

JULIA NITZ
AXEL R. SCHÄFER (Eds.)

Women and US Politics: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

Essays
in Honor of
Hans-Jürgen
Grabbe

American Studies ★ A Monograph Series

Volume 303



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ALFRED HORNUNG
ANKE ORTLEPP
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Preface

This book has its origins in a conference organized by the Institute of English and American Studies at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg and the Obama Institute for Transnational American Studies at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz on “Women and US Politics: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives.” In this three-day event, which took place in Lutherstadt Wittenberg in September 2017, academics from a wide range of disciplines and a variety of countries came together to investigate how US politics, past and present, were conceptualized and practiced in relation to gender.

The impetus for this international and interdisciplinary meeting at the historic location of the ancient University of Wittenberg (*Alma mater Leucorea*, 1502–1817) was not only the shared interest in matters related to gender and politics. The assembled scholars also wanted to honor Professor Hans-Jürgen



Christine Grabbe, Hans-Jürgen Grabbe, and Carmen Birkle at the conference opening, 25 Sept. 2017. © Carsten Hummel.

Grabbe, a distinguished colleague and friend, who had held the chair for Anglo-American Cultural Studies at Martin Luther University from 1994 to 2012. The conference (and this volume) thus present the collective scholarly efforts of an academic network established by Professor Grabbe during his time at Halle and at the Center for United States Studies

(Zentrum für USA-Studien, ZUSAS) in Wittenberg, as well as through his involvement with the European Association for American Studies, and his transatlantic scholarship.

In 1995, Hans-Jürgen Grabbe founded the Center for US Studies at the Leucorea Foundation, a non-profit organization affiliated with Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg. As director, he quickly established ZUSAS as a leading hub for the study of US society, culture, and politics in Europe. The Center offered seminars, teacher training courses, lectures, cultural events, and fellowships in Wittenberg for two decades. It put the town (already known as the place where, as one notorious student blooper has it, “Luther nailed 95 theologians to the wall”) on the map of American Studies

in Europe. The Center's mission, in keeping with Professor Grabbe's aspirations, was to reach beyond academic circles and to foster informed public conversations about the United States. From 2006 until 2014, the Center operated as a research institution of Martin Luther University, and, to this day, ZUSAS's successor, the Muhlenberg Center for American Studies, continues to promote research on American history, culture, politics, and society through international conferences, workshops, and continuing education seminars.

Hans-Jürgen Grabbe, an erudite and exacting scholar, dedicated his professional life to research on US history, German-American relations and transatlantic migration. His œuvre includes a path-breaking study of post-World War II German political parties and the US, *Unionsparteien, Sozialdemokratie und Vereinigte Staaten von Amerika 1945–1966* (1983), and his authoritative book on pre-Civil War transatlantic migration, titled *Vor der großen Flut: Die europäische Migration in die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika 1783–1820* (2001). Over the last few years he has also developed an interest in local history. His most current book, *Verleumdet, verfolgt, vertrieben: Der*



Axel R. Schäfer during his introductory address.
© Carsten Hummel.

Wittenberger Arzt Paul Bosse und seine Familie 1900–1949 (2019), recalls the ordeal of a family that was subject to the Nazi regime's relentless persecution of Jews and political opponents. In addition, Professor Grabbe is the author and editor of numerous essays and essay collections. He continues to edit the *American Studies Journal*, which provides a forum for intellectual debate about all aspects of life in the US, connecting the scholarly community with the broader public. Above and beyond his tireless efforts to promote Martin Luther University as a center for the study of the United States, he served for many years as chairman, treasurer, and executive director of the German Association for American Studies (DGfA), and as president and treasurer of the European Association for American Studies (EAAS).

In an autobiographical essay on the campus revolts of the 1970s at the University of Hamburg, he recalled that the Maoist Communist Party of West Germany had once declared him "an enemy of the people." Thankfully, the German state saw things rather differently—and for good reason. In 2008, Professor Grabbe was awarded the *Verdienstkreuz am Bande* (Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany) in recognition of his achievements in furthering academic relations at the national and European levels, German-American relations, and for his founding of ZUSAS.

This is the highest tribute Germany can pay to individuals for their political, economic, or intellectual accomplishments, and for social, charitable, or philanthropic work. The award was followed by the bestowal of an honorary membership in the German Association for American Studies in 2013, on the occasion of the organization's sixtieth anniversary, and the award of a "Certificate of Appreciation" from the US Department of State for "outstanding services in promoting mutual understanding between Germany and the USA through teaching, research and public relations."

The central themes of Hans-Jürgen Grabbe's research range from colonial history and the history of migration all the way to transatlantic pietism and the cultures of memory. Keen observers will note that among his publications are no dedicated studies on gender. However, this is precisely why the theme is more than appropriate for this volume. As a true scholar, Hans-Jürgen Grabbe was always eager to encourage research outside of his academic comfort zone and beyond his own fields of specialization. This is also part of his larger commitment to both intellectual acuity and the *vita activa* of the academic in this world. Skeptical of idolatries and dogmas, while not shying away from intense academic debate, he does not see judging the past as the foremost function of historians. Instead, following Hans-Georg Gadamer, he regards the "existential encounter" with historical experience as the primary goal and necessary prerequisite for critical analysis.



Julia Nitz during her end of conference remarks, 27 Sept. 2017. © Hans-Jürgen Grabbe. All unacknowledged photographs come from this source.

It is in this spirit that we present this volume of essays covering themes ranging from seventeenth-century politics to twenty-first-century campaigning, from Ann Hutchinson to Hillary Clinton, from Hannah Arendt to Dorothy Day, from Rosie the Riveter to "serial feminism," from African American life writing to Dis/ability Studies, from "Republican motherhood" to "equal opportunity emasculation," from crossdressing to "the right to bare arms," from women suffrage to post-feminism, and from photography to travel writing.

Finally, we would like to express our deep appreciation for the many people who worked tirelessly in the background and without whose expertise and commitment a volume of this kind would not have been possible. In particular, we would like to acknowledge Natasha Anderson, Carrie Andrews, Laura-Isabella Heitz, Torsten Kathke, and Katharina Weygold

for their excellent editorial support, Martina Kohl of the US Embassy in Berlin for her commitment to the conference, Carsten Hummel for creating

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Julia Nitz, Axel R. Schäfer
Halle and Mainz, April 2020

Women and US Politics: An Introduction

In her concession speech for the 2016 presidential election, Hillary Clinton lamented, “Now, I—I know—I know we have still not shattered that highest and hardest glass ceiling, but someday someone will and hopefully sooner than we might think right now” (“Hillary Clinton’s Full Concession Speech”). She was addressing American women on the subject that their high hopes for a woman president—as one of the ultimate goals of women’s struggle for political equality—had been disappointed yet again. However, as Debbie Walsh, director of the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) at Rutgers University in a press release on November 11, 2016, also stressed, “The results of Tuesday’s election show us that, when given the opportunity, Americans will vote for a woman for president.” After all, Hillary Clinton won the popular vote by more than three million ballots cast. Yet Walsh also added, “By no means has gender bias disappeared from the presidential playing field” (CAWP, “Popular Vote”).

Both Clinton’s concession speech and Walsh’s comment express two essential insights, first, that a pivotal moment in the history of women and US politics has been reached, and, second, that this moment needs to be understood in historical terms. *Women and US Politics: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* constitutes a scholarly response to this ongoing and perceived ‘crisis’ in gendered politics—in both the positive and negative sense of that term. Its main objective is to map research areas and patterns of analysis that help us understand current events related to women and US politics from a range of academic disciplines, foremost among them cultural history, literary and media studies, and political science. It brings together leading scholars from Germany, Great Britain, Greece, the Netherlands, Poland and the United States who investigate how US politics past and present have been and are conceptualized and practiced in relation to gender. As outlined in more detail below, the volume is part of a concerted academic effort, ranging across academic fields and geographical boundaries, to widen the scope of women and politics studies.

Women and politics research conducted in the past fifty years reveals a direct correlation between women’s de facto political engagement and scholarly discussions about their political activities. From the 1970s onwards, the

number of women nominees for US Congress and statewide elective executive offices has slowly but steadily increased, though with occasional lapses and leaps. The table below provides an overview of female nominees by the two major political parties (R = Republican; D = Democrat) to illustrate this development.

Year	Senate	House
1970	1 (0 D, 1 R)	25 (15 D, 10 R)
1980	5 (2 D, 3 R)	52 (27 D, 19 R)
1990	8 (2 D, 6 R)	69 (39 D, 30 R)
2000	6 (4 D, 2 R)	122 (80 D, 42 R)
2010	15 (9 D, 6 R)	138 (91 D, 47 R)
2016	16 (12 D, 4 R)	167 (120 D, 47 R)
2018	23 (15 D, 8 R)	235 (183 D, 52 R)
2020 (estimate)	47 (31 D, 16 R)	327 (202 D, 125 R)

Fig. 1: Major Party Women Nominees for the US Senate and US House of Representatives, Numbers Provided by the Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University. (CAWP)

As can be seen, the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries witnessed a steady rise of women nominees, culminating in a female candidate winning the Democratic Party's nomination for presidency in 2016 and a subsequent surge in women running for and being elected to congressional office in 2018. That year also brought hitherto unachievable successes in minority women gaining access to electoral politics: Sharice Davids (Kansas) and Deb Haaland (New Mexico) became the first Native American women elected to Congress; Ilhan Omar (Minnesota) and Rashida Tlaib (Michigan) became the first Muslim women elected to Congress; and Michele Lujan Grisham (New Mexico) became the first Democratic woman of color elected as a state governor nationwide. Currently, a total of 127 women serve in the US Congress—26 women in the Senate and 101 women in the House of Representatives. Ninety women hold statewide elective executive posts, and the proportion of women in state legislatures is 28.9 percent (GAWP).

After record numbers of women were elected to Congress in 1992, soon dubbed “the year of the woman,” CAWP organized a three-day conference to develop an agenda for the study of women and American politics in the twenty-first century. In 2003, Susan J. Carroll published the revised and updated results of these proceedings in *Women and American Politics*, in which she argues that “major shifts in the political climate and changes in the political context also have raised new questions for women and politics

researchers” (2). While in the previous twenty-five years women and politics studies had contributed substantially to an understanding of women’s participation in American electoral politics, many questions remained, such as the gender-related impact of female public officials on society and electoral offices, gender differences in voting behavior, party identification, and other political attitudes and actions. Hence, the Center’s affiliates suggested expanding the concept of the political, diversifying our understanding of ‘women,’ and applying alternative and varied methods of analysis from fields other than political science. They also recommended bridging the gap between scholars and practitioners (1–32).

In the subsequent decade, this call for a broader and more inclusive approach to women and politics was taken up by a small number of scholars, such as Lynne Ford in her *Encyclopedia of Women and American Politics* (2008) and Doris Weatherford in *Women in American Politics* (2012). A plethora of publications on women and American politics appeared in the wake of Hillary Clinton’s campaign to be the Democratic nominee for president against Barack Obama. Publications again peaked when Clinton ran for president and lost to Donald Trump in 2016.

The immediate academic response to Clinton’s run for the Democratic nomination in 2008 was a range of books on her personality, her campaigning style, and her public as well as her media perception. Joanne Bamberger’s *Love Her, Love Her Not: The Hillary Paradox* (2015) and Shawn J. Parry-Giles’s *Hillary Clinton in the News: Gender and Authenticity in American Politics* (2014), for example, explore these aspects. These works were accompanied by studies on the history of women and the presidency, including Justin S. Vaughn and Lilly J. Goren’s *Women and the White House: Gender, Popular Culture, and Presidential Politics* (2013), and discussions of media bias, such as Erika Falk’s *Women for President: Media Bias in Nine Campaigns* (2008/2010).

In the aftermath of Clinton’s unsuccessful run for the presidency, the academic and public focus temporarily shifted to depictions of gender and sex in (presidential) politics. Notable books include Caroline Heldman et al., *Sex and Gender in the 2016 Presidential Election* (2018), Jackson Katz, *Man Enough? Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, and the Politics of Presidential Masculinity* (2016), and Christine Kray et al, *Nasty Women and Bad Hom-bres: Gender and Race in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election* (2018). Such publications catered to an immediate need of the public and academia to try to make sense of what had just transpired and to assess it in terms of prevalent notions of gender, sex, and representational biases. Such discussions might have unduly foregrounded the gender factor in Clinton’s defeat.

After all, Sarah Palin had been a resoundingly popular female Vice Presidential candidate in 2008, adored by Republican voters who disliked and

hence didn't vote for Hillary Clinton in 2016. Yet the highly charged gender rhetoric accompanying Democratic and Republican election campaigns, as well as their media coverage, did call for a reassessment of politics and gender. The flood of publications on women and politics that inundated the American market after 2016 reveals a more complex engagement with women's history in general and an intensified interest in the historical dimensions of the intersecting realms of gender, sex, and politics. It seems that scholars are finally responding to the agenda on women and politics set by CAWP over a decade earlier.¹

The range of themes and activities examined in the last four years on the subject of women's political engagement testifies to an evolving notion among scholars of what constitutes politics. Instead of focusing only on electoral issues, researchers are examining a swathe of public activities women have engaged in and ask in what ways these activities can be viewed as political.

In addition to an increase in the breadth and multiplicity of what are considered women's political activities, there has also been a surge in the variety of methods and perspectives applied to the study of women and politics. In their introduction to *Women and American Politics*, Susan J. Carroll and Debra J. Liebowitz criticize the scientific epistemology and methodology that governed political science-based engagement with women as androcentric and as too reliant on quantitative data (3, 10). Recent research makes room for a greater range of scholarly approaches, by, for example, giving a voice to women politicians themselves, as do Kelly Dietmar, Kira Sanbonmatsu, and Susan J. Carroll for congresswomen in *A Seat at the Table* (2018). Others, such as Susan Bordo in *Untangling the Political Forces: Media Culture, and Assault on Fact that Decided the 2016 Election* (2018), focus on media as a political force, while Feminista Jones in *How Black Feminists Are Changing the World from the Tweets to the Streets* (2019) engages with media as tools for political activism.

While the term 'women' in most women and politics research still largely refers to Anglo women, scholars are increasingly aware of the limitations of this approach. In turn, they have begun to recognize the political activities of women of color, as well as to take into account the intersectional dynamics of race, class, religion and gender. Works on black women and politics and, to a lesser extent, the studies on other minority women, are indicative of this new engagement. There are, however, very few works that pay homage to

¹ A thematically ordered bibliography of studies on women and US politics published since 2016 is provided at the end of this collection. It does not claim completeness but serves to highlight current trends in women and politics research.

the diverse but intersecting experiences of women of color, identifying differences and similarities in the ways they partake in and are affected by politics. Rare exceptions in this regard are Wanda V. Parham-Payne's *The Intersection of Race and Gender in National Politics* (2017), Rebekah Herick's *Minorities and Representation in American Politics* (2017), and Imaobong D. Umoren's *Race Women Internationalists* (2018).

Umoren's exploration of American, Martinican, and Jamaican women's participation in global freedom struggles pays tribute to yet another paradigm set out by CAWP in their 1994/2003 women and politics research agenda, namely, geographical and historical comparisons that would increase our understanding of political strategizing across national and temporal contexts and highlight culturally specific parameters.

Offering a survey of current research on women and politics, the present volume highlights the recent diversification of the field. As Ellen Carol DuBois and Lynn Dumenil envisioned in their seminal study on American history, *Through Women's Eyes* (2016), US women's historians and feminist scholars succeeded in creating a "more expansive sense of the political dimension of women's historical experience [...] that looks beyond the formal electoral arena to other sorts of collective efforts to change society, alter the distribution of power between groups, create and govern important institutions, and shape public policy (xxxii)."

The volume joins this effort to create more elaborate and sophisticated ways of conducting women and politics research, participating in what Anne Firor Scott calls "making the invisible woman visible" and aligning itself with the CAWP-agenda for the twenty-first century. It follows Carroll's inductive approach of defining politics via women's activities rather than through a pre-set notion of what is properly considered political engagement (*Women and American Politics* 13–15). It offers historically and culturally specific frameworks of analysis that open up new insights into the way women were politically active in a myriad of ways and locations.

The book is structured along thematic lines, proceeding from historical case studies of the intersection of gender and political causes via investigations into the politics of representation to explorations of women's political writings and the politics of women's writing. It is admittedly focused on Anglo woman, but offers two important contributions that critically examine black women's political engagement. The collection's overall strength is located in its historical scope—with case studies starting in early America and ending with the 2016 presidential election—and in its variety of methodological frameworks, ranging from media and literary analyses to political theory and life writing.

Section 1, "Gender and Political Activism in US History," starts out with Marianne S. Woceck's "Women in Early America—Barred from Politics but

with Influence,” a discussion of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century American women’s potential for leadership through the lens of entrepreneurial prowess more generally. She challenges the belief that in early America few women took on leadership and entrepreneurial roles by emphasizing that talented women developed and carried out such roles outside of male-dominated definitions of positional power and thus often went unnoticed. Her aim is to offer a better understanding of women’s impact in a society in which systemic barriers, culture, and tradition prevented them from assuming roles in the public sphere. She seeks to broaden the discussion of leadership by challenging male-focused definitions of positional power. Through the example of nine influential early American women, Wokeck illustrates the myriad ways in which they functioned as (political) leaders despite the many constraints of household, family, and legal dependency.

Manfred Berg shares Wokeck’s interest in the historical negotiation of the political for women. “A Vitality Necessary War Measure: Woodrow Wilson’s Conversion to Woman Suffrage” shows how through calculated political actions suffragists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century won over a Southern-born president for their cause. Berg examines the reasons for Wilson’s self-proclaimed conversion on the question of woman suffrage, and shows how many traditionalists like him eventually embraced the idea of women voting because they came to believe that women’s political empowerment would support the social order rather than upset it.

Sabine Sielke, and Philip John Davies take us forward to more recent events with a focus on gender and political leadership and on gendered leadership representations. They are interested in the gender dynamics that dominated the 2016 presidential election, connecting them to gender-specific representational paradigms, and placing their findings within historical traditions.

In “‘Stronger Together’? The Seriality of Feminism, the Gender of Misogyny, and the Case of Hillary Clinton,” Sabine Sielke argues that “the presidency is a truly ‘masculinist’ institution.” Taking the historical defeat of Hillary Clinton as an example, she explores why, in a country that saw the rise of an influential women’s movement and the election of ever more women to high political offices, the presidency remained a male domain. Sielke suggests that misogyny and the persistence of contempt for women are recurring elements in US politics. In her view, both the “seriality of feminism” and the recurring discrimination and violation of women are part and parcel of a compromised American democracy that underlie the current rightwing populist upsurge.

Phil Davies’s “The 2016 Election: Post-truth, Post-feminism, or just Post-Clinton” is also concerned with voter attitudes in connection with the 2016

presidential campaigns and election results. He takes issue with the inflationary use of the term “unprecedented” in media and expert analyses of the events, viewing the badge as an excuse for the failure to predict and explain Trump’s victory. Like his fellow contributors to this section of the book, he foregrounds gender-related issues as factors in Clinton’s defeat. Davies emphasizes that male candidates are only expected to fulfill expectations of masculinity, while female candidates must exhibit masculine characteristics and at the same time remain feminine. However, he makes clear that party allegiance still directs the decisions of most voters and points out that there is no substantial electoral bloc that bases its decision primarily on a candidate’s sex.

Section II, “The Iconography and Visual Representation of Gender in Media and Politics,” starts off with Volker Depkat’s “Male Politicians in Women’s Clothes: Reflections on a Visual Narrative in the Early Republic,” an exploration of mid-nineteenth-century political cartoons depicting male politicians in women’s clothes. Comparing the visual grammar and communicative functions of cartoons showing Confederate President Jefferson Davis and US President William Henry Harrison, he illustrates how female attire on politicians could simultaneously denote weakness and cowardice as well as moral integrity and courage. Placing these depictions in the broader context of the expansion of US democracy and the politicization of the domestic sphere since the early Republic, Depkat highlights the fluidity of gender roles in mid-nineteenth-century politics.

Visual grammar also plays a key role in Frank Mehring’s “Rosies across Ideologies: Intermedial and Transnational Approaches to an American Female Icon,” a comparative analysis of the propagandistic representation of women in the United States and Germany during and after World War II. Mehring finds that the war imagery published in the press of both nations was strikingly similar. In both cases it created a ‘Rosie the Riveter’ type of woman, promoting the view that women could do a man’s job and still retain their femininity. In American post-war memory culture, the Rosie the Riveter image came to denote female self-empowerment and a feminist agenda, eroding a muscular and masculine patriarchal war propaganda. In the aesthetic framing of post-war German women, no such shift was possible, however, because German women’s contribution to the war effort came to be understood mostly as complicity with the Nazi war machinery and the Holocaust.

In “Michelle Obama and the Power of Representation,” Eva Boesenberg joins the discussion on the visual politics of American womanhood by focusing on Michelle Obama’s self-representations as First Lady from 2009 through 2016. Drawing on dis/ability critical race studies, she illustrates how Obama made physical fitness a feminine characteristic in an attempt to

counter the ascription of ‘dis/ability’ to Black bodies and to undermine binary understandings of sexuality. In Boesenberg’s view, this reveals Obama’s deft challenges to gendered and racialized discourses that have historically limited a First Lady’s freedom of action and expression. At the same time, she raises the issue in what ways this break with hegemonic notions of femininity—while empowering for some—might also marginalize others who are not able-bodied.

Carmen Birkle’s “‘Yes She Can’? The Hillary Paradox and American TV Series” focuses on the role of sex and gender notions in American TV shows that center on career women in politics. She analyzes how TV series, such as *Commander in Chief*, *Veep*, and *House of Cards*, mirror and reinforce the public perception of the presidency as a masculine institution and thereby contributed to Clinton’s defeat in the presidential election. Overall, Birkle emphasizes that society and gender issues cannot be understood without consideration of their popular culture. She contends that TV series form part and parcel of socially produced art that reflects as well as criticizes the culture it emerges from and thereby helps to shape people’s attitudes in a variety of intended and unintended ways.

The diachronic exploration of the visual politics of gender in this section concludes with Brigitte Georgi-Findlay’s “Female Politicians in Contemporary American Television Series.” She examines a wide selection of series that aired between 2005 and the fall of 2017 and featured leading or aspiring female politicians. In her reading, the shows portray a sexist and clannish Washington that tries to keep women out. At the same time, they critically engage with the gendered expectations that male and female politicians face. Viewing the TV series as an effort to construct an alternative political history of the US, Georgi-Findlay nonetheless leaves open for discussion the question whether they promote female political agency or reinforce existing power structures in a male-dominated political world.

The final section of this volume, “Writing the Political in Women’s Fiction and Non-Fiction,” is concerned with fictional, autobiographical, and theoretical writings and the politics enacted and promoted in such literary efforts. Theodora Tsimpouki, in “Gender Politics and Architectural Space in Edith Wharton’s *The Age of Innocence*,” explores the conjunction of literary realism, gender, and architecture. She analyzes Wharton’s Pulitzer award-winning 1920 novel in the context of the author’s work on architecture and decoration, with a focus on the role of interior design and architectural space. Tsimpouki maintains that Wharton, by engaging with architecture, decorative art, and depicting empowered women who create and design space, challenges traditional divisions of private and public space along gender and class lines. She contends that Wharton illustrated the characters’ female agency in architectural formulations “[seeking] to defy gender barriers and

manipulate female opportunities available in the changing urban environment of New York.” She thereby reevaluates previous interpretations of Wharton’s conservative politics.

Alfred Hornung’s “Charmian Kittredge London’s *Our Hawaii*” engages in a discussion of Charmian London’s political work as a life writer. Her autobiographical account *Our Hawaii* (1917) documents Charmian and her husband Jack London’s Hawaiian experiences in the first two decades of the twentieth century that led to his turning away from macho white supremacist notions to more egalitarian, socialist, and ecological convictions. Hornung outlines how Charmian London takes credit for this reformation of character in her autobiographical work, and how she finds her own voice as an author.

In “*From Union Square to Rome: Revisiting the Religious Radicalism of Dorothy Day* (1897–1980),” Hans Bak continues the analyses of women’s life writing by taking a closer look at Catholic social activist Dorothy Day’s autobiographical work, *From Union Square to Rome* (1938), in which Day justifies her conversion to Catholicism to socialist and communist comrades. In a close reading of Day’s life writing, Bak shows that she conceived of her move from radicalism to religion not in terms of a break, but as a natural reconciliation of her struggle against oppression and social injustice with religious concepts of love and mercy. Bak also illustrates how Day struggled with living up to her political vision of “Christian communism” and pacifist creed against attacks from official authorities of Church and State throughout her life.

In “Refugee Blues: Hannah Arendt, Statelessness, and the Limits of Identity,” Andrew Gross undertakes a study of Arendt’s political writings, particularly her controversial critique of the concept of universal human rights and mandated school desegregation in the 1960s. Countering accusations that Arendt privately harbored racist feelings, Gross locates the origins of her stance in both her refugee experience and her conceptual separation of the social from the political sphere. In his view, Arendt combined a deep faith in American republicanism, with its emphasis on citizenship and checks and balances, with a deep fear, expressed in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, in the obliteration of the distinction between the private and the political realms. In turn, she formulates a defense of private social choices while advocating civic equality: The state should not mandate desegregation just like it should not mandate (but sanction) mixed marriages. Juxtaposing Arendt’s stance with her friend W.H. Auden’s poem “Refugee Blues,” Gross suggests that the poet, while sharing many of Arendt’s positions, offers an important corrective by recognizing that second-class citizenship is often created by social practices. Concepts of heteronormative marriage, as well as separate schooling, thus undermine republican principles.

Jerzy Durczak's "Images, Words, and Politics: Sally Mann's *Hold Still*" returns to life writing and visual art in its discussion of US photographer Sally Mann's memoir *Hold Still*. Durczak delineates her politics of self-representation and discovers a narrative of transformation from apolitical artist to politically engaged photographer. In particular, he explores the controversies around her 1990 exhibition *Immediate Family*. The exhibition and the album included photographs of her three prepubescent children in the nude. Durczak also examines Mann's photographs in her book *Deep South*, which showcase her transition from an artist hardly interested in politics and social questions to her new approach of taking pictures that take into account the history of slavery and racism.

Finally, Gabriele Linke, in "The Personal and the Political in Selected African American Congresswomen's Memoirs," studies former black congresswomen's memoirs. On the one hand, she identifies shared narrative and thematic features, including references to slavery, Civil Rights activism, structural racism and sexism, and fighting an oppressive system. On the other hand, her analysis shows that a prototype of the black congresswoman's memoir does not exist. Instead, the manifold ways of African American life writing are revealed.

Taken together, *Women and US Politics: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* aims to integrate women's political activities into discussions of US politics, instead of perceiving them as intriguing adjuncts to 'real politics.' Women's political history is both a compelling story and a fertile arena for further academic exploration. Granted, the collection barely moves away from a focus on privileged women. Further studies must continue to bring ethnic and racial minorities and wage-earning women from the margins to the center of such discussions. Nonetheless, these essays create a more expansive sense of the political dimensions of US women's historical experience and move away from focusing solely on electoral politics. They offer a range of case studies on women's political activities, on women's political thought, and on gender politics in historical perspective. Such explorations highlight the social, ideological, and representational mechanisms and traditions that contributed to Hillary Clinton's defeat. They might also help us understand the poor showing of progressive Democrat Elizabeth Warren, whose campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination has just ended (on March 5, 2020).

At the time of writing, the 2020 presidential election is coming near, and the importance of gender is once again very apparent. Six women started out in the Democratic primaries, and just two of them were among the contenders as the field narrowed. Just this week, both Senator Amy Klobuchar (Minnesota) and Senator Elizabeth Warren (Massachusetts) dropped out,

leaving two straight white septuagenarian men vying for the party's nomination to stand against the white male incumbent president. Already in the few days since ending her campaign, Warren has received a great deal of media scrutiny, with many pointing out the continued gender barrier, and arguing that a man with similar qualifications, ideas, eloquence, and resounding intellect would most likely be at the top of the ticket right now (see Cottle; Reston). Nonetheless, the fact that six women ran in the Democratic primaries, and that two of them made it quite far, also sparks hope for the possibility that Americans may soon shatter that highest and hardest of glass ceilings.

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I

Gender and Political Activism

MARIANNE S. WOKECK

Women in Early America—Barred from Politics but with Influence



In early North America women had no formal role in politics because they lacked the authority that is an integral part of any official and public position. The rate of progress along the line toward women's participation in politics, including the presidency, has not only been slow, but has been marked repeatedly by tension. If there is a connection between women's lives and the influence some achieved in early America with those that typify women currently in US politics, the line is tentative and faint, inviting further investigation.

The focus on women in politics in recent times is heavily indebted to political science and sociology.¹ When pursuing inquiries into the political roles women may have played in earlier periods students and scholars have to rely also on findings in areas such as law, education, economics, and the development of particular professions. A preliminary examination of a small group of early American women may offer yet another, complementary approach: Using the lens of leadership qualities, the role of women who excelled and were recognized as entrepreneurs and leaders in the domestic sphere, promises a better understanding of the impact of women in a society in which systemic barriers as well as culture and tradition prevented women from taking on public roles, in particular those with positional authority.

This essay focuses on select seventeenth- and eighteenth-century American women as examples for leadership and, relatedly, also entrepreneurship. The choice of leadership and entrepreneurship as indicators for outstanding

¹ In the 1970s women's history was becoming recognized—albeit not always respected—because it produced innovative scholarship and attracted students, both critical for any new discipline or field for becoming rooted first and then for its survival in the competitive academic environment in the United States. Since then interest in women's and gender studies has increased and developed and also splintered into further sub-categories.

accomplishments is largely anachronistic for women in early America. The organizational and legal structures of the institutions in which women could participate and act limited the kinds of engagement open to them. Even though early American women, with very few exceptions, were dependent on men and, therefore, lacked authority, an exploration of their gender-constrained roles and actions that were influential merits examination. With a focus on influence, women's impact can be described in terms of leadership characteristics and entrepreneurial initiatives. Such an exploration leads to interesting questions, with emphasis less on what opportunities were missing for women but what options were present, albeit hidden and, importantly, with the potential for future translation into political action and much later also into holding positions in government.

Entrepreneurship is much sought after and highly prized in our world. Entrepreneurs are characterized as people growing great ideas, typically by starting enterprises that require significant initiative and carry substantial risks. Their success depends on leadership, the ability and activity of leading a group or an organization, which business schools define as a quality that cannot be taught but learned and enhanced through developing talent, skill training, and mentoring.² Over the course of centuries this understanding of leadership has been rooted in and shaped by examples of outstanding men in government and the military and also in business, science, and the arts. Their mark in and on the public has been recorded, recognized, and commemorated. As a result, leadership has become culturally defined as masculine. Excepting royal women such as Queen Anne in the eighteenth century and Queen Victoria in the nineteenth century, women did not seem to fit that masculinist leadership profile.

The institution of marriage, closely tied to a family's acquisition and control of property, and therefore the status, security, and opportunities that came with it, set the parameters within which women lived and could act. Their dependence on fathers first, then on husbands, and, if widowed, often on sons allowed them to manage households, educate children, servants, and slaves, cultivate and leverage kinship and patronage connections, and engage charitably with local communities and congregations. Clearly, women had much to occupy them and to provide them with opportunities for entrepreneurship and leadership. Those opportunities were comparable but neither

² Even a cursory Google search of business schools and programs reveals the pervasive lure of "entrepreneurship" as a teaching objective and learning outcome. Even general education goals in professional and graduate programs other than business have embraced entrepreneurship and included it in their curricula.

similar nor equal to the circumstances associated with traits and behaviors of entrepreneurship and leadership in men.

The distinction between the domestic or private sphere and the public sphere acknowledges that leadership and entrepreneurship translate differently for women and men. The domestic arena has been considered appropriate for women and, when characterizing women's influence in gendered terms, the domestic has been associated with "feminine" qualities. The prerogative of having the authority to act in the public sphere was seen as one of men, and men only, and cultural norms have rated those activities as "masculine."³ Scale presents yet another dimension for differentiating between the authority and places of action for men and women. The influence of women in the domestic realm with regard to leadership was small relative to men in the public sphere. As a result, the impact of entrepreneurial women with leadership qualities was limited.

Similarly, the ways by which their activities and engagement were noted, remembered, and recognized, even celebrated, as outstanding and lasting were inconsequential. If the places and people affected, if not transformed, by the leadership of men were represented with a large circle, women's spaces and opportunities for exhibiting and modeling leadership would be drawn as a relatively small one. And even as those circles overlapped in certain parts it was typically in layered fashion, with female leaders in the background—expressed differently in the language characterizing their role, more often as helpmeet rather than partner. There is no question that those differences in scale are critical. A focus on entrepreneurship and leadership and their impact on prevailing cultural terms calls attention to some of the asymmetry associated with men and women that is based on the difference of scale for their respective actions and significance.

Questions concerning the nature of leadership have a long history, as a quick Google search and Wikipedia check make obvious. Depending on perspective and interest, definitions and descriptions of leadership and what makes a leader are many and range broadly. They include the example of George Washington's military genius, the many announcements of leadership training that business schools and self-help organizations offer as well as the theories that psychology and philosophy have developed. Some such attempts at classification reduce the characteristics of leadership to an essential five; others offer more than twenty. My own collection from those sites and suggestions is large and can be grouped into numbers closer to a

³ The widespread stereotypical assumption that leaders are men is underscored by the recent report of a study about leadership: Heather Murphy, "Picture a Leader. Is She a Woman?" in the online edition of the *New York Times*, 16 March 2018.

total of forty. Going beyond a mere checklist, a grouping of those characteristics, variously captured as adjectives, verbs, and nouns, yields a pattern of four different components. 1) Given traits, typically expressed as an adjective; 2) character, that is, particular values and convictions, most often described in terms of nouns; 3) acquired skills—also mostly nouns; and 4) exhibited behavior, usually indicating action and therefore in verb form. Not surprisingly, assignment of leadership components to those four categories is somewhat fluid and their distribution is uneven. The requisite traits of leaders, foremost talent and intelligence, are few. The nouns used to describe character are the most plentiful, while particular skills and behaviors associated with or requisite for leadership are roughly even and moderate in number.

An attempt to align the components of leadership—traits, character, skills, and behavior—with how they would be manifest in men and women and how they would be judged according to gendered cultural norms yields a complex pattern. Adjectives that connote particular traits of a leader do not differ between men and women in general but being talented and intelligent has been judged traditionally according to sex and, therefore, in culturally gendered terms. The conviction that women were inferior not only physically but also intellectually was near universal and generally accepted by men and women alike. Such a view of sex-determined abilities has persisted. As a result of this belief, the actions and arenas in which talent and intelligence could become manifest and be expressed and developed have constrained women.⁴

In the North Atlantic world of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries those limitations, namely the unquestioned priority of familial duties, affected the ways in which exceptionally talented and intelligent women could gain the self-knowledge and, therefore, the self-confidence necessary to pursue and develop their gifts. Even those who were extroverted, with a naturally positive attitude, and who were secure in support for their endeavors—be it writing, music, or painting—typically showcased their artistry in small circles and through men as intermediaries. By comparison, men did not encounter restrictions of stage and audience, and more importantly, they could develop their talents, knowledge, and abilities with the support of role models, mentors, patrons, and supporters, not counting the assistance from mothers, wives, and sisters, who enabled them to focus on the visions that

⁴ Sheryl Sandberg, *Leaning In: Women Work, and the Will to Lead* (2013), a manifesto of what women need to do to triumph in the male-dominated work place was published five years ago, the number one best seller in economic history, judged variously as powerful, naïve, and irrelevant.

drove them. In other words, exceptionally gifted women, even under favorable circumstances, rarely had the time, guidance, and fortune to develop fully over the long-term. Furthermore, the structure of society and culturally determined expectations combined to limit their places for learning from and teaching others to opportunities within their families and local communities. This meant that the imprints they could leave were small and their accomplishments were rarely known outside of those circles and hence publicly neither acknowledged nor recognized.

Given those circumstances, the paucity of evidence in the surviving records about the ventures of outstanding women is not surprising. When the places of their operations were small and the number of people who observed such undertakings or were affected by them was very limited, lack of knowledge by a broader audience or by posterity has resulted in underscoring the perception that there were few women endowed with leadership traits rather than that talented and intelligent women had to find ways and places to develop their gifts and ambitions that were different, often unnoticed, from those available to men.

The values and convictions that are associated with marks of leadership are highly gendered, traditionally reflecting those characteristics that have been linked to the examples of famous men, based on the experience and conviction that men are destined to lead—in the military, economy, and society, including politics. When women were recognized for having the same kinds of values and convictions that characterized leadership in men, they were rooted in different experiences and expression, and evaluated in distinctly gendered ways. The spheres of family, congregation, and community delineated women's activities and engagement by which their beliefs, morals, and ethics were expressed. When female leaders breached the boundaries of these spheres in order to expand into a more public realm, the assessment of their power and strength of convictions tended to be negative.

Similarly, integrity, honesty, humility, generosity, and empathy are characteristics that can be assigned to men and women but only in men are they associated with leadership. For women they were values expected as part of their roles in the family and community. Conscientiousness, commitment, and courage, and especially passion and vision, are “masculine” character attributes of leadership. Women may be recognized for being committed to and conscientious in the exercise of their traditional roles but those were rarely equated with circumstances that required or afforded them with opportunities to be courageous, passionate, or visionary. When wisdom is identified as characteristic of leadership, it is not necessarily linked to experience at a certain age but rather based on a holistic, even reverential judgment, often by others. It has remained distinctly gendered with regard to the

spheres in which men and women can act to demonstrate wisdom and be recognized for it.

When it is accepted that leadership depends on given traits and is based on certain chosen values and convictions, the acquisition of particular skills contributes to the development of leaders. Leadership skills are divided into those that are formally acquired (today in many business school programs and courses) and those that are learned and developed informally. Traditionally, men had opportunities to acquire leadership skills, ranging from service in the armed forces to climbing the achievement ladder in the financial sector. Women lacked access to those venues for gaining expertise and advancement. Instead, the areas and circumstances in which women acquired and demonstrated such skills were typically private, not public.⁵ Today it is widely accepted that many of those skills—which are often characterized as “masculine”—are tied to management, typically in business, foremost among them problem-solving, strategic perspective, communication, competence, focus, determination, and self-discipline.

It is a truism that there have been relatively few female leaders because, traditionally, women have lacked, even been denied, the independent status and agency expected and required to strive for and achieve positional leadership and the authority associated with it. Leaders, good and bad, have provided the data set from which the characteristics of leadership have been extracted—often implicitly with the assumption that imitating and developing the right ones appropriately will make for success. What can this mosaic of general leadership characteristics contribute to the examination of the role of select outstanding Western women in early America?

The lives of extraordinary women who gained and exercised influence and also left footprints in the record provide some insights.⁶ It bears

⁵ The often binary modes of adherence to and action in public versus private spheres in the lives of women have been a long-standing focus and issue in early American women's history. See, for example, Mary Beth Norton, *Separated by Their Sex: Women in Public and Private in the Colonial Atlantic World* (2011).

⁶ Historians have learned a lot, mining large numbers and varied kinds of data, in efforts to retrieve better knowledge and tell of the lives of women in early America, including the experiences and fates of native and African American women. As a consequence, the literature has grown. Following are three examples focused on the second half of the eighteenth-century: one a collection of essays, Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Women in the Age of the American Revolution* (Charlottesville: Published for the United States Capitol Historical Society by the University Press of Virginia, 1989); another is a narrative about the role of women, the third a collection of documents in the words of women: Joan R. Gundersen, *Useful to the World: Women in Revolutionary America, 1740–1790* (2006 ed.); Cynthia A. Kierner, *Southern Women in Revolution, 1776–1800: Personal and Political Narratives* (1998).

remembering that in most cases their legal status was that of coverture, thereby binding them to the protection and authority of husbands—basis and demonstration of patriarchy and paternalism that was rarely questioned or challenged.⁷

In the seventeenth century, life for most white women in North America was a struggle, both for survival and for making a living under challenging circumstances far from what they knew in Europe. I chose three women, Ann Marbury Hutchinson (c. 1591–1643), Margaret Brent (1601–ca. 1670), and Maria van Cortlandt van Rensselaer (1645–1689) to represent three different cohorts in three different colonies. Ann Marbury Hutchinson, of the pioneering generation, is included in all American college textbooks (Mays 187–90).⁸ Born of modest background in England, she married well and her family became one of the founding and elite families of the Puritan Massachusetts Bay Colony. Skilled as a midwife and nurse, she was a woman of keen intellect and strong convictions, who challenged the authority of the ministers with her preaching and charisma. Convicted of heresy and excommunicated, she was forced to leave Boston, move through Indian country to Rhode Island and from there, to Dutch Long Island, where she and the five youngest of her fourteen children were massacred. Her leadership profile was remarkable with regard to intelligence and confidence, the values and convictions she held, and the requisite skills for playing a prominent role in her family and community, in effect calling into question the established order of male dominance.

Margaret Brent, who belonged to the subsequent generation of pioneering women, provides a very different example of leadership (Mays 58–59). Born into a wealthy Catholic family in England, she migrated to Maryland where she obtained and managed a sizable estate as a single woman. Although it was not uncommon for women in England's landed families to take over as

⁷ According to William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765), the definition of coverture states, that once married, "the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the ... legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage" (qtd. in Johnson Lewis). See also Dorothy A. Mays, *Women in Early America: Struggle, Survival, and Freedom in a New World* (2004), 91–92 (coverture). While the definition seems clear, actual cases could be complicated as is apparent in Kacy Dowd Tillman's article "Women Left Behind: Female Loyalism, Coverture, and Grace Growden Galloway's Empire of Self," (141–55, esp. 143). And, Joy Day Buel and Richard Buel Jr., *The Way of Duty: A Woman and Her Family in Revolutionary America* (1984); see also the review by Sarah F. McMahon about the historical documentary movie, *Mary Silliman's War*, based on the book.

⁸ Please note that the organization of the women, terms, and concepts covered in Mays's book is in alphabetical order and that each entry includes a section on "Further Readings."