors by Political Party, 1974–2004	290
Figure 9.12	Gender Gap in Public Policy Attitudes, 1994–1996	296
Figure 9.13	Percentage of Men and Women Voting Democrat and Republican in U.S. Presidential Elections, 1980–2004	299
Figure 9.14	Percentage of Voting Age Population Who Reported Voting in Presidential Election Years, 1964–2004, by Gender	300
Figure 9.15	The Gender Gap Around the World	307
Figure 10.1	The Women Power Index, 1971–2000, for Free and Partly Free Countries	311

Tables

Table 1.1	World Rankings for Women in Parliament for Select Countries, 2005	17
Table 1.2	Regional Percentages of Women in Parliament, 2005	18
Table 3.1	Countries Electing a Woman to Parliament Within 3 Years of Universal Suffrage by Year Woman Elected	68
Table 3.2	Absolute and Relative Gains in the Percentage of Women in Parliament of Select Big Jump Countries	76
Table 3.3	Female National Leaders	81
Table 3.4	Female Prime Ministers in Presidential Systems	84
Table 3.5	Female National Leaders Holding Mainly Symbolic Power	85
Table 3.6	Percentage of Women in Cabinets by Region, 1998	97
Table 3.7	Percentage of Female Cabinet Ministers Holding Types of Cabinet Positions	98

Table 4.1	Average Percentage of Women in Parliament, by Country's Dominant Religion	112
Table 4.2	World Values Survey Questions on a Woman's Place	116
Table 5.1	Women's Representation in Plurality/Majority Versus PR Systems	138
Table 5.2	Female Legislators by Political Party, 1975 and 1985	144
Table 5.3	Percentage of Female Candidates and Women in National Legislatures	148
Table 5.4	Constitutional Quotas	154
Table 5.5	Political Party Quotas	156
Table 5.6	Election Law Quotas, 2005	159
Table 6.1	Civil Wars and Women's Political Gains	172
Table 7.1	Crime Bills Introduced in 1989 Session, Colorado State House, by Sex of Sponsor	199
Table 8.1	Women in Parliament, Women Ministerial Appointments, and Female National Leaders in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2006	229
Table 9.1	Female Governors Throughout History	268
Table 10.1	The Women Power Index, 2005	310
Table 10.2	Thresholds of Women's Parliamentary Representation for 185 Countries, June 2005	312

Maps

Map 2.1	States That Ratified Women's Suffrage Before 1920	40
Map 8.1	Women's Parliamentary Representation in Western Industrialized Countries, 2006	221
Map 8.2	Women's Parliamentary Representation in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2006	239
Map 8.3	Women's Parliamentary Representation in the Middle East and North Africa, 2006	253
Map 9.1	Women's Representation in State Legislatures, 2006	264
Map 9.2	Positive Attitudes About Women in Politics Across 38 U.S. States	277

Introduction to Women in Politics

Women are not well represented in politics. Simply turning on the television to a summit of world leaders, a debate in the British Parliament, or a United Nations Security Council meeting reveals a dearth of female faces. Women make up half of the population of every country in the world. But the worldwide average percentage of women in national parliaments is only 16%. Of the more than 190 countries in the world, a woman is the head of government (president or a prime minister) in only 7. Women are 9% of ambassadors to the United Nations, 7% of the world's cabinet ministers, and 8% of world mayors.

At the turn of the 21st century, there is little overt discrimination against women in politics. Almost every country in the world provides the legal right for women to participate in politics. Women can vote, women can support candidates, and women can run for office. But the lack of visible women in the political life of nation after nation suggests that veiled discrimination against women remains. In some countries, such as Sweden, Argentina, and Rwanda, women have made remarkable progress in their political representation. Unfortunately, in many other countries, the struggle for equal representation proceeds slowly. And some populations, religions, and governments remain openly hostile to the notion of women in politics.

In no country do women make up 50% of the **national legislature**. But a few countries do come close. For years, Sweden reigned as the country with the highest percentage of women in its **parliament**. In 2003, however, Sweden



Figure 1.1 Finding the Six Female World Leaders Among Those Gathered for the United Nations 50th Anniversary Is a Challenge

SOURCE: ©UN/DPI Photo. Reprinted with permission.

was dethroned by Rwanda, which reached 48.8% women in its legislature. The two countries could not be more different. Sweden is a developed Western nation, has been at peace for almost two centuries, and governs through a parliament first established more than 500 years ago (Kelber 1994). In Sweden, women's increasing participation in politics was a long, slow process. Beginning with reforms in the 1920s, Sweden broke the 10% mark for women's legislative representation in 1952, boasted the first female acting prime minister in 1958, and then passed the 20% mark for female legislative presence in 1973 and the 30% mark in 1985.

In contrast, in 2003, Rwanda had just begun to recover from a brutal genocide during which more than a million people lost their lives. Rwanda is a poor nation in Africa that ranks 159th out of 177 countries in its level of "human development" (United Nations 2004). The 2003 election was the inaugural election of a new constitution, which guaranteed women at least 30% of the National Assembly seats. Before that time, women had been less of a presence, never hitting 20% of the parliament before the transition to an interim government in 1994. But even with a guaranteed 30%, voters chose even more women—almost 20% more. The promotion of women by international organizations, the influence of local women's organizations, and the sheer number of men killed during or imprisoned after the genocide help explain the sudden rise of women to substantial political power (Longman 2006).

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

developing countries in their representation of women as political leaders. For example, as of June 2005, the United States ranked 61st of 185 countries in percentage of women, falling behind Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ecuador, and Zimbabwe. Britain ranks 52nd and is behind Mexico, Namibia, and Vietnam. Spain, Italy, and the United States have never had a female president, whereas Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and Indonesia have. It is also important to recognize that Sweden and Rwanda are two of only a handful of true success stories for women's presence in politics. Of all countries, 73% have less than 20% women in their national legislatures. And 10 countries have no women representatives at all.

The story of women, politics, and power is therefore different than that of women in education or women in the labor force. Although women have made remarkable inroads into both higher education and traditionally male occupations, the political sphere remains an arena where women have far to go. Altogether, when we talk about women and politics, women remain just a "blip on the male political landscape" (Reynolds 1999:547).

Arguments for Women's Representation in Politics

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

But does it matter if all political decision makers are male? In principle, the answer could be no. But in practice the answer is often yes. In principle, most laws are gender neutral, and elected representatives pay attention to all of their constituents equally. In practice, however, **feminist** political theorists have argued that the appearance of neutrality toward gender or equality between men and women in government actually hides substantial gender inequality. If gender-neutral language is used in principle, but in practice only men appear in politics, then women are not equal but rather invisible. Theorists such as Anne Phillips, Carol Pateman, and Iris Young

have shown that abstract terms used in political theory, such as *individual* or *citizen*, though having the appearance of being gender neutral, actually signify White males (Pateman 1988, 1989; Phillips 1991, 1995; Young 1990). Even more forceful arguments say that the state was structured from its inception to benefit men and that it has a continuing interest in the maintenance of male domination, both in Western countries (Lerner 1986; MacKinnon 1989) and in non-Western countries (Charrad 2001).

Without women, the state, being populated only by men, could legislate in the male interest. That is, if women are not around when decisions are made, their interests may not be served. Golda Meir was an Israeli cabinet minister before she became prime minister of Israel. She related the following story: "Once in the Cabinet we had to deal with the fact that there had been an outbreak of assaults on women at night. One minister (a member of an extreme religious party) suggested a curfew. Women should stay at home after dark. I said: 'but it's the men attacking the women. If there's to be a curfew, let the men stay at home, not the women.'" Golda Meir's presence on the cabinet allowed her to point out the unfairness of making women stay home rather than men. If she had not been there, who would have pointed this out?

In general, male lawmakers are less likely to initiate and pass laws that serve women's and children's interests (Berkman and O'Connor 1993; Bratton and Haynie 1999; Childs and Withey 2004; Schwindt-Bayer 2006; Swers 1998; Taylor-Robinson and Heath 2003; Thomas 1991). They less often think about rape, domestic violence, women's health, and child care. But in democracies, the points of view of all groups need to be taken into account. Therefore, the views and opinions of women as well as men must be incorporated into political decision making.

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

Case Study: The Story of Mukhtaran Bibi—Village Council Justice

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

The expectation was that now Mukhtaran Bibi would commit suicide. Indeed, because they are now considered deeply dishonored and

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

Mukhtaran Bibi's story has a mostly happy ending. She received compensation money from Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf and used it to start two schools in her village, one for boys and the other for girls. When the government detained her for planning to visit the United States in June 2005, international attention and outcry forced her release. Her round-the-clock guards provided by the government afford her some protection from her attackers, who were released after their convictions were overturned in March 2005.

The stories of many other young girls in Pakistan do not have such happy endings. They are beaten for not producing sons, raped, disfigured for trying to choose a husband for themselves, or killed as a matter of family honor. In a society that does not acknowledge rape in marriage, approximately 50% of women who do report a rape are jailed under the 1979 Hudood Ordinances. These Ordinances allow courts to view a woman's charge of rape as an admission of illegal sex unless she can prove that the intercourse was nonconsensual. Such proof requires multiple male witnesses to the crime, as in some circumstances the testimony of a woman is worth only half that of a man.

SOURCES: Kristof (2004, 2005) and Human Rights Watch (1999).

Case Study: Wife Beating in Nigeria—Legal Under the Penal Code

In December 2001, Rosalynn Isimeto-Osibuamhe of Lagos, Nigeria, wanted to visit her parents. Her husband, Emmanuel, told her she had to stay home. Their argument ended when Emmanuel beat Rosalynn unconscious and left her lying in the street outside their apartment. This was hardly the first time she'd been beaten. During the course of their 4-year marriage, Emmanuel beat her more than 60 times.

This story is not an unusual one in Africa, where domestic violence is endemic. Chronic underreporting, cultural acceptance, and women's shame make it difficult to provide hard and fast numbers on the extent of wife beating in Africa. But a recent study suggests that one half of Zambian

women report being physically abused by a male partner. An earlier Nigerian survey explains that 81% of married women reported being verbally or physically abused by husbands. Few African countries have domestic violence laws on the books.

What could Rosalynn Isimeto-Osibumhe do? Domestic violence is entrenched in Nigerian law. Section 56 of the Nigerian Penal Code allows husbands to use physical means to chastise their wives, as long as the husbands do not inflict grievous harm, where grievous harm is defined as loss of sight, hearing, power of speech, facial disfigurement, or other life-threatening injuries. Nigeria, a country of 350,000 square miles, has only two shelters for battered women. Police do not pursue domestic violence as assault, and Rosalynn's pastor told her not to make her husband angry and to submit to him. Indeed, many of Isimeto-Osibumhe's female neighbors believe that husbands have a right to beat wives who argue, burn dinner, or come home late.

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

SOURCES: LaFraniere (2005), Kishor and Johnson (2004), and Odunjinrin (1993).

Case Study: Delaying the Clarence Thomas Vote— Female Representatives Speak Out

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

In the fall of 1991, Clarence Thomas was close to being confirmed as a U.S. Supreme Court justice. But on October 6th, 2 days before the Senate was scheduled to vote on his nomination, a distinguished law professor, Anita Hill, accused Thomas of sexually harassing her in 1981. The story exploded in the media and various groups began calling for a delay on the confirmation vote until the charges of sexual harassment could be fully investigated.

But on Tuesday morning, the 8th of October, it looked like the Senate vote on Thomas would go forward as planned. The men of the Senate (at the time the Senate had 98 men and 2 women) did not plan to investigate the