

Representation by Gender and Parties

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Abstract

This essay focuses on how women's political representation is related to the role of parties as representative institutions. Does the political representation of women inherently conflict with representation by party? When does the political representation of women coincide with representation by party? I argue that most past work related to gender and parties can be divided into two areas of research according to how scholars view the relationship between gender and party representation. In the first, gender and party are believed to be in competition and women's representation achieved at the expense of political parties. In the second, scholars investigate women's influence within the party and the presence of gender issues on the party agenda. Here, representation is believed to occur by gender *and* party. Thus, gender and party do not necessarily conflict. I propose that scholars should integrate these two research areas and be more attentive to how women's representation is related to the role of parties as representative institutions.

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Representation by Gender and Parties

Democracy is arguably unthinkable save political parties (Schattschneider 1942). What about democracy for women? Does democracy for women also depend on political parties? At first glance, the answer might appear to be no. Women's representation is potentially at odds with representation by parties. Women have often found the U.S. party system to be unwelcoming and unresponsive. The two major parties were a barrier to obtaining women's suffrage. Indeed, after suffrage was won, the leading women's suffrage organization became a nonpartisan organization. The modern women's movement, which emerged decades later, initially eschewed the political parties. Yet, because parties organize government and field candidates for office, the representation of women in American politics is likely to necessitate representation by parties.

This essay focuses on how women's political representation is related to the role of parties as representative institutions. Does the political representation of women inherently conflict with representation by party? When does the political representation of women coincide with representation by party? What are the implications of theories about women's descriptive representation for theories of parties?

One form of women's political representation is descriptive representation, or the presence of women in legislative institutions. Descriptive representation poses a fundamental challenge to liberal theories of representation. Whereas district-based representation assumes that political interests are geographically based, descriptive representation posits that political interests arise from group identities that transcend geographic boundaries (e.g., Williams 1998; Guinier 1994). Indeed, a descriptive

representative may act as a surrogate for group members beyond the legislator's district (Mansbridge 2003). Scholars have given more consideration to the relationship between descriptive representation and geographic representation than to the relationship between descriptive representation and party representation, and many theories about descriptive representation barely mention political parties (e.g., Williams 1998; Mansbridge 1999; Mansbridge 2003).

Representation by parties can also transcend district boundaries and the traditional dyadic notion of representation. For example, Democratic voters may not feel represented if their district's representative is a Republican, but the presence of Democratic legislators in the chamber can provide adequate representation. Thus, partisan representation can produce collective representation (Hurley 1989). Yet, attention to the numerical presence of underrepresented groups reflects dissatisfaction with prevailing forms of representation—including party representation.

I argue that most past work related to gender and parties can be divided into two types of studies according to how scholars view the relationship between gender and party representation. In the first, gender and party are believed to be in competition. For example, many scholars regard party as an institutional constraint on the ability of women legislators to act for women. Similarly, studies of mass political behavior often view gender and party as competing cues, asking if voters defect from their party in order to support (or oppose) a woman candidate. Thus, scholars frequently pit gender against party. I discuss this research below under the heading "Representation by Gender or Party." In these works, women's representation is believed to come at the expense of political parties.

In the second area of research, scholars investigate women's influence within the party and the presence of women's interests on the party agenda. Here, representation is believed to occur by gender *and* party. I discuss works in this area under the heading "Representation by Gender and Party." Because women within the party are more likely than men to press women's interests, the role and status of women within the party may shape the party's responsiveness to women's interests. Thus, gender and party do not necessarily conflict. Indeed, the party's representation of gender issues may depend on the advancement of women within the party. Meanwhile, women's descriptive representation depends on parties because most candidates run on party labels.

I first discuss scholarship that pits gender against party, and then review works that emphasize the compatibility of gender and party representation. In the second half of the essay, I discuss ways to integrate these two strands of research.

I argue that scholars should seek to unite theories of descriptive representation with theories of parties. I suggest that further research be conducted on the conditions under which: (1) women achieve substantive representation in the party; (2) women's descriptive representation coincides with the party's electoral goals; and (3) women's descriptive representation coincides with the party's electoral goals *and* furthers women's substantive representation. In sum, I propose that scholars should be more attentive to how women's representation is related to the role of parties as representative institutions.

Representation by Gender or Party

Although the Constitution does not mention parties and the nation's founders were opposed to parties, most party scholars view strong parties as central to democracy.¹

¹ Coleman (1996: 373) observes: "When party organization students contend that 'parties matter,' they are making both an empirical and normative statement."

Responsible parties, which offer parties a clear choice, arguably enhance representation (Committee on Political Parties 1950). However, most party scholarship is silent on the consequences of strong parties for women. Indeed, strong parties may be at odds with women's representation. Although research related to gender and parties has typically examined either women's descriptive representation or women's substantive representation, both forms of representation pose similar dilemmas for the parties. Both forms of women's political representation threaten to undermine the role of parties in organizing American politics. And the pursuit of both forms of women's representation may prove electorally costly for the parties. If party representation conflicts with women's representation, women's representation would seemingly be enhanced by weaker political parties.

One mechanism to achieve representation by both gender and party is the gender quota, which has been adopted by many parties around the world. Today, 157 parties in 73 countries have candidate quotas, thereby achieving women's descriptive representation through party representation.² In the United States, candidate quotas are not on the agendas of the major parties—in part because of the prevalence of single-member rather than multi-member districts and proportional representation. Thus, there is no direct correspondence between women's descriptive representation and party representation in the United States.

Arguably, the primary goal of the party is to win office (Downs 1957; Schlesinger 1975). If women candidates are perceived as electorally costly for the party, then party representation and women's descriptive representation may be in conflict (Norris 1993).

² Statistics are from the IDEA (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) quota database <<http://www.quotaproject.org/system.cfm#political>>.

Despite much research arguing that women and men fare about the same when they run for office (e.g., Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Burrell 1994; Seltzer, Newman, and Leighton 1997), surveys reveal that party leaders are not agreed on the electability of women candidates (Sanbonmatsu 2006).³ Party leaders may perceive a woman candidate to be a greater electoral risk than a man because of the relative newness of women candidates. Indeed, the parties have arguably hindered the descriptive representation of women by failing to recruit and support women candidates (Carroll 1994).

Voters subscribe to both gender and party stereotypes about politicians (Rahn 1993; Kahn 1996). When voters' gender stereotypes about candidate ideology intersect with partisan stereotypes, Republican women appear to be disadvantaged: Republican voters may not regard Republican women candidates as typical Republicans because they perceive women as liberal (King and Matland 2003). Indeed, King and Matland (2003) find that Republican women congressional candidates are less likely than Democratic women to win open seat primaries. Cooperman and Oppenheimer (2001) also find that Republican women congressional candidates fare worse on average than Republican men. If Republican women candidates perform worse than men, there is little incentive for the party to recruit them. Thus, women's descriptive representation may pose an electoral risk from the standpoint of the party.

The substantive representation of women may also be perceived to come at a cost to the party. For example, Sanbonmatsu (2002a) argues that the parties have largely been unresponsive to women's group interests because gender equality issues are controversial. The parties' centrist positions on many gender issues are unsurprising

³ Maniquet, Morelli, and Frechette (2005) posit that gender quotas in France can be explained by the belief that women are more likely to lose their races: male incumbent politicians may support equal gender representation on party lists because it will increase their chances of being reelected.

given the tendency of the parties to pursue the median voter (Downs 1957). Precisely because changes in gender roles have been so widespread, gender issues pose considerable uncertainty for strategic politicians looking for winning issues (Sanbonmatsu 2002a).

Substantive representation may also arise from women's descriptive representation. Party leaders may fear that women candidates, once elected, will act on behalf of women rather than on behalf of the party. Within the legislature, gender arguably rivals party as an organizing principle. Party is typically regarded as an institutional constraint on women's ability to legislate for women (e.g., Reingold 2000; Evans 2005). Scholars have investigated whether—controlling for party—women legislators are more likely than men to represent women's interests. Gender cohesion within the legislature is a potential threat to party cohesion (Swers 2002; Osborn 2003). Women may behave as a cohesive group within the legislature without any coordination, or with coordination through a women's caucus.

The existence of a women's caucus may be viewed as a threat to the party caucus. For example, women legislators in Colorado decided to form a legislative caucus in the 1980s, having achieved a critical mass within the legislature and found common cause on some women's policies. But the idea was short-lived: the speaker of the house vehemently opposed the idea and no women's caucus formed. Any type of loyalty that might disrupt the speaker's power as party leader was strictly forbidden, and no caucus (save the party caucus) permitted.⁴

⁴ Personal interviews with former women state legislators conducted in Denver and Boulder, Colorado, 2001.

Meanwhile, when the Republican party took over the U.S. House of Representatives after the 1994 elections, legislative service organizations (LSOs), including the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues (CCWI), were immediately dismantled. This decision was driven by a number of factors and affected all LSOs. Yet, the consequence has been to hinder the ability of women to work across party lines (Gertzog 2004). Indeed, Gertzog advised the CCWI to cooperate with party leadership: "The CCWI has to make clear that although it has an agenda of its own, it is not an incipient threat to those who run the House, and its members are prepared to work with party leaders when they can" (2004: 174). Thus, party leaders may fear that women legislators will behave as the substantive representatives of women rather than as party representatives.

Women's issues are fragmented across congressional committees (Norton 1995). In order to study committee behavior, gender scholars have had to assiduously identify those committees that are more likely to handle women's issue bills (Norton 1995; Swers 2002). But scholars have not addressed the larger question of why congressional committees are not organized around women's interests. If committees are organized to benefit the majority party (Cox and McCubbins 1993), then the lack of correspondence between congressional committee organization and women's interests may indicate a disjuncture between party and gender.

Gender is also a potential threat to party discipline at the level of mass politics: candidate gender may lead voters to defect from their party (e.g., Dolan 1998; Brians 2005). Plutzer and Zipp (1996: 50) explain: "gender identity competes with party affiliation as a cue for voting behavior." Likewise, Brians (2005: 357) summarizes the

popular notion that Republican women candidates can help close the gender gap: “This proposition assumes that (at least some) women voters’ partisan identification may be trumped by an affinity with their gender.” In general, candidate gender is thought to have a larger effect in the absence of the party cue: in primaries, nonpartisan elections, or among independent voters (Zipp and Plutzer 1985; Cook 1994; Plutzer and Zipp 1996; Seltzer, Newman, and Leighton 1997). Women voters may defect if the party does not address women’s issues. Because the desire to elect more women to public office transcends party, women may also use their vote to pursue descriptive representation rather than substantive representation.

Conflict between gender and party is also evident in the historical record and the exclusion of women from party politics. A zero-sum game is often posited between interest groups and parties (Schattschneider 1942). Women had turned to nonpartisan activities and pioneered interest group politics because of their exclusion from partisan politics (Cott 1987; Skocpol 1992; Clemens 1997). And the very development of interest group politics arguably led to the decline of parties (Andersen 1996; Clemens 1997). Meanwhile, the utility of partisanship and the relative merits of working through the parties—as opposed to adopting an independent or nonpartisan stance—generated much debate among suffragists (Edwards 1997; Andersen 1996). Today’s women’s organizations and political action committees (PACs) also make choices that seem to pit gender against party, such as whether to support candidates on a gender or party basis (Burrell 1994).

Women’s descriptive and substantive representation may be inversely related to the strength of party organizations. For example, Young (2000) argues that a decrease in

the role of parties in candidate selection in the 1980s created space for women to organize PACs and pursue the election of more women. Thus, party decline led to an increase in opportunities for women's organizations and the pursuit of women's descriptive representation. Harvey (1998), as well, sees the decline of party organizations in the 1960s as leading to an opening for women's interest groups to mobilize women. Perhaps women are best able to pursue their group interests through interest groups rather than through parties.

Women within the parties have long weighed the costs and benefits of organizing *as women* within the party (Freeman 2000). Women may even seem threatening to the party as individuals. Scholars have debated whether women party activists are more amateur, more ideological, and less party-oriented than men—suggesting a tradeoff between women's commitment to feminist causes and the well-being of the party (e.g., Shafer 1983; Baer and Jackson 1985; Baer and Bositis 1988; Paddock and Paddock 1997). Thus, women's allegiance is often suspect.

Representation by Gender and Party

Much research has portrayed a competitive relationship between gender and parties, but other scholars have investigated the strategy of women working through the parties in order to advance women's interests. And scholars have identified the ways that women and women's movements strengthen parties and the ways in which attention to women and women's movements contributes to party theory itself.

Baer and Bositis (1988) argue that because parties tend toward oligarchy, social movements such as the women's movement are needed to ensure that party elites are

more inclusive and representative of the mass base. With their focus on social movements and the circulation of elites, Baer and Bositis (1988) help to unite the three aspects of party—electorate, organization, and government—within one model. Thus women, as descriptive representatives, can strengthen the parties as representative institutions. In this view, reform critics are mistaken to believe that the inclusion of women as party elites weakens the party. Though Baer and Bositis focus on women's presence as convention delegates rather than elected officials, their theory has implications for women's descriptive representation more broadly. For example, because descriptive officeholders can enhance communication between representatives and constituents (Mansbridge 1999; though see Lawless 2004), women's descriptive representation has the potential to strengthen the parties.

Women's descriptive representation isn't necessarily at odds with the party's electoral success—especially if women are more competitive candidates than men. Burrell (1994) demonstrates that the parties are committed to recruiting women candidates and that they fund men and women equally. Women candidates and officeholders can also aid the party indirectly. Precisely because women are viewed as particularly credible and expert on women's issues, women are often tapped to speak for the party and called upon to help close the party's gender gap (Swers 2002). To the extent that society values descriptive representation, incorporating women within party leadership can enhance the party image (Sanbonmatsu 2006).

Because women run on the party label, it may be necessary to disaggregate women by party in order to understand women's descriptive representation (Sanbonmatsu 2002b). And strong party organizations may facilitate women's election to office—

suggesting that building the party and increasing women's descriptive representation go hand in hand (Burrell 1993, 1994; Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Caul and Tate 2002).

The parties can provide women with needed resources and networks.

The political parties are an important site of women's political participation and a context for studying women's political ambition (e.g., Freeman 2000; Gustafson, Miller, and Perry 1999; Gustafson 2001; Jennings and Farah 1981; Fowlkes 1984; Clark, Hadley, and Darcy 1989). Women have achieved important leadership posts within the legislative party, including Nancy Pelosi's election as House Democratic Leader.⁵ Instead of viewing gender cohesion within the legislature as problematic, gender and party cohesion may not be at odds; for example, Osborn (2003) finds that Democratic party cohesion is positively related to women's voting cohesion in state legislatures.

Women and men might be motivated to participate in the party for different reasons (Fowlkes, Perkins, and Tolleson Rinehart 1979). And women and men within the party have different issue positions and ties to different types of organizations (Jennings 1990; van Assendelft and O'Connor 1994; Day and Hadley 1997; Clawson and Clark 2003). Because of these gender differences, the content of the party agenda is likely to depend on the extent to which women wield influence within the party. This is particularly true of women's rights issues, which are relatively new issues and have the potential to cross-cut the existing line of cleavage between the two parties (Sanbonmatsu 2002a). Meanwhile, the way to achieve influence within each party may depend on party culture (Freeman 1986).

In the first half of the twentieth century, male party leaders opposed gender solidarity and insisted on party loyalty rather than gender loyalty (Freeman 2000). But

⁵ See CAWP (2005) for more details about women's leadership roles in Congress.

party leaders welcomed women's expertise with regard to women voters. Freeman (2000: 229) explains:

Although women of both parties were constantly told to put party loyalty above all else, to serve the party faithfully and ask nothing for themselves, they in fact did make demands, and usually backed them up not by threats to sit on their hands, but by allusions to a mythical woman voter who would support the party that elevated the women within it.

Women did infiltrate the party organization, though they wielded little influence (Freeman 2000). Yet, women's tireless efforts as party workers throughout the twentieth century were worthwhile: because of the efforts of party women and their success in garnering appointments, women were positioned within the bureaucracy to play a critical role in women's policymaking during the second wave of the women's movement (Freeman 1975).

Katzenstein (1987) observes that women's movements have tended to ally with left parties. Thus, the fact that the Democratic party has been more responsive to women's group interests may not be surprising (Freeman 2000; Wolbrecht 2000). Freeman (1986) argues that differences in the political cultures of the parties made the Democratic party more receptive to feminist claims because influence within the Democratic party is established by group clout, whereas influence within the Republican party emerges from networks and whom you know. Freeman's (1987; 1989; 1993; 1999; 2000) scholarship on women within the party organization and the party conventions demonstrates that pressing women's claims through the parties has been successful.

Indeed, Freeman (1999) identifies social movements as a cause of elite party realignment. She explains that since 1980, "the parties have polarized sharply on all issues touching on women, sex, and the family. Instead of seeking the center, the national

parties are staking out distinct ideological territories” (Freeman 1999: 180). Feminist activists wield influence within the Democratic party, whereas antifeminist activists wield influence within the Republican party. Though the parties took similar positions in response to the modern women’s movement initially, they are now responding differently—and to different groups of women (Freeman 1987).

Meanwhile, the primary issue divide between the Democratic and Republican parties—the welfare state—is a gendered cleavage, and gender itself is becoming a more defining feature of the party system (Kenski 1988; Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999; Box-Steffensmeier, DeBoef, and Lin 2004). Thus, in this regard, women’s substantive representation coincides with party representation automatically because women’s interest in the welfare state makes them a natural ally of the Democratic party. Indeed, not only do women today have a stronger interest in a more activist government than men, but women helped to create the U.S. welfare state in the first place (Ware 1981; Baker 1984; Skocpol 1992). Not surprisingly, then, gender defines the parties’ bases, and gender gaps occur in party identification and voting behavior. Indeed, women voters are less likely to identify as independents and more likely to identify with the parties than men (Norrander 1997). The gender gap in party identification suggests a divergence in men’s and women’s interests (Carroll 1988; Box-Steffensmeier, DeBoef, and Lin 2004). Yet, some groups of women are more closely aligned with the Democratic party than others. For example, African American women overwhelmingly supported Democratic nominee John Kerry in 2004, as did unmarried women, while majorities of married women and white women supported Republican George W. Bush.

In sum, while gender and party are often pitted against each other as though in a zero-sum contest, the political representation of women need not conflict with party goals. The party agenda may reflect women's interests, with women's substantive representation achieved by party representation. Moreover, women's descriptive representation can strengthen the party.

Future Directions for Research

Better integration of these two types of studies—studies that regard gender and party in conflict, and studies that link party and women's representation—can enrich our understanding of both gender and political parties. Gender cross-cuts the parties, suggesting an uneasy fit between gender and party. Yet, it is precisely the lack of alignment between gender and party as well as the status of women as a majority group that provide women with opportunities for leverage in the party system.

In this section, I describe ways that these research questions can be brought together and suggest areas for further research. I propose that scholars focus on the conditions under which: (1) women achieve substantive representation in the party; (2) women's descriptive representation coincides with the party's electoral goals; and (3) women's descriptive representation coincides with the party's electoral goals *and* furthers women's substantive representation.

Substantive Representation

First, more research is needed on the conditions under which women achieve substantive representation from the party. Initially, the modern women's movement opted

to exploit their contacts and work directly with members of Congress, the president, and agencies rather than working through the parties (Costain and Costain 1987; Freeman 1987). Scholars have pointed to a range of important factors to account for the party's receptivity to women's interests, including the women's movement, women's interest groups, women voters, women's partisan organizations, and party realignment. Party representation of women's interests may also emerge inadvertently: party polarization on gender issues may be driven by the parties' positions on race or general ideological divergence rather than by gender issues per se (Wolbrecht 2000).

A recurring theme is that the influence of women's organizations in the party system seems to depend on the status of women voters and the extent of cohesion among women voters as a group. Yet, many questions remain about how women's groups and parties interact and whether the threat of exit is needed to induce representation from the party.

Party competition is one way to achieve responsiveness. Women's commitment to social reform and their threat to party machines in the late 1800s and early 1900s helps explain Democratic and Republican party opposition. However, the electoral threat of third parties induced greater support for suffrage among the Democratic and Republican parties (Banaszak 1996; McConaughy 2004). McConaughy (2004) argues that "programmatic enfranchisement" better explains the success of suffrage than "strategic enfranchisement." Working within partisan politics to build coalitions and pressure the major parties was more effective, she argues, than the elusive promise of a women's vote. Thus, strategic enfranchisement, whereby parties would support suffrage in order to

expand the electorate for strategic purposes, finds less support than an account that emphasizes coalitions and third party support.

Harvey (1998) posits that independent women's organizations are needed in order for women to have leverage over the parties. After suffrage, women's organizations and the parties were in a race to coordinate women's votes. She sees the threat by independent women's organizations to organize women's votes as the key mechanism that can increase party responsiveness to women's issues.

However, the mechanism that motivates party responsiveness to women's organizations may not be threat so much as promise. Young (2000: 204-5) observes: "When women's movement organizations have appeared to be able to offer political parties what they most desire—electoral success—parties have welcomed these organizations into the partisan fold and have adopted the movement's issues as their own." The women's movement increased the influence of women within the parties because of party concern about possible shifts in women's voting behavior (Young 2000: 89-90).

An unresolved question is whether women's groups win representation from the party by threatening to lead women voters away from the party, or if they win representation by promising to deliver women voters to the party. Interest in women's votes is generally recognized as a driving force in securing women's substantive representation in Congress (Costain 1992). However, a focus on women voters can also lead to a narrow issue agenda (Carroll 1999). And Sanbonmatsu (2002a) observes that party interest in representing women may not lead to responsiveness across gender issues. The existence of a gender gap can also create more party interest in men's votes than

women's votes, thereby further reducing the party's interest in representing gender issues. Moreover, if the decline of the Democratic party is caused by its very success among women, and a female-dominated party is viewed as a liability (Stark 1996), then it is not clear if women's interests are served in the long run by a gender gap in party identification.

In general, the gender gap has not been large enough to give women significant leverage within the parties (Young 2000: 205). Similarly, Swers (2002: 132) believes that the informal power that accrues to women in Congress from the gender gap is contingent and less meaningful than the formal power conferred by institutional positions.

Scholarly debates about the consequences for American democracy of contemporary partisan polarization are directly related to women's interests. For example, as Aldrich (1995) observes, ideological groups and activists have pulled the two parties apart since the 1960s. Feminist and antifeminist party activists have played a central role in this transformation (Freeman 1999).

According to Fiorina (2002; 2005), the polarization of party elites helps to explain the decline in mass political participation.⁶ As the parties have become more responsive to activists and absorbed divisive social issues such as abortion, politics has become less relevant to average citizens. Fiorina (2005) observes that responsible party theorists of the 1950s assumed that the dominant issues would continue to be foreign policy, the economy, and the welfare state—issues on which there was a general level of consensus. However, today's politics are dominated by social issues and identity politics.

⁶ However, women's groups have created new opportunities for political participation (Barakso 2005a), which suggests that the interest group explosion of the 1970s and 1980s may not have harmed participation.

Ironically, abortion is arguably one of the only gender issues on which the parties have been responsive—precisely because of the campaign contributions and votes that abortion groups bring to the party coalitions (Sanbonmatsu 2002a). It is unclear how women’s group interests would fare were parties to become more moderate and less responsive to their allied interest groups—including women’s groups.

The single most successful period of congressional enactment of women’s rights legislation occurred in the early 1970s with bipartisan support and less cohesive legislative parties (Freeman 1975; Costain 1992). This case suggests that women’s group interests are more likely to achieve representation in a less polarized party system. Greater partisan polarization in Congress has also made the bipartisan efforts of the Congressional Caucus for Women’s Issues much more difficult (Gertzog 2004). Indeed, Costain and Costain (1987: 210) questioned the wisdom of a close alliance of feminist groups with the Democratic party and whether such an alliance was more productive than a bipartisan interest group strategy. In a very polarized setting, the threat of exit by feminist (or antifeminist) groups may not be credible. Yet, the early 1970s was characterized by the absence of an organized opposition to the women’s movement, which is not the case today. The parties’ responsiveness to women’s groups is also likely to depend on whether the parties view those groups as an electoral liability (Freeman 1987).

The parties have arguably absorbed women’s rights issues (Adams 1997; Wolbrecht 2000; Wolbrecht 2002). However, incorporation into the parties’ agendas does not necessarily mean policy enactment: it may be precisely because the parties have

incorporated women's rights issues, and polarized on them, that those issues are stalled in Congress today (Wolbrecht 2000).

Thus, many questions remain about the comparative wisdom of achieving women's substantive representation through bipartisan versus partisan approaches, as well as the larger implications for American politics of the parties' alliances with feminist and antifeminist organizations. There is no consensus on whether women's representation is enhanced by the threat of exit and the disruption of partisan loyalties—perhaps by organizing women through interest groups rather than through parties—or working within the parties or interest groups allied with the parties to achieve influence. These mixed findings point to the importance of increasing the dialogue between studies that use a “gender versus party” framework with those that use a “gender and party” one. These debates also provide an opportunity to link studies of gender to broader questions about parties, interest groups, and polarization.

Descriptive Representation

A second research agenda is to specify the conditions under which women's descriptive representation is believed to further the party's electoral goals. Whereas some scholars posit a conflictual relationship between parties and women's candidacies, and others see a completely harmonious relationship, more research needs to be done to unite these pieces of evidence and specify the relationship between parties and women's candidacies, as well as the relationship of the political parties to women's groups and PACs.

A number of scholars argue that party strength is positively related to women's descriptive representation (Burrell 1994; Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Caul and Tate 2002). Yet, party organizational strength is negatively related to the presence of women state legislators (Sanbonmatsu 2006). Thus, although party organizational strength is usually regarded as good for democracy, the trend of stronger party organizations may not bode well for enhancing democracy for women. In addition, because women's interest groups and PACs can organize and work to increase women's representation in a weak party environment, it is not self-evident that a strong party environment is best for women candidates. For example, EMILY's List has received some criticism for taking sides in primaries when the party might be better served by consensus on the party nominee. Additional research is needed on whether a distrust of parties is helpful to increasing women's descriptive representation or whether women's candidacies are enhanced by a combination of insider and outsider strategies. In addition, more research is needed on how primary elections and party endorsements affect women's representation (Welch 1989; Caul and Tate 2002).

The lack of correspondence between gender and party can create openings for women's descriptive representation. Party concern about the gender gap can spur party interest in women candidates (Burrell 1994; Andersen 1996)—particularly if party leaders believe that women candidates will attract women's votes (Kittilson 2006). Because gender can compete with party for voter loyalties, running a woman candidate is one strategy to court defection from the opposing party. This possibility suggests that the minority party may be more interested in recruiting women candidates than the majority party. A party may also feel compelled to recruit women candidates if the other party is

fielding women (Matland and Studlar 1996; Caul 2001). At the same time, however, recruiting women candidates may be a costly electoral strategy if the party is looking to attract older, less educated, or conservative voters, who are less likely to support a woman candidate (Dolan 2004). Skepticism about women's chances are likely to reduce party recruitment of women (Sanbonmatsu 2006). How majority/minority party status, the gender gap, and ideology interact to shape women's descriptive representation merits further research. In general, more research on internal party politics can shed light on women's underrepresentation (Baer 1993)—particularly because the representation of women is likely to depend on beliefs about women candidates and the gender of party leaders (Niven 1998; Sanbonmatsu 2006).

Descriptive, Substantive, and Party Representation

Third, scholars should investigate the conditions under which women's candidacies and officeholding can further both party goals and women's substantive representation. Scholars interested in the behavior of women legislators have often pitted party against gender, viewing party as an institutional constraint facing women legislators who want to act for women. Yet, women may be able to act as the substantive representatives of women at the same time that they act as party representatives. The next generation of gender and party scholarship will need to unify work on parties with work on the ability of women legislators to act for women.

Young (2000: 203) observes an inverse relationship between what she calls representational responsiveness and policy responsiveness—or women's descriptive and substantive representation. When the women's movement failed to help elect the

Democratic presidential nominee in 1972 and 1984, the party became less responsive to its policy demands (Young 2000: 192). She notes that feminist activists have subsequently come to focus on descriptive instead of substantive representation.

Women's organizations and PACs face strategic dilemmas about whether to support women candidates—making women's descriptive representation the priority—or friendly Democratic candidates—men or women—in order to pursue women's substantive representation (e.g., Young 2000; Barakso 2005b). Yet, EMILY's List demonstrates the possibility of simultaneous pursuit of party goals (e.g., election of a Democratic candidate), women's descriptive representation, and the advancement of women's interests (e.g., EMILY's List pro-choice issue criteria). Indeed, Day and Hadley (2005: 51) find that most EMILY's List contributors consider themselves to be strong Democrats.

The ability of individual legislators to pursue their own initiatives, outside the confines of party discipline, enhances the attractiveness of electing more women to office in order to increase women's substantive representation (Young 2000: 185). This dynamic suggests that weaker legislative parties facilitate women's substantive representation. In Swers' (2002) comprehensive study of gender differences in congressional behavior, the largest gender differences in behavior occur on bill sponsorship—the stage of the policy process where members are least constrained by party loyalty. Meanwhile, Swers (2002: 14-15) expected fewer gender differences in legislative behavior on social welfare issues than on feminist issues precisely because social welfare issues are the primary line of cleavage between the parties and are well integrated into congressional organization. Thus, the extent to which party representation

and women's substantive representation are in conflict depends on which of women's interests are under consideration.

Factors such as majority party status and electoral vulnerability also have implications for the ability of women to act for women. For example, Evans (2005) identifies an important difference between Democratic and Republican women in Congress: whereas Democratic women tend to represent safe Democratic districts, Republican women tend to be elected from more marginal districts. Republican women also represent more moderate districts than their male peers. The greater electoral vulnerability of Republican women, and differences between the two parties' cultures, constrains Republican women's participation within the legislature to a greater extent than Democratic women's participation. Democratic women have played a unique role in Congress in promoting women's interests (Wolbrecht 2002). Yet, the minority status of the Democratic party means that Republican women have more institutional power to advocate for women (Swers 2002). At the same time, majority party status constrains women's ability to act as the substantive representatives of women, with gender cohesion perhaps more difficult to achieve when you are in the majority party (Swers 2002). Scholars are only just beginning to investigate the incorporation of women into the legislative party (Evans 2005).

Nearly two decades ago, Costain and Costain (1987) observed that women were gaining influence within the parties at a time when parties were declining in importance. Yet, evidence of the growing strength of political parties abounds, particularly with regard to the role of parties in government. Precisely because women may be a threat to party cohesion, Young (2006) identifies a possible role for party recruitment strategies in

producing women's descriptive representation. Potential women candidates may be perceived to be (and may in fact be) more liberal than the party median. If parties only recruit candidates who are close to the party median, then women—who may be expected to defect from the party once in the legislature—may not reach the legislature in the first place (Young 2006). Thus, Young directs our attention to party leader perceptions of the ideology of potential women candidates—perceptions which may reduce women's descriptive representation.

Party gatekeeping may also reduce the likelihood that women legislators will substantively represent women. Historically, women who achieved leadership posts within the party organization were not necessarily sympathetic to the collective interests of women—especially if their lack of loyalty to women as a group was the very reason for their advancement (Freeman 2000). Male party leaders belittled the notion of women's common interests.

As Baer (2003) argues, more research is needed on women's access to party leadership. Such a focus promises to shed much light on how party representation and the ability of women to act for women are linked. Because party leaders shape the legislative agenda, the dearth of women in leadership has implications for the presence of women's interests on the party's agenda. Meanwhile, moving into the majority may reduce women's interest in working across the aisle on women's issues (Gertzog 2004): being a team player and advancing within the legislative party may mean foregoing women's interests.

Our theories about parties in the legislature would be strengthened were more party scholars to grapple with the challenges raised by thinking about gender. For

example, how is descriptive representation related to current scholarly debates on party in government? Differences in methodological approach—namely the prevalence of game theoretic approaches in legislative politics—may account for the seeming disconnect between the literatures on women’s representation and parties in the legislature. Yet, both debates—debates about descriptive representation and party in government—would benefit from a dialogue. Past work suggests the fruitful ways that rational choice can be used to study gender (e.g., Harvey 1998; Maniquet, Morelli, and Frechette 2005).

Conclusion

Representing women—acting on behalf of women’s interests and incorporating women as representatives—poses a series of challenges to political parties primarily interested in winning office. For this reason, pitting gender against party appears to be an appropriate way to view the relationship between the two. At the same time, working within the parties is an inevitable part of furthering democracy for women, and women have become increasingly incorporated into the political parties.

Comparing the relationship of gender and party with that of race and party is a promising way to strengthen both literatures. For example, scholars have argued that Black descriptive representation and Black substantive representation may conflict because of party representation. The creation of majority minority districts through redistricting, which is likely to increase Black descriptive representation, may reduce Black substantive representation: if a redistricting plan reduces the total number of Democratic legislators, then increasing Black descriptive representation may come at a cost to Black substantive representation in the chamber as a whole because Democrats

are more likely to represent Black interests than Republicans (Swain 1995; Lublin 1997). Despite important differences between race and gender—in terms of geography, for example—similar questions about parties and women’s representation can be posed (Caul and Kittilson 2005).

Both women and African Americans have pondered the possibility of forming a third party. Third parties were the key supporters of women’s suffrage, suggesting the inherent limitations of working with the two major parties. Yet, forming a third party—which NOW contemplated in the early 1990s—seems impractical (Barakso 2005b: 206-7). Likewise, the two-party system poses a structural barrier to representing African American interests: strategic elites are likely to push racial issues outside of party competition in their attempts to attract the median voter (Frymer 1999; 2005). However, one way that gender and race are quite distinct is that women are a majority group. Though they are an underrepresented and historically disadvantaged group, women’s majority status provides them greater opportunities for leverage than are available to most racial and ethnic groups.

As scholars continue to investigate the complex ways in which gender intersects with party, opportunities abound to more closely link scholarship on parties to debates about descriptive representation. Moreover, the relationships among parties, interest groups, and social movements can quite fruitfully be addressed by studying the case of women.

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