Politics & Gender, 3 (2007), 297–319. Printed in the U.S.A.

Theorizing Women's Representation in the United States

Suzanne Dovi

University of Arizona

From the perspective of women's experiences, it is easy to see that democratic representative institutions can be tools of oppression.[1] After all, formal democratic institutions have been either a form of governance that has *only* ruled over women (e.g., women were formally prohibited from holding elected offices) or a form of governance in which women have ruled and been ruled *unequally* (e.g., the number of female representatives have been significantly lower than the number of male representatives).[2] Moreover, informal representative institutions, for example, interest groups, do not seem to work for women as well as they do for powerful men (Strolovitch 2007). These facts suggest that democratic representative institutions need to be viewed suspiciously. We should not assume that representative institutions in democracies necessarily benefit all women. We need to recognize how they can divide women, pitting some women's interests and preferences against

The author would like to thank Christina Wolbrecht, Karen Beckwith, and Lisa Baldez for their helpful comments. In addition, I would also like to thank Sigal Ben-Porath, Amanda Driscoll, Kara Ellerby, Kris Kanthak, Jane Mansbridge, Barbara Norrander, Trina Running, the participants in the Political Women and American Democracy Conference, and participants in my graduate seminar on Feminism and Democracy for their comments and conversations. Most of all, I would like to thank Houston Smit whose conversations, support, and help made this article possible.

1. By democratic representative institutions, I mean those formal as well as informal political institutions used to advance public policies within democratic states. For a full discussion of my understanding of democratic representation, see Dovi (2007).

2. For a discussion of how men disproportionately represent women in all democratic states, see Inglehart and Norris 2003; Nelson and Chowdhury (2003).

Published by Cambridge University Press 1743-923X/07 $15.00 for The Women and Politics Research Section of the American Political Science Association.

DOI: 10.1017/S1743923X07000281

other women's interests and preferences. Democratic representative institutions can function to preserve the status quo, distributing benefits unjustly among different men and women.

Knowing if and how well representative institutions are working for women in democracies depends, in part, on one's understanding of what counts as the adequate representation of women in a democracy. Does the adequate representation of women require female representatives? If so, how many? Do the opinions, interests, and perspectives of these female representatives matter? Does the adequate representation of women depend simply on the passing and implementation of policies that most women consider to be "women-friendly" or on the passing and implementation of policies sensitive to gender oppression? Does the adequate representation of women require outside pressure on both male *and* female representatives? Does such outside pressure need to come from women?

Any conscientious attempt to answer these questions requires, as Iris Marion Young (1994, 715) wisely recommends, attending to "questions about how and whether women in a particular time and place suffer discrimination and limitation on their action and desires". Following Young's advice, in this article I focus on the representation (or lack thereof) of U.S. women. More specifically, I survey recent theoretical and empirical research on representation, in general, and the representation of U.S. women, in particular, in order to identify those conceptual tools that can best help us understand whether and when U.S. women are being adequately represented.[3] My intent is to focus on the representation of U.S. women specifically (and not comparatively). I do so partially because the United States falls behind many other democracies in its attempt to increase the number of women in public office.[4]

My focus on the political representation of U.S. women is motivated by two main considerations. First, it will help us rethink a common bias

3. Of course, not all feminists support such a project. Those who reject liberal democracy or who embrace some radical forms of feminism could argue that women can never be adequately represented within the current US system. I do not wish to argue here for whether the US is sufficiently democratic to represent US women. Instead I presuppose the legitimacy of liberal democracy and intend to articulate the theoretical assumptions necessary for assessments of whether the current US system adequately represents women.

4. According to Pippa Norris (2000), women generally do better in Nordic countries, averaging 38.3% while other countries such as Kuwait or the United Arab Emirates have few or no female representatives. In the United States' Congress, a record total of 16 women serve in the Senate and 71 women sit in the House. In the US, 76 women hold statewide elective executive posts, while the proportion of women in state legislatures is at 23.5 percent (Fact Sheet on Women in Elective Office 2007).

among U.S. political scientists that increasing descriptive representation will promote further democraticization and improve the substantive representation of U.S. women.[5] Such scholars treat the representation of women as a numbers game—the more women, the better the democracy. Such thinking has justified recent institutional reforms, such as party list quotas and gender quotas that are specifically aimed at increasing the number of female representatives. Although the inclusion of *some* women does have some advantages, as will be discussed later, the assumption that increasing the number of women improves the level of democraticization fails to treat seriously how democratic representative institutions can distribute benefits unjustly among different groups of women. It naively assumes that the benefits and privileges of some women will translate into giving all women a voice in the United States. It also ignores how the opinions, interests, and perspectives of those female representatives influence the degree to which democratic institutions approximate their ideals.

Second, I understand political representation to be a major, albeit limited, way that power is distributed in the United States. In stating this, I want to avoid having my vision understood as simply reducing democracy to political representation.[6] An examination of the representation of U.S. women, be it in formal or informal political institutions, is an important starting place for reevaluating the oppressive and/or liberating potential of democratic institutions for them.[7] By surveying recent theoretical and empirical work, we can be in a better position to identify the costs (and possibly even some benefits)[8] of having relatively few U.S. women among the political elites. As will be seen, improvements to the substantive representation of women and to democratic institutions can depend on *which* women hold offices, as well as on how representative institutions are gendered. It is not enough to assume that competitive elections will safeguard women's needs and concerns.

I begin with a broad question: "What do we mean by the representation of women?" For its answer, I turn to the theoretical literature on political representation as well as to recent feminist contributions to that

5. Christine di Stephano (1997) contends that democraticization does not necessarily improve the conditions of women.

6. For more robust visions of democracy, see Carole Pateman (1970) and Chantal Mouffe (1992).

7. Not everyone considers getting more women into elected offices to be politically significant. For some, the integration of women into the political system is only significant to the degree to which such integration changes the structure of the political system. See Cohen, Jones, Tronto (1992).

8. For instance, Virginia Woolf (1966) recognizes the value of Women having a society of outsiders for transforming political relations.

literature. After exposing a persistent problem facing those who wish to assess the representation of U.S. women, what I call the *inclusion problem*, I recommend several ways that those who wish to study their representation might proceed. Finally, I conclude by summarizing the insights in the theoretical literature on representation that are vital to the study and assessment of the representation of U.S. women.

THE POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

Most theoretical discussions of political representation begin with Hanna Pitkin (1967). Pitkin's classic work sets the terms of how we think about political representation. In particular, she identifies four alternative views of representation: 1) the formalistic view, which focuses on the processes of authorization and accountability; 2) descriptive representation, which focuses on the extent to which representatives "resemble" or share certain experiences with the represented; 3) symbolic representation, which examines the emotional response of the represented to the representative; and 4) substantive representation, which focuses on the activity of advancing the interests of those represented.

Each view provides an alternative approach for assessing the quality and success of the representation of U.S. women: U.S. women could vote their representatives in and out of office (formalistic view). U.S. women could resemble or share certain experiences with their representatives (descriptive representation). U.S. women can feel represented (symbolic representation). Finally, U.S. representatives can act on women's behalf, advancing "women's interests" (substantive representation).

Pitkin's discussion of political representation also shows why evaluating the representation of U.S. women is such a difficult task. The concept of representation is itself paradoxical: Each view of representation contains different and sometimes contradictory standards for how representatives should behave. For instance, the descriptive view of representation assesses representatives by their similarities to their constituents, for example, sharing certain racial characteristics. In contrast, substantive representation evaluates representatives by whether they are good delegates (those who follow the expressed preferences of their constituents) or good trustees (those who follow their own understanding of their constituents' best interests). Pitkin suggests the reconciling of these contradictory standards by evaluating representatives according to

the "best interests" of the represented. However, establishing commonly agreed-upon criteria would be necessary for determining the "best interests" of the represented, and unfortunately, Pitkin never specifies how we are to identify such criteria.

Those who study the representation of U.S. women face similar difficulties.[9] Not only can the standards for evaluating the representation of U.S. women contradict each other, but there are also no commonly agreed-upon criteria for identifying "women's interests" (Diamond and Hartstock 1991; Jonasdottir 1989; Sapiro 1981). In attending to the differences among U.S. women, it becomes clear that benefits from democratic institutions can be distributed unfairly among different groups of women (Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1989, 1991; Hancock 2007; McCall 2005). As a result, there can be an infinite regress of different women's interests, thereby dissolving the category of women into mere individuals (Young 1994, 721). Though useful for identifying different ways that women can be represented, Pitkin's analysis is less helpful for determining which women are *adequately* represented in the United States or whether U.S. women *can be* adequately represented.[10]

Recent empirical and theoretical research holds at least three important insights into how political scientists should approach the question of whether U.S. women are being adequately represented. The first insight is that the adequate representation of U.S. women will not occur exclusively in legislative bodies. In particular, Laurel Weldon (2002) argues persuasively that political scientists should not simply "count bodies" in legislatures—that is, count the number of women in legislatures—to determine how well women are being represented. The representation of women depends on nongovernmental actors, such as women's movements. Building on Weldon's insight suggests that the activities within civil society, for example, the kinds of outside pressure placed on public officials, can be crucial to the adequate representation of women. Moreover, other features of a political society, such as the right to association and the availability of political resources, can influence the quality of the representation of U.S. women.

9. Some feminists contend that women have interests distinctive from men. For instance, according to Kathy Ferguson (1984), such distinctive interests emerge from women's disproportionate association with mothering and reproduction, the political economy of the gendered division of labor, and the arrangement of the female body. Others argue that women have a distinctive interest in ending gender oppression.

10. Pitkin's account does not capture the changing political realities about how democratic citizens are currently represented. For helpful discussions of the different ways that contemporary democratic citizens are represented, see Rehfeld (2006) and Warren and Castiglione (2004).

A second important insight into our understanding of whether women are adequately represented comes from Jane Mansbridge (2003). Mansbridge identifies four different forms of democratic representation in the United States (promissory, anticipatory, gyroscopic, and surrogacy).[11] She claims that the normative criteria for each form of democratic representation vary. For example, promissory representation would require representatives to keep their campaign promises to women, while gyroscopic representation would require representatives to provide opportunities for women to assess the candidate's character in order for them to represent women adequately. The proper criteria for determining whether U.S. women are adequately represented partially depend on which form of democratic representation is being employed. Those concerned with the adequate representation of U.S. women will need to specify which form or forms of representation they are examining and determine whether the representative is acting consistently with the normative criteria specific to that form. For our purposes here, Mansbridge's classification system is important because it opens the possibility that U.S. women can be adequately represented *in more than one way*. It also reveals the need to identify indicators that would signal *which* women are *not* being adequately represented according to each of these forms.

One final insight is implicit within the recent theoretical literature on representation: Improving the representation of women (or at least increasing the number of female elected officials) does not automatically mean that democratic institutions will better approximate democratic ideals. After all, political representation is not necessarily democratic (Rehfeld 2006); thus, improving the representation of some women does not necessarily mean that the society as a whole is becoming more democratic. This is true not only because women do not necessarily value democratic institutions (Dovi 2007) but also because improving the representation of some women can come at a cost to other women (Cohen 1999; Dovi 2002; Young 2000). Increases in the number of female public officials by themselves should not be taken as evidence of further democraticization. In addition, as Adolph Reed, Jr. (1986) argues, mass mobilization around identity might constitute a new mode of domination, an "artificial negativity" that creates an illusory opposition so

11. This classificatory scheme of how women are being represented in the United States raises new and interesting research questions: Are female citizens more likely than male citizens to rely on surrogate representation—that is, on representatives whom they did not directly authorize? Do U.S. women require all four forms of democratic representation in order to be adequately represented?

that the social management system can control that opposition. Reed's work implies that the inclusion of U.S. women in representative institutions could function to preserve the status quo and thereby the inequalities within the U.S. political system. His work suggests that an increase of female representatives will only be likely to improve democracies if those representatives (and the people who support them) value certain things—such as democratic representative institutions that proactively address gender inequalities and reconcile political conflicts fairly.

FEMINIST CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNDERSTANDING THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

Feminist theorists have made many important and shamefully overlooked contributions to democratic theory. To view democratic institutions—especially representative institutions—from feminist perspectives is to enter a much richer and more complicated vision of politics than the one typically held by political scientists (Childs 2006). Anne Phillips (1991, 159) captured this insight, writing: "Feminism multiplies the places within which democracy appears relevant, and then it alters the dimensions as well. 'Details matter'." Not only have feminist theorists challenged conventional ways of knowing and researching political life (Zerilli 1998), but they have also expanded the proper scope of democratic theory: broadening the unit of analysis from the individual to the family unit (Okin 1989), rejecting simplistic divisions between the public/private arena (Elshtain 1981; Landes 1988), criticizing the gendered assumptions of political research (Sapiro 1979, 1987, 1991), and providing a more fluid and complex understanding of our political identities.

Recognizing all of the feminist contributions to democratic theory is clearly beyond the proper scope of this article. For this reason, I concentrate on only four feminist contributions that improve our understanding of the adequate representation of U.S. women: 1) Feminist theorists have expanded our understanding of *what* needs to be represented; 2) feminist theorists have identified formal as well as informal barriers to the representation of U.S. women; 3) feminist theorists have recognized how the gendered nature of political institutions affects the representation of women; and 4) feminist theorists have identified specific representative functions that are more likely to be performed by female than by male representatives.

First, feminist theory has expanded our understanding of *what* needs to be represented. Traditionally, political theorists writing on representation have focused on interests (e.g., Barry 1965). Of course, the concept of interest can be based on subjective criteria, for example, on what a person actually wants, or objective criteria, for example, on a standard of what is a justifiable interest. Problems arise when objective criteria and subjective criteria conflict. Such problems have led political scientists to set aside the issue of interests and to focus merely on the expressed preferences of constituents (Achen 1975).

Feminist theorists have refined our understanding of what needs to be represented in two important ways. The first refinement occurs in their recognition of the problem of essentialism.[12] Feminists noted that conceptions of "women's interests" often assume some essential understanding of women; that is, they assume that all women possess a common identity or shared set of interests. Feminists argue that we should not assume that all women view political issues from the same perspective. We should not evaluate representatives by whether they enact a laundry list of feminist or even "women-friendly" public policies. In fact, the easier it is to identify a list of policies that all women should or do support, the less important it is to have female representatives. After all, according to Phillips (1998), male representatives could also advance such a laundry list. Phillips would reject attempts to evaluate the adequate representation of U.S. women by appealing to a particular list of policies.

In response to the problem of essentialism, feminists have introduced two important distinctions: a) the sex/sexuality/gender distinction and b) the women/feminist distinction. The sex/sexuality/gender distinction is important because it differentiates sex (biology, physiology) from sexuality (sexual preferences, sexual orientation, sexual practices) and from gender (social roles and status). These distinctions allow us to recognize how gender is socially constructed within any given society: What women are depends on the norms and practices of their society.[13] The women/feminist distinction emerges because not

12. For a discussion of the problem of essentialism, see Fuss (1989) and Williams (1998).

13. A tremendous amount of feminist attention ranging from Simone De Beauvoir (1952) to Judith Butler (1990) has been paid to the way we define women. For contemporary discussions, see Moi (2002), Young (1994), and Zerilli (1998, 2005). Patricia Mann contends that feminists should "stop worrying about issues of identity and focus on issues of agency, or significant action" (1997, 225). According to Mann, it is more important to understand why people are uncertain about how to act and what is considered meaningful action than it is to define the category of women.

all women are committed to gender equality, let alone to the elimination of gender hierarchies.[14]

Both the gender/sex/sexuality distinction and the women/feminist distinction reveal that conceptions of women's interests are deeply ideological. Evaluations of the representation of U.S. women in terms of women's interests will reflect a particular political bias of the researcher. How we identify interests reflects our commitment (or lack thereof) to feminism.

Another way that feminists have refined our understanding of what needs to be represented can be found in the work of Iris Marion Young (1986, 2000). For Young, women are represented when their *interests*, *opinions*, and *perspectives* are being advanced. For her, interests determine the life prospects of individuals, for example, material resources. Opinions are the values, principles, and priorities of individuals. Perspectives are understood as particular kinds of social meanings, apparent in the types of questions being asked during public deliberations. Women's perspectives are present when participants in public deliberations inquire about the specific impact that public policies have on different women. As can be seen, identifying how issues are being framed and whose values are being appealed to are vital for assessing the adequate representation of U.S. women—which requires more than satisfying U.S. women's policy preferences.

The second contribution of feminists to our understanding of whether U.S. women are adequately represented is their analysis of the formal and informal barriers to the representation of women.[15] Feminists have denounced such formal barriers as simply unacceptable to the proper functioning of democratic institutions, be those barriers formal prohibitions against women voting or against women running for office.[16]

Feminists have also identified informal barriers to "real representation." For example, Young's (1990) discussion of the five faces of oppression is particularly instructive for understanding the barriers that can prevent citizens from expressing their interests, opinions, and perspectives.

14. Debra Dodson (2006) employs Georgia Duerst-Lahti's terms "feminale" and "feminalism" (Johnson, Duerst-Lahti, and Norton 2007) as a conceptualization that avoids putting women in the feminist–antifeminist box. This terminology is particularly helpful for analyzing conservative women and women who deny being feminists but support gender equality because it recognizes the possibility that women will not identify themselves as feminist even though they advance public policies that support gender equality.

15. Feminists have also identified various barriers that prevent women from participating in numbers equal to those of men, such as political recruitment (Norris 1995) and socialization (Jennings 1983).

16. Famously, Joseph Schumpeter (1976) argues that democracies should be able to determine the scope of who participates. Since democracies are allowed to decide who counts as the people, a democracy can legitimately decide to rule out women as full citizens.

According to Young's work, representation would not be adequate when U.S. women face violence, powerlessness, exploitation, cultural imperialism, and/or marginalization. Admittedly, her faces of oppression could be updated, for example, an account of exploitation that takes into account the effects of globalization. Nevertheless, her analysis of the faces of oppression identifies several existing mechanisms within the U.S. political system that prevent the adequate representation of U.S. women.

For many feminists, formal and informal barriers to women's representation can be detected when rates of participation of women or numbers of women in public office do not reflect the number of women in the population as a whole. As Catharine (MacKinnon 1987, 35) wrote, "Feminists have this nasty habit of counting bodies and refusing not to notice their gender". Differences, specifically relative to lower numbers of women, are seen as evidence of discrimination.[17]

Third, feminists have provided an analytical framework for assessing how the adequate representation of U.S. women depends on the ways in which existing governmental institutions are gendered (Rosenthal 2002). It is not enough to examine male–female differences, such as the numbers of women voting or elected to office, or leadership-style differences. Karin Tamerius (1995) identifies four ways that sex differences can become politically relevant to gender experiences: 1) the content of the sexual divisions in society, 2) the perspectives of males and females that vary due to the subjectivity inherent in any interpretation, 3) the mutuality each sex develops based on commonality of experience, and 4) associations formed from similar socialization of a same-sex group. Such insights about the complex relationship between sex and gender suggest that political scientists should not treat sex and gender interchangeably. We should not extrapolate gender from the variable of sex (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995). After all, the concept of gender examines "all those cultural expectations associated with masculinity and femininity that go beyond biological sex differences" (Lipman-Blumen 1984, 3). Acker (2000) provides a particularly fruitful way of analyzing gender in institutional processes, practices, ideologies, and the distribution of power. For instance, she helps us see how the meaning of

17. Of course, feminist analyses of discrimination should not be and are not limited to observable and measurable sex differences in the behavior of female representatives or of female citizens (Lovenduski and Norris 2003). After all, the absence of sex differences does not mean that the political arena is free from structural forms of discrimination (Randall 2002; Squires 2005). For example, women's presence in legislatures may cause men to be more concerned about women's issues, thereby masking actual sex differences (Reingold 2000).

being female—whether positive, negative, or even neutral—can influence the distribution of gender power in representative institutions. Feminist theorists have improved our understanding of the adequate representation of U.S. women by insisting on the importance of gender—revealing how gender norms can constrain and prescribe certain behavior in political institutions and calling attention to the interactive nature of masculinity and femininity that is embedded in those institutions (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995).

Finally, feminist theorists have improved our understanding of the adequate representation of U.S. women by specifying certain functions that female representatives are more likely to perform than are male representatives. These functions emerge in feminist explanations of why women are needed to represent women (e.g., Diamond and Hartsock 1991; Gould 1996; Mansbridge 1999; Phillips 1991, 1995, 1998; Sapiro 1981; Williams 1998; Young 1990, 2000). To contend that female representatives are necessary for democratic institutions, as these feminists do, contradicts the faith that democratic theorists place in institutional design. For instance, Joseph Schumpeter (1976) argued that the actual choice of representatives is less important than having an institutional design that promotes the competition among different groups and thereby provides institutional incentives to be accountable and responsive to the electorate. Feminists' arguments for the descriptive representation of women reveal why even the best institutional design for promoting competition is not enough: It matters whether the people who occupy institutional position are women.

In particular, there are at least six distinct arguments for why female representatives are necessary for the adequate representation of U.S. women: *the role model argument*, *the justice argument*, *the trust argument*, *the legitimacy argument*, *the transformative argument*, *and the overlooked interests argument*.[18] Each of these arguments points to a different function that female representatives can have in the United States.

The *role model argument* contends that the presence of female representatives in the U.S. political system improves female citizens' self-esteem and sense of political efficacy. Seeing Hillary Clinton or Nancy

18. Anne Phillips (1998) identifies four main arguments for representation: overlooked interests, justice, revitalized democracy, and role model argument. My six arguments expand on Phillips's four arguments in light of recent empirical and theoretical findings. Note that the trust argument and the legitimacy argument both suggest that descriptive representation holds certain benefits for the U.S. political system as a whole, and that suggests that the adequate representation of U.S. women depends on the quality of the entire political system.

Pelosi in leadership positions increases female citizens' sense of the possible, expanding their career choices to include the highest positions of political power and inspiring other female citizens to imitate their career paths.[19] The role model argument captures how female representatives can "mentor" other women. For instance, senior female representatives can mentor their junior female colleagues by showing them how to raise money (Driscoll and Kanthak n.d.).

The *justice argument* contends that fairness demands that men and women be present in roughly equal numbers among political elites. As Phillips (1998, 229) asserts, "it is patently and grotesquely unfair for men to monopolize representation." Descriptive representation of women compensates for existing inequalities and combats the formal and informal barriers to participation by supplementing women's access to the political arena. The justice argument links the need for female representatives to U.S. citizens' sense of fairness.[20]

The trust argument focuses on the past betrayals of female citizens by male representatives in the United States. According to the trust argument, increasing the number of female representatives is necessary so that female citizens can put their confidence in U.S. political institutions.[21] In this regard, U.S. women will only be adequately represented when they have representatives whom they trust. Such trust is likely to have an additional benefit, namely, increasing the participation of female citizens. Having more female representatives is likely to increase the number of women who vote, lobby, and get involved in politics.[22]

The legitimacy argument contends that the presence of female representatives increases the legitimacy of U.S. democratic institutions (Phillips 1995, 1998).[23] Put simply, the legitimacy of the U.S. government depends on who is present, and so an all-female Congress could not legitimately represent U.S. men and an all-male Congress could not legitimately represent women. In terms of adequate

19. For an alternative explanation of the role-model effect, see Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006).

20. For this reason, we need to explore whether women feel unfairly represented by male representatives, as well as whether men feel unfairly represented by female representatives.

21. For an alternative explanation of the impact of descriptive representatives on trust, see Gay (2002).

22. Empirical evidence seems to support that the number of women in elective office or the number of credible female candidates increases the political interest and participatory attitudes on women in the electorate. See Atkeson (2003); Burns, Schlozman, and Verba (2001); Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler (2005); Verba, Burns, and Schlozman (1997).

23. The extent to which increasing trust also increases the legitimacy of democratic institutions is the extent to which the trust argument will resemble the legitimacy argument.

representation, knowing how many of which categories of women is necessary to increase the legitimacy of the U.S. government is critical.

The transformative argument maintains that the presence of female representatives improves democratic institutions, allowing them to better approximation of their democratic ideals. Women make representative institutions more democratic. According to the transformative argument, the presence of U.S. female representatives not only changes the norms and political practices of those institutions (Phillips 1998) but is also possible only when the political system has substantially changed (Diamond and Hartsock 1991).[24] This argument implicitly assumes that female representatives will behave in a more democratic fashion (e.g., attending to political inequalities and facilitating democratic deliberations) than existing male representatives. The transformative argument suggests that the adequate representation of U.S. women will depend on systemic changes that make the U.S. political system more democratic.

Finally, the *overlooked interests argument* holds that democratic deliberations and political agendas can be improved by having more female representatives in public office. According to this line of reasoning, male representatives are not always aware of how public policies affect female citizens. For this reason, the presence of female representatives can contribute to "the feminization of the political agenda" (the articulation of women's concerns and perspectives in public debates), as well as "the feminization of legislation" (public policies that take into account their effect on women (Childs 2006, 9)).[25]

Recently, an important qualification has been introduced about the need for descriptive representation. In particular, Mansbridge (1999) contends that the need for descriptive representation is contingent. The presence of female representatives in the United States would only be necessary under certain conditions. More specifically, Mansbridge (1999, 628) identifies four contexts in which descriptive representatives perform certain functions: It follows that U.S. female citizens should prefer female representative when they need

24. It is not clear whether women have a transforming effect on representative institutions or whether representative institutions need to transform in order to include women.

25. The presence of female representatives improves the quality of deliberations because female representatives are presumed to have more insight and concern about women's issues than do male representatives. According to such logic, the reason that some U.S. states make female prisoners give birth in shackles is because male representatives do not appreciate the inconvenience and hardship that such shackles place on women giving birth.

1. to foster adequate communication in contexts of mistrust;
2. to promote innovative thinking in contexts of uncrystallized, not fully articulated interests;[26]
3. to create a social meaning of "ability to rule" for members of a group in historical contexts where that ability has been seriously questioned; and
4. to increase the polity's de facto legitimacy in contexts of past discrimination.

Note that descriptive representation will only improve the substantive representation of women in the first and second context. The third and fourth contexts promote goods other than substantive representation. Mansbridge reiterates that assessments about whether U.S. women are adequately represented should not focus exclusively on substantive representation. Increasing the number of female representatives in the United States can enhance the capacities of some women to rule themselves and can even increase the legitimacy of the country's democratic institutions. The need for more women among U.S. political elites depends on the political context. Her work suggests that under some conditions, U.S. women could be adequately represented in the absence of female representatives.

THE INCLUSION PROBLEM

Despite these important insights about assessing the representation of U.S. women, a persistent problem remains. I call this persistent problem *the inclusion problem*. The inclusion problem recognizes the costs that come with becoming political insiders. This problem can take at least two different forms. The first emphasizes the costs of including some women rather than other groups of women. The second emphasizes the dangers that accompany the political inclusion of women. Both forms recognize that political inclusion may not always be desirable. Political scientists should not assume that increasing the number of women among the political elites will necessarily improve the substantive representation of women or will necessarily make a polity more democratic.

26. As Mansbridge (1999) points out, the need for descriptive representation depends on the degree to which interests are crystallized. The more we know what disadvantaged groups want, the less descriptive representation is necessary. This argument often relies on the example of Senator Carol Braun's refusal to renew the Daughters of the American Revolution's patent of the confederate flag. However, this example is somewhat misleading because the issue of the confederate flag was crystallized *within* the African-American community. The problem was that white senators did not have sufficient understanding and appreciation of this crystallized interest.

The first form of the inclusion problem results because of the significant differences among women. Women differ when they have children or do not, are divorced or not, have been raped or not, are straight or gay, obese or thin, Muslim or Christian, menopausal or prepubescent. These differences matter to the degree that attempts to increase descriptive representation of one group cannot be enacted without marginalizing further other vulnerable subgroups of women. For instance, Young (2000) discusses how the increased representation of Latinos can come at the expense of the representation of gay and lesbian Latinos. She emphasizes that this is a problem for all representatives, not simply for descriptive representatives. It occurs because one person cannot adequately capture the differences among the many. To Cathy Cohen (1999, 70), including some representatives from marginalized groups leads to marginalization of other members as "secondary marginalization." Members of marginalized groups can play an important role constructing and regulating the group identity. By controlling the behavior and attitudes of other group members, they manage the public image of the group. To the degree that "women" is a heterogeneous category, democratic institutions can advantage some women as they disadvantage others. Thus, bringing some women into politics and representing some women's interests, perspectives, and opinions can come at the expense of other women's interests, opinions, and perspectives. Those who study the representation of women must attend to the ways in which female representatives can perpetuate inequalities.

The second form of the inclusion problem focuses on the costs that come with political incorporation. John Dryzek (1996) argues that marginalized groups should be strategic about when and how they want to be included in the state. For Dryzek, marginalized groups should only aim at inclusion in the state when "a group's defining concern can be assimilated in an established or emerging state imperative and . . . civil society is not unduly depleted by the group's entryway into the state" (p. 475). Otherwise, political inclusion can lead to the group being "co-opted or bought off cheaply" (p. 480). Before concluding that increased numbers of female representatives are good for democracy, political scientists need to examine the state imperatives, as well as how much outside pressure is placed on female representatives. Political scientists also need to differentiate between female representatives as inside players who can potentially transform the political system and female representatives who are merely tokens.

MOVING BEYOND THE INCLUSION PROBLEM

I make three concrete recommendations for the ways in which we should assess the adequate representation of U.S. women in light of their differences. First, those who study the relationship between women and democracy should not focus simply on the disadvantages that all women share. Rather, four additional considerations need to be examined:

1. How do representative institutions confer benefits on some group or groups of men at the expense of conferring the same or different benefits on women?
2. How do representative institutions confer benefits on some groups of women at the expense of conferring the same or different benefits on other groups of women?
3. How do representative institutions impact *most* women?
4. How do representative institutions impact *the most vulnerable* women?

Since representative institutions create political winners and losers, political scientists need to attend to patterns of privileging, ones that transform and improve the lives of some women as they disadvantage and marginalize other women.

Second, it is necessary to consider the ability of women to hold their representatives accountable. As Judith Squires (2005) and Childs and Krook (2006) suggest, it is important not only to assess *who* represents and *what* gets represented but also to examine *how* the substantive representation of women occurs. It matters whether the substantive representation occurs because women have political influence and can sanction their representatives. It is necessary to look beyond formal mechanisms of authorization and accountability to alternative forms of accountability.

Here, Ruth Grant and Robert Keohane's (2005) discussion of accountability in the international arena is particularly instructive. They suggest that in the international arena, we should not assume that the ballot box is necessary for preventing the abuse of power. Sometimes indirect forms of accountability, such as relying on experts to monitor each other (peer accountability) or on public opinion (public reputational accountability), can be effective. Grant and Keohane's insights about alternative forms of accountability suggest that political scientists need to trace not only what women's representatives are doing but also to whom they are responsive and who holds them accountable. Do women's opinions of their representatives count as much as men's opinions? For example, do women lack the peer and reputational forms

of accountability needed to sanction their representatives? Does the adequate representation of women require women to possess a certain combination of accountability forms? Which forms of democratic representation enhance the ability of which female citizens to sanction their representatives, and which forms of democratic representation promote representatives' responsiveness to female citizens? Are certain groups of women helped or harmed by having women exercise direct and/or indirect forms of accountability? As can be seen, we need more research assessing how well different groups of women can influence and sanction their representatives (if they are able to at all).[27] We also need to examine whether institutional reforms aimed at increasing the number of women in the public arena possess adequate mechanisms of accountability. Here I posit that one factor that matters most for the adequate representation of U.S. women is having sufficient power to sanction their representatives.

Third, it is necessary to create a theoretical framework for determining when and how differences among women matter in representative practices. Should those who study the representation of women simply assume that white female representatives cannot represent black women? Or should they assume that white female representatives can *under certain conditions* represent black women just as black female representatives can *under certain conditions* represent white women? In order to advance this second area of research, it is important to understand the conditions that divide and unite different groups of women. Understanding the differences between descriptive representation of women and descriptive representation of race is one important step (Htun 2004). Moreover, if we are to take the heterogeneity of gender seriously (and the dangers of secondary marginalization), then assessments of the representation of women cannot treat all women the same.

Consequently, we need to move beyond identifying those groups that need descriptive representation by simply pointing to a group's historical exclusion. For example, Melissa Williams (1998) identifies those groups that need descriptive representation by whether the group has experienced discrimination *over multiple generations*. Such an understanding of which groups require more descriptive representation,

27. Such evaluations are likely to be complicated by the fact that even when representatives advance what are considered to be women's interests, it is difficult to determine whether those representatives are responding to their female constituents or to other pressures, e.g., party demands or instrumental interests. See Mansbridge (2003).

though, does not adequately consider how democratic citizens must sometimes choose between different disadvantaged groups (black women or white women) to receive more descriptive representation. For instance, we need to forego simplistic oppressor/oppressed distinctions that fail to acknowledge how women participate in and can benefit from gender hierarchies. Improving the representation of some women can be inextricably tied to the exclusion of other women.

This means that new modes of domination and existing forms of exclusion are relevant for assessing who needs more descriptive representation. Groups that have been marginalized over multiple generations are not the only ones who lack adequate representation. In fact, if the need for descriptive representation is contingent, feminist theorists need to confront the fact that present forms of exclusion might sometimes outweigh historical ones. Determining which vulnerable subgroups of women should be prioritized is certainly not easy. However, such questions are integral for determining whether certain groups of U.S. women are being adequately represented.

In particular, we need to reconsider the importance of ideological and religious differences among women. Here, we need more scholarship on how conservative women can advance the interests of some women despite the opposition from some feminist women. We need a better understanding of the relationship between a politics of presence (what Phillips calls descriptive representation) and the politics of ideas.[28] One place to begin is with political ideologies that contribute to the exclusion of certain groups. We need to differentiate representatives who promote gender hierarchies, for example, justify policies by presuming certain gender hierarchies or inciting violence toward women, from those who seek to undermine gender hierarchies. A lot more needs to be said about how empirical research and theoretical accounts need to account for differences among women. What I can say here is that feminists should not presume that privileged representatives—whether they are white males or white females—promote hierarchies, or that all representatives from disadvantaged groups seek to undermine hierarchies.

What may be most necessary for a proper assessment of the representation of U.S. women is an analysis of how the institutional conditions constrain different women's choices of their representatives. Understanding how norms and informal practices can prevent

28. For Phillips, democratic politics occurs when both a politics of presence and a politics of ideas are represented in a democratic polity; she does not specify, however, how they relate to each other.

democratic institutions from living up to their ideals is crucial for creating realistic expectations of any female or male representative. Such an understanding can benefit from a recognition of the inclusion problem, specifically, how the pursuit of one political strategy (e.g., incorporation) may serve some women while harming others. If this is true, then perhaps one of the most enduring lessons from feminist theorists is that we need to continue to be suspicious of how representative institutions distribute privileges in democracies. Feminist contributions to our understanding of representative institutions provide an important check on the rhetoric of democracy, exposing the ways our democratic rhetoric is overinflated and highlighting the need to proceed cautiously.

CONCLUSION

So what does it mean for U.S. women to be adequately represented? My survey of the literature has provided only a tentative answer to that question. First, we cannot determine whether U.S. women are adequately represented simply by examining the substantive representation of women. This is true not only because attempts to define "women's interests" are likely to be deeply ideological and controversial, but also because the opinions and perspectives of women are vital to their adequate representation. Political scientists need to attend to how U.S. policies are framed, which values are expressed and which questions are asked within representative institutions, and how these can potentially work against certain women. It is not enough for just some women's interests, opinions, and perspectives to be present: The adequate representation of women requires the presence of women's *multiple* interests, opinions, and perspectives.

Second, those who wish to determine if U.S. women are being adequately represented must pay attention to context. The institutional legacy of representative institutions is relevant, for example, the historical prohibitions against women voting. So are the institutional norms and practices that continue to constrain women's choices about their representatives and their capacities to sanction their representatives. The political inclusion of more women is not necessarily a sign of democratic progress. Furthermore, to pay attention to the relevant political context means examining political behavior outside formal governmental institutions. Finally, the importance of context to evaluations of the

representation of women suggests that the adequate representation of U.S. women is likely to take different forms.

This leads to my third and final point: Evaluations about the adequate representation of U.S. women depend on what is properly considered possible. Without better empirical evidence on how many, and which, female representatives are needed to provide an adequate voice for women's multiple interests, opinions, and perspectives in democratic institutions, political scientists risk holding female representatives to too high—or possibly even too low—a standard. An examination of representative institutions from the perspective of women's experiences reveals that these institutions can potentially be both tools of oppression and tools of liberation.

REFERENCES

Achen, Christopher. 1975. "Mass Political Attitudes and the Survey Response." *American Political Science Review* 69 (December): 1218–31.

Acker, Joan. 2000. "Revisiting Class: Thinking from Gender, Race, and Organizations." *Social Politics* 7 (Summer): 192–213.

Atkeson, Lonna Rae. 2003. "Not All Cues Are Created Equal: The Conditional Impact of Female Candidates on Political Engagement." *Journal of Politics* 65 (4): 1040–61.

Barry, Brian. [1965] 1990. *Political Argument*, 2d ed. Herefordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Burns, Nancy, Kay Schlozman, and Sidney Verba. 2001. *The Private Roots of Public Action: Gender, Equality, and Political Participation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

Campbell, David, and Christina Wolbrecht. 2006. "See Jane Run: Women Politicians as Role Models for Adolescents." *Journal of Politics* 68 (2): 233–47.

Childs, Sarah. 2006. "The Complicated Relationship between Women's Descriptive and Substantive Representation." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13 (1): 7–21.

Childs, Sarah, and Mona Lena Krook. 2006. "Gender and Politics: The State of the Art." *Politics* 26: 18–28.

Cohen, Cathy. 1999. *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Cohen, Cathy, Kathleen B. Jones, and Joan C. Tronto, eds. 1997. *Women Transforming Politics*. New York: NYU Press.

Collins, Patricia. 2000. "It's All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation." In *Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a Multicultural, Post-Colonial, and Feminist World*, ed. Uma Narayan and Sandra Harding. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press: 156–76.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1989. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Anti-Discrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 139–67.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43 (6) (July): 1241–99.

De Beauvoir, Simone. 1952. *The Second Sex*. New York: Knopf.

Diamond, Irene, and Nancy Hartstock. 1991. "Beyond Interests in Politics: A Comment on Virginia Sapiro's 'When Are Interests Interesting? The Problem of Political Representation of Women.'" *American Political Science Review* 75 (September): 717–21.
Di Stefano, Christine. 1997. "Integrating Gender into the Political Science Curriculum: Challenges, Pitfalls, and Opportunities." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 30 (June): 204–6.
Dodson, Debra. 2006. *The Impact of Women in Congress*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Dovi, Suzanne. 2002. "Preferable Descriptive Representatives: Or Will Just Any Woman, Black, or Latino Do?" *American Political Science Review* 96 (December): 745–54.
Dovi, Suzanne. 2007. *The Good Representative*. New York: Blackwell.
Driscoll, Amanda, and Kristin Kanthak. N.d. "Patterns of Colleague Support in the U.S. House: Why Democrats Have an 'Old Girls Network,' but Republican Women Want to be 'Just One of the Boys.'" University of Arizona. Unpublished typescript.
Dryzek, John. 1996. "Political Inclusion and the Dynamics of Democratization." *American Political Science Review* 90 (September): 475–87.
Duerst-Lahti, Georgia and Rita Mae Kelly, eds. 1995. *Gender Power, Leadership and Governance*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
Elshtain, Jean Bethke. 1981. *Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Fact Sheet on Women in Elective Office 2007. Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University. http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/Facts.html#elective (March 9, 2007).
Ferguson, Kathy. 1984. *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
Fuss, Diana. 1989. *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature & Difference*. New York: Routledge.
Gay, Claudine. 2002. "Spirals of Trust? The Effect of Descriptive Representation on the Relationship between Citizens and their Government." *American Journal of Political Science* 46 (October): 717–32.
Gould, Carol. 1996. "Diversity and Democracy: Representing Differences." In *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Seyla Benhabib. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 171–86.
Grant, Ruth, and Robert O. Keohane. 2005. "Accountability and Abuses of Power in World Politics." *American Political Science Review* 99 (February): 29–44.
Hancock, Ange-Marie. 2007. "When Multiplication Doesn't Equal Quick Addition: Examining Intersectionality as a Research Paradigm." *Perspectives on Politics* 5 (1): 63–79.
Htun, Mala. 2004. "Is Gender Like Ethnicity? The Political Representation of Identity Groups." *Perspectives on Politics* 2 (September): 439–58.
Inglehart, Ronald, and Pippa Norris. 2003. *Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change Around the World*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
Jennings, Kent. 1983. "Gender Roles and Inequalities in Political Participation: Results from an Eight-Nation Study." *Western Political Quarterly* 36 (September): 364–85.
Johnson, Cathy Marie, Georgia Duerst-Lahti, and Noelle H. Norton. 2007. *Creating Gender: The Sexual Politics of Welfare Policy*. London and Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
Jonasdottir, Anna G. 1989. "On the Concept of Interest, Women's Interests, and the Limitations of Interest Theory." In *The Political Interests of Gender: Developing Theory and Research with a Feminist Face*, ed. Anna G. Jonasdottir and Kathleen B. Jones. New York: Sage, 33–65.

Landes, Joan. 1988. *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
Lipman-Blumen, Jean. 1984. *Gender Roles and Power*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
Lovenduski, Joni, and Pippa Norris. 2003. "Westminster Women: The Politics of Presence." *Political Studies* 51 (1): 84–102.
MacKinnon, Catharine. 1987. *Feminism Unmodified*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Mann, Patricia. 1997. "Musing as a Feminist in a Postfeminist Era." In *Feminism and the New Democracy: Re-siting the Political*, ed. Jodi Dean. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 222–42.
Mansbridge, Jane. 1999. "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes.'" *Journal of Politics* 61 (3): 628–57.
Mansbridge, Jane. 2003. "Rethinking Representation." *American Political Science Review* 97 (4)(November): 515–28.
McCall, Leslie. 2005. "The Complexity of Intersectionality." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30 (3): 1771–1800.
Moi, Toril. 2002. *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*. 2d ed. New York: Taylor & Francis.
Mouffe, Chantal. 1992. *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community*. New York: Verso.
Nelson, Barbara J., and Najma Chowdhury. 1994. *Women and Politics Worldwide*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
Norris, Pippa. 1995. *Political Recruitment: Gender, Race and Class in the British Parliament*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Norris, Pippa. 2000. "Women's Representation and Electoral Systems." In *The International Encyclopedia of Elections*, ed. Richard Rose. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 348–51.
Norris, Pippa, and Joni, Lovenduski. 1989. "Women Candidates for Parliament: Transforming the Agenda?" *British Journal of Political Science* 19 (1): 106–15.
Okin, Susan Moller. 1989. *Justice, Gender and the Family*. New York: Basic Books.
Pateman, Carole. 1970: *Participation and Democratic Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Phillips, Anne. 1991. *Engendering Democracy*. New York: Polity.
Phillips, Anne. 1995. *Politics of Presence*. New York: Clarendon.
Phillips, Anne. 1998. "Democracy and Representation: Or, Why Should It Matter Who Our Representatives Are?" *Feminism and Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 224–40.
Pitkin, Hanna. 1967. *The Concept of Representation*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
Randall, Vicki. 2002. "Feminism." In *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, ed. David Marsh and Gerry Stoker. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
Reed, Adolph, Jr. 1986. *Race, Politics and Culture*. New York: Greenwood.
Rehfeld, Andrew. 2006. "Toward a General Theory of Political Representation." *Journal of Politics* 68 (February): 1–21.
Reingold, Beth. 2000. *Representing Women*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
Rosenthal, Cindy. 2002. *Women Transforming Congress*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
Sapiro, Virginia. 1979. "Women's Studies and Political Conflict." In *The Prism of Sex: Essays in the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. Julia A. Sherman and Evelyn Torton Beck. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 253–66.

Sapiro, Virginia. 1981. "When are Interests Interesting?" *American Political Science Review* 75 (September): 701–21.
Sapiro, Virginia. 1987. "What Research on the Political Socialization of Women Can Tell Us about the Political Socialization of People." In *The Impact of Feminist Research in the Academy*, ed. Christie Farnham. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 148–73.
Sapiro, Virginia. 1991. "Gender Politics, Gendered Politics: The State of the Field." In *Political Science: Looking to the Future in the Theory and Practice of Political Science*, ed. William Crotty. Evanston, IL: Northampton, 165–88.
Schumpeter, Joseph. 1976. *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*. London: Allen and Unwin.
Schwindt-Bayer, Leslie A., and William Mishler. 2005. "The Nexus of Representation: An Integrated Model of Women's Representation." *Journal of Politics* 67 (2): 407–28.
Squires, Judith. 2005. "Rethinking Substantive Representation." European Consortium of Political Research, Budapest.
Strolovitch, Dara. 2007. *Affirmative Advocacy: Race, Class, and Gender in Interest Group Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Tamerius, Karin. 1995. "Sex, Gender, and Leadership in the Representation of Women." In *Gender Power, Leadership, and Governance*, ed. Georgia Duerst-Lahti and Rita Mae Kelly. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 93–112.
Verba, Sidney, Nancy Burns, and Kay Lehman Schlozman. 1997. "Knowing and Caring About Politics: Gender and Political Engagement." *Journal of Politics* 59 (4): 1051–72.
Warren, Mark, and Dario Castiglione. 2004. "The Transformation of Democratic Representation." *Democracy and Society* 2 (1): 5, 20–22.
Weldon, S. Laurel. 2002. "Beyond Bodies: Institutional Sources of Representation for Women in Democratic Policymaking." *Journal of Politics* 64 (4): 1153–74.
Williams, Melissa. 1998. *Voice, Trust, and Memory: Marginalized Groups and the Failings of Liberal Representation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Woolf, Virginia. 1966. *Three Guineas*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt.
Young, Iris Marion. 1986. "Deferring Group Representation." In *Nomos: Group Rights*, ed. Will Kymlicka and Ian Shapiro. New York: New York University Press, 349–76.
Young, Iris Marion. 1990. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Young, Iris Marion. 1994. "Gender as Seriality: Thinking about Women as a Social Collective." *Signs* 19 (3): 713–39.
Young, Iris Marion. 2000. *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Zerilli, Linda. 1998. "Doing without Knowing: Feminism's Politics of the Ordinary." *Political Theory* 26 (August): 435–58.
Zerilli, Linda M. G. 2005. *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.