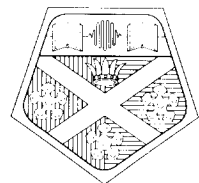# STRATHCLYDE PAPERS ON GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

## UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE

# SOMETIMES IT'S HARD TO BE A WOMAN:

## The Dilemma of Difference and Women's Political Ambition

*by*

## Momin Rahman

*No. 100*

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# THE DILEMMA OF DIFFERENCE AND WOMEN'S POLITICAL
# AMBITION

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*Acknowledgements*

## *Synopsis*

In her study of 1972 Democratic and Republican Convention Delegates, Virginia Sapiro (1982) concluded that there were differences in how each sex dealt with the conflict their political activism caused and that men and women thus calculated the costs of political ambition in different ways. Women found greater conflict between their family roles and political ambition and so delayed or curtailed their activism. This paper updates that research by asking the same questions to delegates from California to the Democratic Convention in New York City in July 1992. The findings are placed in the context of the debate in democratic theory about the 'dilemma of difference' (Young 1989). Women are 'different' by being the subordinate (female) gender in a male-dominated society. Although it has no basis in nature, the construction of gender is a pervasive form of social inequality. This difference of gender has direct relevance to political activism.

Participation in politics can be seen as a liberal feminist strategy, in that feminists engage with existing political systems. Other feminists, concerned with women's difference in terms of social and material subordination in a patriarchal society, contend that the conditions of participation take no account of the inequality this difference creates. This is crucial in liberal democracies where political elites exist and are predominantly male. While a token few may participate in the elites, their doing so will not change the social order of patriarchy that denies the majority of women the opportunity to be in the political elite.

In looking at the personal costs of women's political activism and how this affects ambition, this paper will argue that the continuing social construction of gender, creating women's difference, remains fundamentally unchallenged by a liberal feminist strategy of participation in male-dominated political systems.

## *1.  Feminism, the Dilemma of Difference and political participation*

### Liberal Feminism and participation

The basic premise of feminism is that women are oppressed in society; its political aim is the liberation of women from social, physical and economic oppression. Political representation in democracies is one method of achieving this, based on the assumption that political decisions can effect change in social and economic conditions. However, this is an explicitly *liberal* feminist strategy, presuming as it does that the actual political structures are not irredeemably patriarchal, and therefore women can make a difference by participating. Furthermore, the necessarily reformist measures possible in democracies (where the majority are neither pro-feminist nor feminist) are seen as incrementally cumulative in securing women's liberation, rather than tokenistic and ineffective.

Despite the criticisms of liberal feminism by more radical feminists, one cannot see liberal feminism as merely naive in its assumptions about politics and participation. First wave feminism's struggle for the vote did deliver political citizenship. Sylvia Walby's recent article asks the question 'is citizenship gendered?' and her discussion uses the different categories of citizenship developed by Marshall; civil, political and social (Walby 1994). Although not a liberal feminist, she acknowledges that political citizenship, i.e. getting the vote, created the opportunity to achieve civil citizenship, such as participation in politics, although it has not brought about equal social citizenship for women. Although this categorisation is certainly context-specific (British) and so open to criticism, the universality of women's suffrage providing an opportunity to press for further social change cannot be disputed. This illustrates how liberal feminism does not differ from radical or socialist feminism in desiring social change. Rather, its analysis of how this change may be achieved is fundamentally different from other feminisms, particularly in its focus on the potential of participating in politics. Liberal feminists would argue that the political system can be adapted by opening it up to women's interests (Swiebel 1988). Thus the legitimacy of the political system as a mechanism is not in question but rather its current gender blindness.

Parry describes Western captialist democracies as pluralist or democratic elitist systems where 'individual participation in public affairs is not in itself an important ideal' (Parry 1969:148). Liberal feminists have explicitly questioned this; the making of public policy which reflects women's interests and the presence of women in decision-making roles is at the core of the strategy of participation. The theoretical tradition of pluralism has only recently addressed the lack of women's participation in these systems, explaining it in two ways; either women had no distinct interests from men, or they chose not to participate. Carroll (1985) documents these explanations more fully and provides a criticism of the sexist assumptions of their authors. The emergence of the new women's movement in the late 1960s was concerned with the lack of social change in women's oppression and can be seen 'as pluralist proof that many women perceive they have interests distinct from those of men' and so 'the question of whether governing institutions have represented these interests adequately becomes

important' (Carroll 1985: 15). The analysis of representation has highlighted how women are constrained from participation by the social construction of gender (Sapiro 1982, Chapman 1991) and how this lack of presence has denied the distinct expression of women's interests. This view of representation is held by both liberal and radical feminists engaged with democratic theory, but the participation of women in democratic politics has become a major focus of liberal feminist strategy, as part and parcel of using the political system to gain equality

Again, this strategy is not naively arguing for microcosmic equality in representation. The main argument is that a sufficient increase in the number of women representatives may lead to an ability to act as feminists, on behalf of women (leaving aside for the moment the diversity of agendas and constituencies in feminism). Hernes' book on Nordic feminists shows that the increase in women in the Storting in Norway (Hernes 1988) led to substantial changes, especially in welfare policies. Similarly, Norris and Lovenduski's research on candidates for the British House of Commons suggests that women have more liberal social policy attitudes (1989).

However, 'the real participants are the members of the political elites in the parties and public office and the elites of the many competing intermediary groups' (Parry 1969:148). To participate feminists have inevitably had to join these elites, but of course these elites are overwhelmingly male. Political citizenship is gendered. Herein lies the dilemma for liberal feminism.

## The Dilemma of Difference and Participation

The lack of social equality or citizenship for women has been explained as a reflection of their status in a patriarchal society:

> Biological sex differences in no way determine or justify the sex-based division of labour or the social evaluation of sex roles. The institution of the family, and women's mothering role within it, are cultural phenomena which reflect and reinforce, especially through the separation of domestic and public spheres, male chauvinist attitudes and practice.....In the context of an already male dominated society, the industrial revolution depressed women's status still further as they were tethered to a domestic sphere whose social value steadily declined. In Britain and the United States the imperatives of advanced capitalism in important respects reinforce male dominance, especially through the family-household system, though in other ways tend to undermine it.
>
> (Randall 1982: 33)

This social and material inequality has persisted after the achievement of limited equal political and civil rights (Walby 1994), although the latter do entitle women to 'oppose their government and stand for office; and [to] associational autonomy - the right to form independent associations including social movements, interest groups and political parties' (Held 1992:17). This political activity is overwhelmingly elite activity in democracies. However, the elites were and still

are men. Iris Young has neatly phrased the problem this presents in competing for positions as a 'dilemma of difference:

> Contemporary social movements seeking full inclusion and participation of oppressed and disadvantaged groups now find themselves faced with a dilemma of difference. On the one hand, they must continue to deny that there are any esential differences between men and women, whites and blacks, able-bodied and disabled people that justify denying women, blacks, or disabled people the opportunity to do anything that others are free to do or be included in any institution or position. On the other hand, they have often found it necessary to affirm that there are often group-based differences between men and women, whites and blacks, able-bodied and disabled people that make application of a strict principle of equal treatment, especially in competition for positions, unfair because these differences put these groups at a disadvantage.

(Young 1989: 266)

The feminist analyses of under-representation and participation have, on the whole, concluded that women who actually do make it into male-dominated elites exhibit the same socio-economic characteristics as men, i.e. they have to be at least as well educated, funded, and enjoy the same social status as men before they can even begin to think of competing successfully (Kirkpatrick 1976, Chapman 1991).

Nobody is naive about the bias favouring the male gender but liberal feminist strategy is to overcome this regardless of the social factors that deny women equality of opportunity in participation. In democratic elitist politics this participation means deciding to stand and then winning various battles. Jenny Chapman (1992) provides a classification of the selection process into three stages; self-selection, institutional or external selection and finally voter selection. She states:

> On the face of it, all three pose distinct links to both the continuity and stability of political systems and the inter-related interests of existing elites. If anyone can come forward, then why not the 'have-nots'?...In practice, however, political change in competitive systems has been evolutionary rather than revolutionary and the complete dispossession of elties is the exception rather than the rule.
> The reason, of course, is that the very same interdependence of socio-economic and political resources which underpins the whole history of human political values, roles and practices and led to the opening up of competition in the first place. Whatever the available mix of political action may be, and whatever mix and balance may be found in the recruitment process, there is a basic tendency for those who act and come forward to be 'haves' rather than 'have-nots'.

(Chapman 1992;14-15)

Self-selection and external selection are the most crucial areas of inequality both because of the critieria for admission to the elite (be like a man) and the gendered

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division of labour in the home (women look after the children and household). Chapman (1992) deals extensively with the former in a comparative study of the former USSR, Scotland and the USA, and Chapman (1991) and Sapiro (1982) highlight the latter in their respective studies on family roles versus political ambition and participation.

This research focuses on whether ambition (crucial to the initial stage of self-selection) is constrained by systematic social inequality or whether participation does overcome the dilemma of difference that this social inequality creates. For a brief look at some of the systematic social inequalities, I turn next to feminist criticisms of participation.

## Feminist Critiques of Political Participation

Other feminists' scepticism of political participation is founded upon radical critiques of the system of political organisation and competition and a materialist critique of the gendered division of labour. All are radical in that they argue that the political system itself is at fault, rather than its gender balance.

Radical democratic theorists have developed their ideas from both the socialist and liberal feminist tradition. Anne Phillips has engaged most thoroughly with liberal democratic theory and practice from a socialist feminist perspective, drawing on the work of both Carole Pateman and Iris Marion Young. She discusses the prospect of using liberal democracy to achieve women's liberation and concludes that it is fundamentally problematic because, 'it returns to the individual as the basic unit of political life' and so ignores the 'gendered distribution of paid and unpaid labour creating the gendered distribution of political status and power' (Phillips 1992: 69). Phillips also criticises the manifestation of political citizenship because it is unable to reconcile the group difference of women, as the subordinate gender, with social equality since the focus of citizenship is on individual and formal equality. Perhaps the key theme in criticisms of liberal democratic theory and practice is that the polity has been constituted by and for men, thus inevitably creating a system which favours and advances the male gender.

Moreover, the advancement or favouring of males relies fundametally upon subordinating females. For example, if we consider the origins of the political state as constituting propertied men, it is clear that denying married women property rights denies them political status by conferring it on their husbands. Therefore the project for liberation is not to be 'equal to males', since this implies that women would need 'females' to exploit. Rather it is to dismantle the structures that create and perpetuate gender as a basis of subordination.

Phillips does offer prescriptions for liberal democratic theory and practice, but like the one offerred by Iris Young's attempt to overcome the dilemma of difference with a group-based polity (Young 1989), they are a wedge of radical ideas and mechanisms, the thin end of which is a quota system (Phillips 1993). In overcoming the dilemma of difference, feminist democratic theorists do not see liberal democracy and reformism as any use as long as it continues to deny social, group-based difference.

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Some radical feminists have challenged the notion of political organisation itself, going further than the democratic theorists' arguments for reconceptualisation. The most developed argument about political organisation is made by Kathy Ferguson in her book *The Feminist Case Against Bureacracy* (Ferguson 1984). She takes as her starting point Foucault's contention that the increasing bureaucratic organisation of every aspect of life is now the central form of social control. In her analysis, this has increased with the encroachment of the state into private or domestic tasks, echoing Randall's concern with the impact of industrialisation. Ferguson's central point is that bureaucratic organisation is inimical to women's liberation because it is based on 'masculine' values. Bureaucratic organisation is hierarchical, centralised, and depersonalising, creating power relationships through this inegalitarian framework. It thus favours men since it is located within a social context 'in which social relations between classes, races and sexes are fundamentally unequal' (Ferguson 1984: 7). She describes femininity as subordination, because the character traits described as 'feminine' are those of the subordinate in any power relation; accommodating, conflict-avoiding, co-operative, whereas the successful values in bureacratic life are seen as 'masculine' and are examples of domination, aggression, lack of responsibility to others (through depersonalistion). As Parry (1969) describes them, political elites are obviously one arena of bureaucratic, hierarchical and elitist organisation.

Ferguson acknowledges that liberal feminism is important in advancing individual life-chances and that entry into the public world is necessary in order to articulate female experience, but she is extremely wary of the probability of de-radicalisation which can result: 'An exclusive focus on integrating women into public institutions produces a situation that perpetuates bureaucratic discourse rather than challenging it; important questions are not asked, critical arguments are not formulated, alternatives are not envisioned' (Ferguson 1984: 29). This is the crucial point for political participation; does participation really allow an opportunity for changing the system, or is it by its nature absorption into the system? As Ferguson argues, 'Women will not be liberated by becoming 'like men' but rather by abolishing the entire system that allocates human potential by gender' (1984: 94). In this sense, Ferguson goes further than radical democratic theorists who argue that the constitution of the polity benefits the male gender (but does not need to); she is arguing that political organisation is itself gendered, and therefore reconceptualisation to include difference is inimical to the system.

As Randall (1982) argues, there is a material basis to the system of gender division. Marxist or socialist feminism has challenged, adapted and developed the focus on class in the search for an adequate theory of capital and women's exploitation. Some British Marxist feminists, such as Michele Barrett (1980), have abandoned the notion of patriarchy as a system, focusing instead on particular historical circumstances which oppressed women. Others have argued that the exploitation of women must be seen as a separate system that pre-dates capitalism and is not purely a function of it unless some prior concept of gender asymmetry is accepted. Sylvia Walby is an example of this dual systems perspective, developing a flexible idea of patriarchy which includes politics as an arena of public patriarchy, where the power of males is reinforced through

political processes and state policies (Walby 1994). Whether or not patriarchy is seen as equal or subordinate to capitalism, the exploitation of women clearly has a material basis, and therefore material consequences. Just as traditional Marxists would dismiss political participation by the exploited working class as incorporation into the democratic shell that protects capitalism, so it can be argued that women are inevitably the 'have-nots' in a patriarchal capitalist society.

The developments of this materialist perspective have led to a move away from a view of patriarchy as somehow subordinate to capitalist relationships. This radical materialist feminist perspective is developed primarily in the work of Christine Delphy and Diana Leonard, who argue that the asymmetrical gender division in patriarchy is a result of a class relationship in which women are the exploited class. Their research has focused on the heterosexual family unit as a key site of women's exploitation, in which women provide sexual, emotional, reproductive and domestic labour for their husbands. In the domestic arena the burden of labour falls on women, who work more hours than their husbands and must continue to do so even when they are in paid employment themselves (Delphy & Leonard 1992). They argue that this allows men to be engaged in 'public' activities such as political activism, because they have wives. Thus even women who gain access to political elites by 'becoming like men' will never have the same equality of opportunity because they do not have the labour of wives at their disposal. It is this exploitative relationship of gender that facilitates male advancement in society. Logically, for women to compete on equal terms, they must have the same advantages as men, i.e they must have domestic support from wives, but of course they **are** the wives and so can never have this advantage.

Underpinning all these critiques is the gendered distribution of paid and unpaid labour creating the gendered distribution of political power. These criticisms are structural in that they seek to overturn not only political systems as they currently operate, but the fundamental gender structures that are silently incorporated into politics. Overcoming these structural problems through the individual participation of women seems unlikely. This research will seek to establish if structures are overcome, or whether they still fundamentally constrain.

## 2.   *The Case Study of the Californian Delegation*

### Introduction

The aim in this study is to establish whether the structural construction of gender is a serious constraint on women's activism and ambition to be active. The feminist social and political theories outlined in the previous section highlight some of the factors that will need to be considered in the analysis of the results. The liberal feminist position can be taken as the model on which activism is based, and it is being tested against the reality of women's mainstream activism and participation. The women in this case study comprised the Californian State Delegation to the Democratic National Nominating Convention, held for the selection of a presidential candidate in New York City in July 1992.

California was chosen because it had the largest delegation including an overall majority of Brown and Clinton supporters; candidates with a strong liberal position on women's issues. Moreover, as Brown was clearly more liberal than Clinton, particularly in his concern to open up the political system to under-represented sections such as women, the balance of the delegation was tipped towards being pro-(liberal)feminist. The fact that both Democratic candidates for its Senate seats were women also raised the profile of women's issues and the issue of women candidates. In this sense, California was used as an extreme case study, where it was hoped that the political climate and context would create the most positive environment for liberal feminism.

In terms of methodology, this research is an example of the 'small $N$, many variables' study coined by Lijphart to describe comparative research (Lijphart 1971). For a fuller discussion of developments in comparative method, it is worth looking at David Collier's update on Lijphart's argument; Collier claims that the small $N$ problem has been reduced with the growth of interpretative analysis and greater statistical sophistication (Collier 1991). Without going too far into these debates, this research is located in this field of comparison. The small sample is the result of resource constraints, but the analysis is placed in the context of wider social and political theory framed around the dilemma of difference. What this research aims to do is to illustrate the theoretical arguments with a case study of a small $N$ sample, while drawing on the previous research to engage in some historical comparison. Again, this comparison is not methodologically exact, given that Sapiro (1982) and Kirkpatrick (1976) had much larger samples, but it does not prevent a discussion of the continuing social construction of gender framed as a dilemma of difference. *(For a discussion of methods see Appendix A)*

## Previous Research

Sapiro's work (1982) used the Centre for Political Studies 1972 Delegate Study; out of 2449 completed questionnaires she selected 1336 interview subjects. Sapiro was seeking to establish the costs family life posed to political careers and ambition when she examined two hypotheses:

> The first is that some of the same features of family life - specifically, the presence of young children and the spouse's attitude toward the potential candidates's political activities - are associated with a feeling of conflict between public and domestic commitments by both men and women. Second, previous investigation of gender roles and politics suggests that such conflicts are treated differently in the decisions of male and female political activists to seek office.
>
> (Sapiro 1982: 267)

Both hypotheses were confirmed. Sapiro concluded that 'we may now add that these conflicts are experienced at least as much by men as well [as women]' (Sapiro 1982: 276). The second point she established was that men and women

then chose to deal with this conflict differently; the tendency in men for choosing to pursue their ambition despite the identified conflict, whilst women tended to choose their family roles in the face of conflict. Sapiro argued that men withdrew from familial roles, whereas women adopted avoidance strategies, by managing and balancing commitments and by delaying or curtailing ambition. These findings echo Ferguson's arguments about the characteristics needed to succeed in our bureaucratised public life and they also confirm the materialist concern with the unequal division of domestic labour.

Jenny Chapman (1991) conducted a similar study based again on interviews with a random 20 per cent sample of 1004 respondents to the Strathclyde District Election Survey of 1984. Her concern was also the costs to personal life of political ambition and her findings support Sapiro's in that 'conflict is the rule rather than the exception' (Chapman 1991: 8). Conflict with family life, involving parenting and/or partners, was very widespread at 54 per cent of interviewees. The conflict avoidance strategy identified by Sapiro was also revealed in this study and although used by both men and women, Chapman makes the point that few men chose to curtail political ambition or activism to reduce conflict with family life.

Jeane Kirkpatrick's (1976) study of 1972 convention delegates included an investigation of ambition and conflict with family life. It showed that 39 per cent of all women studied had no political ambition as opposed to only 19 per cent of men; the Democratic delegates almost mirrored the overall pattern with 35 per cent of women holding no ambition as opposed to 17 per cent of men. Most highly ambitious women were either divorced, separated or single. Of those with children, the largest section of women with ambition were those with adult children. This finding mirrors the delaying tactic found in Sapiro's study, where women waited until children were grown before resuming or embarking on political careers.

## The Political Context of 1992 and the Resurgence of Feminism

The political context of the '92 presidential campaign and the Democratic Convention is important, in that issues affecting women were high on the agenda. Two factors in particular can be identified as raising the profile of women's role and status in 1992. The first was the (televised) Senate confirmation hearings of Justice Clarence Thomas, in which he was accused of sexual harassment by a former colleague Anita Hill. The aggressive and unsympathetic questioning of Hill by the all-male committee and the subsequent confirmation of Thomas as a Supreme Court Justice raised an outcry across the country. It illustrated to many women that at least two branches of their government were unsympathetic to a very real issue for them despite all the anti-discrimination legislation passed over the previous 20 years. The case also indirectly prompted an unprecedented number of major party women candidates for the '92 Congressional elections with 106 running for the House (70 Democrats, 36 Republicans) and 11 for the Senate, (10 Democrats and 1 Republican). Although the number of major party women candidates for the House of Representatives has increased over the last 20 years,

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the growth has been very modest, from 25 in 1972 to 69 in 1990. However, in 1992 this figure jumps to 106 for the House: 'If the class of '74 is the Watergate class, this could be called the Anita Hill class.'( *Congressional Quarterly.*17.10.92: 3267). 'The striking feature of the women's political drive on the West Coast has been the penetration of the suburbs and the middle-class vote. There seem to be two reasons: abortion and Anita Hill.....The California polls suggest that up to 10 per cent of women Republican voters are changing their vote on the abortion issue alone' (*The Guardian*, 17.10.92).

The abortion issue was the second factor in putting women on the political agenda. The platforms of the two parties highlighted women's roles, with the Republicans pushing traditional family values as one theme, explicitly criticising career women (Hillary Clinton for one) and non-traditional family units such as single mothers (not fathers) and gay and lesbian partnerships. Abortion was never far behind these debates on the proper role of women. The incumbent President Bush promised to nominate more conservatives to tip the Supreme Court balance against abortion. The Clinton campaign was explicitly pro-choice and supportive of non-traditional families and working women. The Democrats have maintained a liberal stance on abortion and have been careful to court this emerging electoral advantage amongst women. The party nominated a woman for Vice-President in 1984, and identified its platform with women's issues. This was clear in Clinton's nomination acceptance speech at the Convention:

> George Bush won't support a woman's right to choose, but I will....I do not want to return to the time when we made criminals of women and their doctors...this difficult and painful decision should be left to the women of America.
>
> (*New York Times.*17.7.92)

In this climate we can reasonably predict that women's role and status was a salient issue at the Democratic Convention and during the research period. The unusual numbers of women running for election also indicates that the liberal feminist perspective of participation was resurgent, or perhaps more accurately, finding itself in a more positive political environment after the explicitly anti-feminist years of Reagan and Bush (Sapiro 1986). The issue of Anita Hill and the resulting connection with support for women is a classic example of liberal feminist thinking; if the Senate committee had more women on it then Thomas would not have been confirmed. This hyptothesis provides the perspective of female experience, but does it challenge the underlying social conditions that allow men to objectify women as sexual objects? The abortion issue seems more clear-cut in that a woman's right to choose echoes the feminist litmus test of abortion on demand. However, no articulation of this more radical position was made at the Convention (since the decision was still seen as for women *and* their doctors), but then such is the stuff of democratic politics in a patriarchal society.

What is perhaps the most important point for this study is that the climate of 1992 was, for the first presidential election since 1976, favourable to discussing issues around women and feminism and that in this sense there was an air of

'going for it', whether this was in candidacy or advocating (liberal) feminist policies.

## The Data Base

The Californian delegation to the National Convention was chosen for this study as it is the largest delegation and so provided the most respondents. This was particularly important as the research had limited resources available for a mailed questionnaire to the USA. It was not possible to obtain a national list from the Democratic National Committee who were understandably busy. California is a heterogenous state, both socio-economically and ethnically, so a profile of the Convention delegates should reflect this to some extent. The following gives some idea of the demograhpy of the state compared to the nation.

Demographic Comparison of the California Delegation to the State and National Average.

|                    | Delegates % | California % | USA average % |
|--------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| African-Americans  | 16          | 7            | 12            |
| Asians             | 8           | 10           | 3             |
| Hispanics          | 21          | 26           | 9             |
| Married couples    |             | 53           | 55            |
| Owner/ occupier    |             | 56           | 55            |
| Income per capita  |             | $20,795      | $18,655       |

(Barone & Ujifusa 1992: delegates from *Congressional Quarterly*, 4.7.92)

Neither California or it's delegation are a microcosm of the USA, especially ethnically, although the state is, on most indicators, near the average for the nation. However, not only did California provide the largest delegation to the Convention, but, as argued above, the political context was particularly salient for women's issues. In the delegation there were 233 women and 231 men; 21 gay men and 14 lesbians. These figures include alternates who may not necessarily take part in the voting but do attend. The delegation had 191 pledged for Clinton, 157 for Brown, with 58 pledged for others, making a total of 406 delegates.

*3. Results of the Study*

## Profile of the sample

From Table 1 (overleaf) it is clear that there are considerably more women delegates than there were 20 years ago; 56 per cent compared to 40 per cent in 1972 (Kirkpatrick 1976). The 50/50 per cent sex quota (Article 10 in the Democratic Party Charter) is obviously at work; 55 per cent of women hold party office compared to 60 per cent of men.

The sample is well educated and overwhelmingly middle class; comparison with 1972 delegates shows that these activists have higher levels of education now, with 76 per cent of them holding a degree or graduate/professional qualifications compared to 56 per cent in '72 (Kirkpatrick 1976: 385). The difference now is the proportion of women who have graduate/professional qualifications at 46 per cent matches the proportion of men at 49 per cent. This is a marked increase from 1972 when the comparison was 18 per cent women to 38 per cent of men. The mean age of women, at 48.1 years, suggests that these activists are the beneficiaries of the expansion of American higher education in the 1960s. The profile confirms the elitist nature of party activism.

The majority of men and women are employed. Seventy-two per cent of women employed now compared to 59 per cent in 1972. What is interesting is the corresponding drop in the proportion of women marked in the 'other' category, which included housewives; this drops from 36 per cent twenty years ago (Kirkpatrick, 1976: 385) to only 7 per cent in 1992. Clearly, many of the women activists have to balance their political activity with children, a job and a husband.

The family life categories illustrate the same pattern identified by Kirkpatrick (1976) and Sapiro (1982): there are significantly more divorced or separated women than men in this sample at 26 per cent compared to 7 per cent. Correspondingly, only 44 per cent of women are married compared to 62 per cent of men. The activists are overwhelmingly currently married or have been so previously, with only 26 per cent of men and 21 per cent of women identified as single.

The above illustrate that getting rid of your husband is good for those women wanting to be active in politics, particularly now that many women are in paid employment as well as family employment. This pattern supports Delphy and Leonard's argument that marriage is an institution of exploitation for wives, and that this does not balance out once the woman is working outside the home. It's hard to be a woman, but worse to be a wife; dumping the man seems to be the only equaliser.

Of those who have children, more women have adult children than men, at 45 per cent compared to 30 per cent. Only 7 per cent of women hae children under 5 years old compared to 18 per cent of men. This confirms the picture established by both Sapiro (1982) and Kirkpatrick (1976), that politically active women have grown children, whereas politically active men have children across the age range. This illustrates further the division of labour in the family unit.

Finally, as expected, the ideological profile of this sample is liberal, with 76 per cent of men and women identifying themselves as either 'liberal' or very 'liberal'.

## *Table 1: Profile of the Sample*

|  | MEN % (43.3) | WOMEN % (56.1) |
|---|---|---|
| **Mean age (in years)** | 45.6 | 48.1 |
| **Education:** |  |  |
| High School | 2.7 | 3.1 |
| Some College | 23.0 | 16.7 |
| College Graduate | 24.3 | 34.4 |
| Post-graduate or professional level | 48.6 | 45.8 |
| **Class identification:** |  |  |
| Lower | 1.4 | 0.0 |
| Working | 10.8 | 9.4 |
| Middle | 44.6 | 55.2 |
| Upper Middle | 35.1 | 30.2 |
| Upper | 6.8 | 5.2 |
| **Employment status:** |  |  |
| Employed full time | 81.1 | 71.9 |
| Unemployed | 4.1 | 8.3 |
| Retired | 9.11 | 2.5 |
| Other | 5.4 | 7.3 |
| **Marital status:** |  |  |
| Single | 25.7 | 20.8 |
| Divorced/separated | 6.8 | 26.0 |
| Married | 62.2 | 43.8 |
| Widowed | 1.4 | 5.2 |
| Long term partner | 4.1 | 3.1 |
| **Age of children** |  |  |
| None | 37.8 | 32.3 |
| Under 5 | 17.6 | 7.3 |
| 5 to 18 yrs | 14.9 | 14.6 |
| 18 and over | 29.7 | 44.8 |
| **Political identification:** |  |  |
| Very liberal | 25.7 | 30.2 |
| Somewhat liberal | 50.0 | 45.8 |
| Middle of the road | 14.9 | 22.9 |
| Somewhat conservative | 8.1 | 1.0 |
| **Those who hold a party position:** | 59.5 | 55.2 |
|  | (*N*=74) | (*N*=96) |

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## Feminism and the Women Respondents

Table 2 below shows that 76 per cent of the women identify themselves as feminist, although only 20 per cent have been active in feminist groups. Ninety-two per cent feel that the women's movement has had an impact on their life. Kirkpatrick's 1972 study did not ask respondents to identify themselves as feminist but only 67 per cent of women Democrats thought women's liberation an important issue in (Kirkpatrick 1976: 446). Clearly, this sample contains women who identify positively with the women's movement of the last twenty years.

Ninety-one per cent have belonged to a women's group, with 60 per cent in civic organisations and 20 per cent in feminist ones. This compares with only 61 per cent of women in 1972 who belonged to either a feminist or civic group (Kirkpatrick 1976: 446). This level of participation is expected amongst party activists. What is important is that the women are both party activists and activists on women's issues as well. It is therefore important to look at how important this self-identified feminism is in reasons for participation.

*Table 2:   Feminism and the Women Respondents*

|  | WOMEN % |
|---|---|
| Women's movement has had an impact on their life | 91.7 |
| Describing themselves as feminist | 76.0 |
| Have belonged to a women's group | 90.6 |
| Type of group: |  |
| leisure | 11.5 |
| civic | 59.4 |
| feminist | 19.7 |
| (no group membership | 9.4) |
|  | (*N*=96) |

## Reasons for political participation

Table 3 (overleaf) shows the incentives for participation. The reasons for participation are much the same for men and women although there is a clear distinction when it comes to ambition for their own career. Forty-seven per cent of men want this compared to 27 per cent of women. Conversely, the social side to participation seems less important to men than women. Despite this lack of ambition, women are as keen as men to get candidates elected who will advocate policies they support. A comparison with Kirkpatrick (1976: 100) shows that the same participation incentives were important in 1972, suggesting that influencing the elite is a constant and important feature of American pluralism. The

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difference now is that there is a self described feminist group seeking influence, whereas Kirkpatrick showed that this was not so twenty years ago. What

## *Table 3: Participation Incentives by Sex and for Women by Civic or Feminist Group Membership*

| Incentive: | MEN % | WOMEN % | CIVIC % | FEMINIST % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Want to see particular candidates elected | 93.3 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Want to get the party & candidates to support policies believe in | 91.9 | 93.8 | 94.8 | 89.5 |
| Fulfilling civic responsibility | 81.8 | 93.7 | 94.8 | 89.5 |
| Politics is part of my way of life | 89.2 | 84.4 | 87.8 | 89.5 |
| Strongly attached to the party & want to give it my support | 77.0 | 75.0 | 75.5 | 84.2 |
| Like the fun and excitement of conventions | 63.5 | 64.6 | 63.1 | 68.5 |
| Friendships/ social contacts | 66.2 | 65.6 | 66.7 | 66.2 |
| LIke feeling of being close to people doing important work. | 48.7 | 62.5 | 63.1 | 63.1 |
| Party work gives visibility and recognition | 40.5 | 36.5 | 38.6 | 36.8 |
| Personal friends or family are active in the party. | 27.8 | 40.6 | 38.6 | 42.2 |
| Want a personal career in politics | ⁀.7 | 27.1 | 28.1 | 36.9 |
| Helps make business or professional contacts | 19.0 | 21.⁀ | 19.3 | 31.6 |

(Note: percentages are those in the group who answered "extremely important" or "quite important.")

seems clear is that these women are in politics to forward their interests and beliefs, but that they do not see this as necessarily linked to a career for themselves. In contemporary American politics the party system is very flexible, both in structure and policy, and so elections have become very candidate-centred. Influencing individual candidates is vital (see Wattenberg 1991). This is clearly a priority with the women in this sample but they do not seem to have the ambition to be candidates themselves.

## Ambitions and Expectations

For party office ambitions amongst women are high, and compare with the levels of ambition amongst men. However, it is the feminist group which has the highest ambition of all at 90 per cent (see Table 4 overleaf). For public office, it is clear that women are consistently less ambitious than men and less ambitious for public rather than party office. This is true of the feminist and civic groups as well. Overall, 66 per cent of women are ambitious compared to 85 per cent of men. This is virtually the same as Kirkpatrick's findings (1976: 413), which showed 82 per cent of men having ambition for public office compared to 64 per cent of women. No progress has been made in twenty years in the proportion of women seeking public office.

The expectations repeat this disparity between the sexes: only 39 per cent of the women, compared to 64 per cent of the men, expect to reach public office at the top of their political careers. However, 65 per cent of the civic group of women do expect to reach a public office at the top of their career, comparing to only 37 per cent of the feminists. The levels of

*Table 4: Ambition for and Expectations of Party and Public office; for Men and Women and for Women by Civic and Feminist Group membership*

|  | MEN % | WOMEN % | CIVIC % | FEMINIST % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PARTY OFFICE** | | | | |
| Ambition for | 83.8 | 75.6 | 76.4 | 89.5 |
| No ambition for | 16.2 | 23.4 | 23.6 | 10.5 |
| Expectations of position at the top of their career at; | | | | |
| any level | 28.4 | 52.1 | 28.2 | 52.7 |
| national level | 2.8 | 19.4 | 21.1 | 31.6 |
| state level | 10.9 | 18.8 | 15.8 | 21.1 |
| local level | 13.6 | 11.3 | 12.4 | 5.3 |
| **PUBLIC OFFICE** | | | | |
| Ambition for | 85.1 | 66.3 | 67.9 | 68.4 |
| No ambition for | 14.9 | 33.7 | 32.1 | 31.6 |
| Expectations of position at the top of their career at; | | | | |
| any level | 63.5 | 38.5 | 65.1 | 36.9 |
| national level | 25.8 | 14.6 | 14.0 | 10.6 |
| state level | 19.0 | 15.6 | 14.1 | 21.0 |
| local level | 20.4 | 9.3 | 15.7 | 0.0 |
|  | (*N*=74) | (*N*=96) | (*N*=57) | (*N*=19) |

(Note: Ambition was taken as those who marked any office in Q3a and 4a, No Ambition were those who marked "No interest".)

office cited are predominantly state or local, however, and this fits with the finding that civic responsibility is an important incentive for this group. The feminist group are interested in higher level office which is by definition more influential and harder to achieve but their expectations are lower despite their ambition. The feminists seem more aware of the difficulties in participation for women. This is supported by the fact that a consistently higher proportion of men than women expect to reach each level of public office at the top of their careers. Conversely, over half the women, 52 per cent, expect to reach a party office compared with only 28 per cent of the men. For the different levels of party office the pattern is the reverse of that for public office, with consistently more women than men expecting to reach both national and state level party office. This suggests that the climate in the party is seen as more favourable to women and the quota system must be important in raising expectations of success.

Comparing the ambition of the sexes by family life variables confirms the pattern established by Sapiro (1982). Women's ambition is significantly lower if there are young children in the family unit, at 71 per cent of women to 100 per cent of men for both public and party office (Table 5 overleaf). What is different is that amongst those with older children, an equal proportion of women as men have ambition, although again there is a lower proportion that seek public office.

It is clear that divorced or separated women have significantly higher ambition for both public and party office than married women. For public office this is marked, at 84 per cent of divorced/separated women compared to only 60 per cent of those married, supporting the previous findings that activisim is easier without the burden of a husband. This confirms the pattern described by Kirkpatrick (1976). Again, public office ambition is significantly lower for both single and married women, at 65 and 60 per cent respectively, although they compare well with men in party office ambition. This balance is echoed across all the groups of women when ambition is calculated by spouse support for political activity; they compare equally with men in party office ambition but significantly lower proportions have public office ambition, regardless of the level of spouse support. Only the mixed/opposed category of support seems to affect ambition, although the interesting point is that 83 per cent of men still have ambition for public office despite having mixed/opposed spouse support, suggesting that men are still unwilling to delay their political ambitions despite the presence of young children or potential conflict with their partners.

*Table 5: Ambition for Party and Public office by Family Life variables*

|  | MEN % | WOMEN % |
|---|---|---|
| **PARTY OFFICE** | | |
| **Ambition as a percentage of those who;** | | |
| have children under 5 yrs | 100.0 | 71.4 |
| have children from 5 to 18 yrs | 81.8 | 85.7 |
| have children over 18 yrs | 77.3 | 66.7 |
| have no children | 82.1 | 86.7 |
| are single | 73.7 | 78.9 |
| are separated/divorced | 60.0 | 84.0 |
| are married | 89.1 | 73.8 |
| have very favourable support from their spouse | 93.1 | 71.1 |
| have somewhat favourable support from their spouse | 82.6 | 82.4 |
| spouse attitude is mixed or opposed to their activism | 66.7 | 60.0 |
| **PUBLIC OFFICE** | | |
| **Ambition as a percentage of those who;** | | |
| have children under 5 yrs | 100.0 | 71.4 |
| have children from 5 to 18 yrs | 90.9 | 71.4 |
| have children over 18 yrs | 68.2 | 61.9 |
| have no children | 89.3 | 71.0 |
| are single | 94.7 | 65.0 |
| are separated/divorced | 80.0 | 84.0 |
| are married | 82.6 | 59.5 |
| have very favourable support from their spouse | 86.2 | 66.7 |
| have somewhat favourable support from their spouse | 87.0 | 64.7 |
| spouse attitude is mixed or opposed to their activism | 83.3 | 60.0 |

(under 5, *N*=13M 7W)  (5 to18,*N*=11M 14W)  (over18, *N*=22M 42W)  (None, *N*= 28M 31W)
(Single *N*=19M 20W)  (Div/sep *N*=5M 25W)  (Married *N*=46M 42W)
(Very Favourable *N*=29M 45W)  (Somewhat favourable *N*=23M 17W) (mixed/opposed *N*=6M 5W)

## Self-identified conflict with personal life and/or parenting

Fifty-seven per cent of women with children under 5 years experience high conflict with parenting compared to 39 per cent of men. A consistently higher proportion of women than men experience some conflict with their personal lives where they have children of any age. However, around a third of the men consistently experience high conflict levels with children of any age, whereas fewer of the women do (from 14 to 23 per cent) except for those who have under fives. Of those who have no children the proportion experiencing conflict is approximately equal for men and women. This suggests that women are still managing and balancing commitments in their personal lives so that they do not experience high levels of conflict, unless they are fulfilling the role of carer for a young child. In the case of conflict with parenting this is more obviously the case, although the proportion of men and women experiencing conflict is fairly even except in the case of under fives, (Table 6, overleaf).

These results echo Sapiro's (1982); with pre-schoolers present there is conflict for both men and women, but substantially higher for women. The actual incidence of conflict seems to be somewhat lower than in '72 (Sapiro 1982: 271) but this may be explained by the distinction made here between conflict with personal life or parenting, which Sapiro did not make.

By marital status, the incidence of conflict with personal life is high, except for divorced or separated men and women, at 20 per cent and 24 per cent, and married women, of whom only 24 per cent report high conflict. The conflicts with parenting are fairly evenly matched across the sexes.

Of those who have a very favourable spouse support for their political activity, the incidence of conflict is still high, with half of the men and women reporting some conflict with personal life and a quarter reporting high conflict. The sexes do compare fairly evenly though.

This even proportion is continued in those who have some favour from their spouse and broadly reflects Sapiro's findings (1982, Table 4: 273.) However, of those with a mixed or opposed attitude from their spouse, the incidence of conflict rises to 100 per cent for both men and women, with men divided 50/50 between some and high levels of conflict with their personal life and 80 per cent of women reporting some conflict and 20 per cent reporting high conflict. Taken with the ambition by spouse support figures from Table 4, which showed that 83 per cent of men compared to 60 per cent of women had ambition with mixed/opposed spouse support, this clearly shows that men are still not delaying their ambition despite the conflict it can cause in their partnerships. The figures also suggest that a supportive attitude from the spouse is some help towards reducing conflict for both sexes. For conflict with parenting, the incidence is lower than with personal life, but 50 per cent of men who have a spouse with a mixed/opposed attitude experience some conflict, compared to only 20 per cent of the women. This can again be explained by the fact that women seem to balance their commitments, while men will suffer the conflict and continue with their political activity.

*Table 6:    Those who experience Conflict with Personal Life and Parenting by Family Life variables*

|  | MEN % | | WOMEN % | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Some | High | Some | High |
| **CONFLICT WITH PERSONAL LIFE**<br>Level of conflict as a percentage<br>of those who; | | | | |
| have children under 5 yrs | 46.2 | 38.5 | 28.6 | 42.9 |
| have children from 5 to 18 yrs | 63.6 | 36.4 | 78.6 | 14.3 |
| have children over 18 yrs | 40.9 | 31.8 | 58.1 | 23.3 |
| have no children | 46.4 | 35.7 | 41.9 | 38.7 |
| are single | 31.6 | 47.4 | 45.0 | 35.0 |
| are separated/divorced | 40.0 | 20.0 | 56.0 | 24.0 |
| are married | 52.2 | 34.8 | 59.5 | 23.8 |
| have very favourable support from their spouse | 51.7 | 24.1 | 53.3 | 26.7 |
| have somewhat favourable support<br>from their spouse | 52.2 | 43.5 | 47.1 | 47.1 |
| spouse attitude is mixed or opposed to<br>their activism | 50.0 | 50.0 | 80.0 | 20.0 |
| **CONFLICT WITH PARENTING**<br>Level of conflict as a percentage<br>of those who; | | | | |
| have children under 5 yrs | 46.2 | 38.5 | 28.6 | 57.1 |
| have children from 5 to 18 yrs | 54.5 | 27.3 | 64.3 | 21.4 |
| have children over 18 yrs | 22.7 | 4.5 | 22.3 | 4.7 |
| have no children | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| are single | 0.0 | 0.0 | 10.0 | 0.0 |
| are separated/divorced | 20.0 | 20.0 | 35.0 | 4.0 |
| are married | 32.6 | 17.4 | 26.2 | 16.7 |
| have very favourable support from their spouse | 24.1 | 6.9 | 15.6 | 11.1 |
| have somewhat favourable support<br>from their spouse | 30.4 | 26.1 | 41.2 | 17.6 |
| spouse attitude is mixed or opposed to<br>their activism | 50.0 | 16.7 | 20.0 | 0.0 |

(under 5, *N*=13M 7W)  (5 to18,*N*=11M 14W)  (over18, *N*=22M 42W)  (None, *N*= 28M 31W)
(Single *N*=19M 20W)  (Div/sep *N*=5M 25W)  (Married *N*=46M 42W)
(Very Favourable *N*=29M 45W)    (Somewhat favourable *N*=23M 17W)
(mixed/opposed *N*=6M 5W)

(Note: Some conflict was taken as those who answered "only occasionally" or "sometimes".  High conflict was taken as those who answered "frequently" or "often")

## *4. Discussion and Conclusions*

### Discussion of the results

These delegates fulfil Parry's (1969) description of the people who participate in democratic elitist politics; they are both well educated and middle class and so part of society's elite. The women in this sample closely reflect the men in both education and class; the increase in education and associated higher occupation and status that women have had access to since the 1970s must have been crucial in facilitating participation in this political elite. However, the women are different from the 1972 sample in two important ways; they are now overwhelmingly employed rather than being housewives and 76 per cent of them describe themselves as feminist. What our respondents mean by feminism is unclear, as only 19 per cent belonged to a feminist group, but given that the majority belonged to a women's civic organisation and the salience of issues like abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment, it is reasonable to assume that they are at the very least interested in achieving gender neutral legislation/policies and increasing women's access to decision-making roles. Politically these women have a definite interest in women's issues and have a priority to influence the party and candidates with their self-identified liberal views.

These women's participation can be seen as a good example of liberal feminism, participating as keenly as men and with a women's agenda as an incentive. Liberal feminism has clearly made some progress over the period since the previous studies of Sapiro and Kirkpatrick. The impact of sex quotas must be important, with 50/50 percentages now mandatory at state and national level in the Democratic Party since 1980. It seems that this has raised expectation and ambition for women and the impact of this is a positive example for wider use. However, despite the quota system, it is clear that women participating are having to do so as equals with men. This entails some serious problems for the women because of their soically constructed difference: although they may match men in education and socio-economic status, they still suffer from structural gender divisions which privilege men by subordinating women. The most obvious example of this in the study is the conflict identified with personal life and parenting.

Women suffer the same conflicts as men do, both with their personal lives and parenting roles. This confirms the pattern established by Sapiro (1982) and Chapman (1991 : 20), who points out that:

The experience of men is not a pretty one and yet that is what will face them [women] if they try to compete on the same terms as men.

All women in this sample suffer conflict, whether married, single, separated, divorced, with or without children. As with Sapiro (1982), it is clear that men suffer conflicts with personal lives and parenting as well and so it could be argued that this is simply characteristic of participation in an elitist system. However, it is clear from this research that women are still predominantly the ones caring for children and this responsibility, especially when they have pre-schoolers, reduces

their political ambition, or causes severe conflict with their activism. One interesting since from Sapiro's findings (1982) is that women now suffer the same levels of conflict as men, rather than more, either when they have no children or those in the over-five years age range. Further research would be needed to establish if this also reflects a more liberal attitude amongst men to shared parenting, which is possible given the very liberal nature of our sample. Alternatively, it is also possible that women have become like men and actually withdrawn from parenting in order to pursue their political activism. Depending on the true explanation, this change can be seen as a positive but slight advance in gender structure. Alternatively it is another example of the negative (male) effects of participation in the party elite. The implications are important, as Chapman (1991:20) asserts:

> Not that women ever can compete on the same terms [as men] as long as the sexes live by different gender roles. Women in every western society still have the primary responsibility for childcare and the family...

Overall, participation still causes conflict for both women and men with children, but in the case of those with pre-schoolers, this conflict is only severe for the women. Again this evidence supports the contention that marriage is a benefit to men and a disadvantage to women.

It is clear that this strategy of participation neither deals with the elitist and competitive system of political organisation that produces conflict with personal lives, nor does it address the underpinning social construction of gender which is incorporated into the political system. Gender structure is fundamental in that its asymmetrical construction, or class construction as Delphy and Leonard would have it, privileges men by exploiting women. The disparities found in ambition and expectations illustrate this point.

Whilst men still claim the highest levels of conflict, at the same time they report the highest levels of ambition. Conversely, more women claim lower levels of conflict corresponding with less ambition. It seems that men have still not learnt, or are still unwilling, to adopt strategies of balance to reduce conflict. Given the age of the sample it seems that the career-delaying strategy (identified by Chapman 1991, Sapiro 1982) is not as evident as it was before, although clearly women are less ambitious if they are caring for an under five child, and more ambitious if their child is adult. More detailed analysis of the length of activism and interruptions for parenting is needed to establish the true nature of the age differences in participation and whether women start their careers at a later age. This analysis would be helped by a much larger $N$ than that in this study, although even with the small absolute number of respondents the gendered patterns of ambition and conflict are quite clear. In self-selection there is still a definite gendered pattern of recruitment favouring men.

An important finding of the research is the consistent pattern of inequality between the sexes with respect to ambition for both public and party office. It is clear that women have less ambition and expectation for public office regardless of their marital status, spouse support or whether they have children. On the other hand, they have consistently more ambition for party office. This can be

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explained both by the adoption of quotas by the party and by the generally liberal attitudes characteristic of Democratic party activists, first documented by McClosky (1956). Although these feminist women are keen to influence party policy and candidates, they are no more likely to have ambition for candidacy themselves than they were twenty years ago. Clearly there is a perception that public office is more difficult to achieve than party office. However, achieving the former is of the utmost symbolic importance to liberal feminists and of practical importance in terms of affecting governmental public policy.

All candidates in American politics receive very personal scrutiny, but women candidates have received particularly harsh and personal examination. This has been true of Geraldine Ferraro in 1984 and more recently of Ann Richards, Governor of Texas and the Chairwoman of the 1992 Democratic Convention (see paper on the Gubernortorial race by Rinehart and Stanley, 1991). In both cases. 'feminine' character traits were taken as signs of weakness, 'masculine' ones as signs of being a bad wife/mother/woman. The women had to compete as equals with men but could not this since they were judged according to gender roles. Considering the high levels of conflict participation causes, even for those included in this study, it is not surprising that women are reluctant to aim for higher and more competitive office.

In terms of party office it seems that in the California State party equal opportunity exists, with more women then men in our sample holding party office. Quotas are now part of the Democratic Party Charter (Article 10: Full Participation.) and thus statutory in every state party and the national organisation. This is one very simple explanation of the preference by women for party office; their chance of success is higher. However, if quotas are needed to increase women's access to political power then they need to be applied widely. However, as Anne Philips (1992) argues, liberal democracy and its tenet of individual formal equality cannot easily accommodate the notion of affirmative action for groups. Quotas seem to work in this case but when viewed in the wider perspective of the quota-less Republicans and the strictly constitutional political culture, this must be seen as very limited progress.

It is clear that women cannot overcome their difference when standing for candidacy. The social construction of gender roles is likely to inhibit their desire to do so. While quotas and a more politically supportive atmosphere might operate in party structures, this is no guarantee of overcoming the dilemma of difference as the findings on conflict illustrate.

## Conclusions

Participation in the system requires that women become like male political activists: educated, middle class and employed professionals. At the same time they must deal with the problems generated by gender divisions. Liberal democracy; elitist, hierarchical and competitive, favours the 'haves' in society and gender construction ensures that these are men. Political citizenship is gendered, despite liberal democracy's abstract notions of individual equality.

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From the explanations of women's non-participation in the past, to the assessments of candidates today, it is clear that gender stereotypes inform all judgements about women in politics. Even when women qualify for the elite on a par with men, they are judged on the basis of gender and, crucially, their lives are constrained by gender, particularly within the family unit. The limit of liberal feminism is that it does not overcome the dilemma of women's difference, and the danger is that participation may be said to compound the dilemma by making women compete as men.

Political citizenship is gendered because political processes and values incorporate and reproduce gender divisions. In light of this, the radical criticisms of political participation are valid. The abstract ideal of individual citizenship ignores the fact that the political system favours male participants because of the gendered division of labour, both in the home and in paid employment. The call for quotas by radical democratic theorists is supported by this research since quotas are a mechanism of representation that recognises social difference and works for women as a group. In candidate-centred elections for public office, the focus on the representative casts them as an individual who can represent all views. As long as this abstract notion of the representative persists, it will be difficult to argue for quotas for under-represented groups. The reasoning behind quotas is that it *does* matter who our representatives are, and so this should logicallly be recognised in public elections as well. In a patriarchal and elitist society, as long as the notion of an abstract representative remains unchallenged, those who get those jobs will inevitably be men. Liberal feminism does not seem to criticise explicitly the gendered basis of representation.

The gendered division of labour has been shown time and again to be important in women's calculations of ambition and their actual activism. The family responsibilities of women, as wives and mothers, seems to be the key oppression. Because of the exploitative relationship between the genders, women will never have the advantages that men do, even if they are single, divorced or separated. As the song says, 'stand by your man'...but not if you want a political career. Even dropping the weight of a husband won't make women equal with men, only getting a wife will do that.

The finding that women's ambition for public office has not increased over the last twenty years seems to vindicate Ferguson's criticisms of political values and organisation. In particular, her argument on femininity as subordination is extremely relevant when considering the judgements and processes that women candidates undergo. Quotas do seem to reduce this aggressive, competitive, 'masculine' culture. There is obviously no reason why individual women cannot deal with this competitive system (as Mrs Thatcher has shown) but in becoming like males they do not make life better for most women (again, as Mrs. Thatcher has shown). They simply perpetuate the notion that equality is a neutral goal, rather than one judged against a male standard.

What is the point of women participating in a system in a way that simply reinforces the oppression they seek to overturn? Before this conclusion becomes too negative it is important to consider the argument that a sufficient increase in the number of women representatives may lead to an ability to act as women, on behalf of women (leaving aside for the moment the diversity of agendas and

constituencies in feminism). While this seems encouraging, more research is definitely needed to establish whether women can operate explicitly as feminists, either in selection, election or office. From this small sample, it seems that even self-identified feminists do not hold out much expectation of or ambition for public office. It seems that unless an explicitly feminist group can come together, either as candidates or in office, the influences of gender divisions or party discipline will keep a critical mass of women from making much impact. Furthermore, unless the participation of such a group can be achieved while incorporating women's difference in their strategy, and articulating the reasons that they *need* to do this, there seems little hope of changing political structures to favour the 'have-nots'.

The advances that have been made in women's representation and issues seem to be mostly the result of broader social change, particularly the influence of myriad women's groups and changes in family and employment patterns. Debates on issues such as equal rights, abortion, sexual violence, have been initiated and informed by feminist critiques have been far more radical than any subsequent political initiatives. Politics lags behind social change.

Politically, it is difficult to achieve a coherent feminist strategy, given the varied analyses of the construction of women's difference that appears in radical criticisms of liberal democracy. What is central is the need for *radical* criticism and advocacy rather than *liberal* reformism. The dilemma of difference remains and liberal feminism does not seem to overcome it. For all the costs that participation entails, in present liberal democratic systems, the silent incorporation of gender ensures that these costs are off-set by little, if any, benefit. Furthermore, it may be that the token participation of a few is having a negative effect for the many, by normalising the idea that liberation means equality measured against men. As radical feminists have pointed out, it is the system of gender allocation that oppresses women, not the lack of opportunity to be like their conflict-riddden male counterparts. It's hard to be a woman, especially when you have to be a man as well.

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## Appendix A

## Methods

The names of the delegates were obtained from the Democratic National Committe in August 1992, after the Convention, which took place July 13-16. A total of 397 questionnaires were sent out, using all the names on the list which excluded the 58 alternates and nine names from the total of 406 which the National Committee print-out omitted.

The questionnaires were addressed and sealed before being sent over to a contact in the University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, for mailing to the subjects. The return address  was also given as Pittsburgh although the covering letter made it clear that this was a study originating in Britain.  The questionnaires were mailed out in early October 1992, with a total of 142 being received back in Glasgow before Christmas.  A follow-up letter was mailed out in mid-December which generated 29 replies,  making **a total of 171, a response rate of 43 per cent.**

The full questionnaire is printed in Appendix A at the end of this study. Questions 1-6 and 9-18 are taken from Kirkpatrick's 1976 study, being relevant to ambition. ( Appendix, Kirkpatrick 1976).  Questions 7-8 are derived from Sapiro and her study of conflict, ( Sapiro, 1982).  Questions 19-21 are derived from  the interview schedule for the Strathclyde District Election Survey, (Chapman 1991). It was felt that these would provide some indication of the importance of women's issues to the respondents more briefly (necessary given the short length of the questionnaire) than the Kirkpatrick survey.

All the tables presented were tested for statistical significance, using both Goodman and Kruskal's *lambda*  and Goodman and Kruskal's *tau.,* (Norusis 1990: 132-139).  Although the absolute differences observed in most of these tables are quite large, none of them proved to be statistically significant since the number of cases in this study is relatively small.  However, this was not an attempt to compare this delegation with a national population but rather to use it as a case study to discuss the theoretical issues raised earlier.   In this sense, the generalisibility of the results in a statistical sense becomes less important.

## Appendix B

# DEMOCRATIC PARTY 1992
# CONVENTION DELEGATE STUDY

1. When did you first become active in the Democratic Party?  ☐

2. We are interested in people's reasons for being involved in politics.
   How important are each of the following reasons to your participation in politics?

| (Mark one in each row) | Extremely Important | Quite Important | Not Very Important | Not at all Important |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personal friends or members of my family are active in the party (as workers, candidates or office holders) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| I want to see particular candidates elected | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Party work helps me make business or professional contacts | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Politics is part of my way of life | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| I am strongly attached to the party and want to give it my support | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| I enjoy the friendships and social contacts I have with other people in politics | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| I like the fun and excitement of conventions and campaigns | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| I want to have a personal career in politics | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Party work gives me a sense of fulfilling civic responsibility | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| I want to get the party and its candidates to support the policies I believe in | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| I like the feeling of being close to people who are doing important work | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Party work gives me visibility and recognition | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

3a. Thinking of all the possible offices and positions in politics, from local to national and from public office to positions in the party organization, which of the following would you most like to be if you could have your personal choice? First consider public office. (Mark only one)

| Office | | Office | |
|---|---|---|---|
| President | ☐ | State Senator | ☐ |
| Vice President | ☐ | State Representative | ☐ |
| US Senator | ☐ | State Judge | ☐ |
| US Representative | ☐ | State Administrative Post | ☐ |
| Cabinet Member | ☐ | Other State Office | ☐ |
| Ambassador | ☐ | Mayor | ☐ |
| Federal Judge | ☐ | Council Member | ☐ |
| Federal Prosecutor | ☐ | Other Local Office | ☐ |
| Governor | ☐ | Other National Office | ☐ |
| Lt. Governor | ☐ | No Interest in Public Office | ☐ |

b. If there were a real chance to hold the position you think is most desirable, how much effort would you be willing to make to get that position? (Mark one.)

| | |
|---|---|
| Would work harder and make more sacrifices than for any other goal in life | ☐ |
| Would work harder than before in politics | ☐ |
| Would make some additional effort | ☐ |
| Will probably hold that position if I do no more than I have done in the past | ☐ |

4a. Next, consider party positions. Which of the following would you most like to be if you could have your personal choice? (Mark only one)

| Position | | Position | |
|---|---|---|---|
| National Party Chairman | ☐ | County Chairman | ☐ |
| Presidential Campaign Manager | ☐ | County Board | ☐ |
| National Committeeman/ Committeewoman | ☐ | County Campaign Director | ☐ |
| Other National Role | ☐ | Other County Position | ☐ |
| State Party Chair | ☐ | City Chair | ☐ |
| State Central Committee | ☐ | Other Local Organization Position | ☐ |
| State Campaign Director | ☐ | No interest in Party Offices | ☐ |
| Other State Position | ☐ | | |
| District Chairman | ☐ | | |
| District Campaign Manager | ☐ | | |

b.  If there were a real chance to hold the position you think is most desirable, how much effort would you be willing to make to get that position? (Mark one.)

Would work harder and make more sacrifices than for any other goal in life ☐

Would work harder than before in politics ☐

Would make some additional effort ☐

Will probably hold that position if I do no more than I have done in the past ☐

5a. Now, all things considered, which of all of these positions do you think you are <u>most likely to hold</u> at the top of your career in politics? (<u>Mark only one</u>, either public or party office, <u>not both</u>.)

| **Public Office** | | **Party Office** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| President | ☐ | National Party Chair | ☐ |
| Vice President | ☐ | Presidential Campaign Manager | ☐ |
| US Senator | ☐ | National Committee | ☐ |
| US Representative | ☐ | Other National Role | ☐ |
| Cabinet Member | ☐ | State Party Chairman | ☐ |
| Ambassador | ☐ | State Central Committee | ☐ |
| Federal Judge | ☐ | State Campaign Director | ☐ |
| Federal Prosecutor | ☐ | Other State Position | ☐ |
| Other National Office | ☐ | District Chair | ☐ |
| Governor | ☐ | District Campaign Manager | ☐ |
| Lt. Governor | ☐ | County Chair | ☐ |
| State Senator | ☐ | County Board | ☐ |
| State Representative | ☐ | County Campaign Director | ☐ |
| State Judge | ☐ | Other County Position | ☐ |
| State Administrative Post | ☐ | City Chair | ☐ |
| Other State Office | ☐ | Other Local Organization Position | ☐ |
| Mayor | ☐ | | |
| Council Member | ☐ | | |
| Other Local Office | ☐ | | |

b. If there were a real chance to hold the position you think is most desirable, how much effort would you be willing to make to get that position? (Mark one.)

Would work harder and make more sacrifices than for any other goal in life ☐

Would work harder than before in politics ☐

Would make some additional effort ☐

Will probably hold that position if I do no more than I have done in the past ☐

6. Do you hold any party position now?

Yes ☐    No ☐

If **YES** what position is this? .....................................................

7. To what extent do you feel that your political activities conflict with either of the following? Please tick one box for each.

|  | Not at All | Only Occasionally | Sometimes | Frequently | Very Often |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personal Life | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Parenting | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

8. What is your (husband's/wife's/partner's) attitude toward your own political activity? Is (he/she)

Very much in favour ☐

Somewhat in favour ☐

Somewhat opposed ☐

Very much opposed ☐

9. In what year were you born? ☐

10. Gender (*please tick*)

Male ☐

Female ☐

11. Marital Status (*please tick*)

| Single | Divorced/ Separated | Widow(er) | Married | Long Term Partner |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

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12. Do you have any children? (*please tick*)

Under 5 ☐
From 5 to 18 ☐
Over 18 ☐
None ☐

13. Are you? (*please tick*)

Employed ☐
Unemployed ☐
Retired ☐
Other ☐

14. What is your exact occupation?
(or former occupation if unemployed or retired)? ...................................................
*Please be as specific as possible.*

15. To which ethnic group do you belong?

White ☐
African American ☐
Hispanic American ☐
Asian American ☐
Other ☐

16. What was the highest level of education you received? (Please tick)

High School ☐
Some College ☐
College Degree ☐
Graduate or Professional Degree ☐

17. In which social class would you place yourself?

Lower class ☐
Working class ☐
Middle class ☐
Upper middle class ☐
Upper class ☐

18. Would you describe yourself as someone who is?

Very liberal ☐

Somewhat liberal ☐

Middle of the road ☐

Somewhat conservative ☐

Very conservative ☐

**FOR FEMALE RESPONDENTS ONLY**

19a. Have you ever belonged to a women's group, organisation or network of any kind (any group made up entirely of women)

Please tick.

Yes ☐

No ☐

b. If **YES** what kind of group? Please tick

Leisure e.g. Keep Fit ☐

Civic e.g. League of Women Voters ☐

Feminist e.g. Now! ☐

20. There is a Women's movement in the Western World, and particularly in the United States. Do you feel this has had any impact on your life – either directly or indirectly through the society in which you live?

Please tick.

Yes ☐

No ☐

21. Would you describe yourself as a feminist? (Please tick)

Yes ☐

No ☐

# THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION.