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# WOMEN AS OUTSIDERS: A GROWING DIVERSITY IN PUBLIC OPINION

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Women may be regarded as outsiders in American politics for several intersecting reasons. First, and perhaps most obviously, they remain woefully underrepresented among the political elites in the United States. Even after the "Year of the Woman" in the 1992 national elections, for example, women held only about a tenth of the seats in Congress -- one of the lowest rates among advanced industrial societies -- and a fifth in the state legislatures (Cook et al, 1994; Darcy et. al. , 1987). Second, at least until the 1980s, women participated in mass political activities (e.g., voting) at somewhat lower rates than men did (Baxter and Lansing, 1980; Clark and Clark, 1986; Welch, 1977). These two indicators of being "outside the central polity," in turn, were explained by a more fundamental third factor -- gender role socialization that oriented women to passive and home-oriented activities. Social trends during the 1970s and 1980s altered this picture somewhat. The rise of the women's movement and women's increasing entrance into the workforce eroded many barriers that traditional values and socialization patterns had created (Elshtain, 1981; Klein, 1984; Sapiro, 1983; Sinclair, 1983). As a result, gender differences in mass political participation narrowed greatly; and the number of women in office increased gradually but, in cumulative terms, quite impressively (Baxter and Lansing, 1980; Darcy et al, 1987).

The attenuation of the first three facets of women's status as political outsiders was accompanied, perhaps paradoxically, by the growth of a fourth aspect. This was the "gender gap" that emerged for the first time in voting and issue attitudes during the 1980s. Previously, there had been little difference in the political preferences of men and women on most substantive issues. Following the election of Ronald Reagan, women began to take more liberal positions on a wide variety of issues and to vote in a more liberal manner than men (Bendyna and Lake, 1994; Clark and Clark, 1993 & 1994; Kenski, 1988; Mueller, 1988; Poole and Zeigler, 1985; Stoper, 1989). The conventional explanation for this was that, as they became more aware of political life, women began to apply distinctively feminine values,

such as compassion and a stress on interpersonal relations, to the political sphere in what might be termed a rise in "gender consciousness" (Carroll, 1982; Conover, 1988; Gilligan, 1982; Klein, 1984; Rinehart, 1992). The growing prominence of the gender gap, however, diverted attention from the fact that the gap between traditional women and feminists was growing as well, as denoted by the surprising lack of a gender gap on abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment (Sears and Huddie, 1990; Shapiro and Mahajan, 1986), suggesting that both groups of women might be considered as outsiders.

Thus, by the early 1990s, public opinion data provided several pieces of evidence that women remained outsiders in U.S. politics and that several disparate groups might qualify for this rubric. With public opinion data from the 1992 National Election Survey conducted by the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research, this paper tests the hypothesis that women are still outsiders. We begin by examining the gender gap on alienation from the political system, general ideological positions, and a sampling of issues concerning women -- all of which would be expected to manifest feelings of women as outsiders. The absence of a gender gap on a central woman's issue, abortion, is then explored in more detail to suggest a more nuanced portrayal of women as outsiders. Finally, the initial findings are refined by comparisons of several groups of women who would be expected to hold differing political perspectives. Overall, the image of women as political outsiders is confirmed; and several separate types of "outsidedness" emerge from the analysis.

### **The Gender Gap on Alienation, Ideology, and Women's Issues**

If women are truly outsiders in the American polity, one would expect them to be disproportionately alienated from their government, liberal in a time of conservative (Reagan-Bush) administrations, and sensitive to issues concerning women's socioeconomic and political status. Data on all these dimensions are presented in Tables 1 through 5 where the gender gap is the simple difference between the percentage of women and men holding a particular attitude. A positive gender gap shows that women are more likely to state a belief than men, while a negative one indicates that an idea is more prevalent among men.

Several aspects of the data on political alienation are consistent with the women as outsiders hypothesis, but overall the results lend only partial support to this theory. Except for expressing a general patriotism, women appeared quite disgruntled. They did not believe that the U.S. was going in the right direction or that the economy was improving; they were quite cynical about the government's competence,



honesty, and responsiveness; they did not appear particularly active or efficacious in political life; and less than half trusted people in general. In short, taken by themselves, they had all the characteristics of political outsiders. Yet, these data are far from completely supportive of the women as outsiders hypothesis which presumes that they are disadvantaged relative to men. If this were so, women should be significantly more alienated than men. In direct contrast, except for the efficacy items (where a negative gap of 10% to 15% shows that women's gains in mass participation have yet to translate into full equality in participatory attitudes), the gender gap is fairly marginal. Thus, women's political alienation does not appear to be much different from men's.

The gender gap is generally consistent with the image of women as outsiders for almost all the items concerning ideology (Tables 2, 3, and 4). Table 2 presents the results of a "feeling thermometer" with a scale of 0 to 100 (50 indicates neutral feelings) that respondents were asked to apply to individuals and groups. It reports the percentage of the population that had positive feelings toward a political figure or group, as indicated by giving them a score of 60 or above. Perhaps the most striking aspect of these data is that few of these groups are perceived positively by as little as half the population. Again, as with the alienation data, Americans clearly were in a sour mood in November 1992.

Table 2 shows that in 1992 women felt more positively toward Bill Clinton, liberals, the federal government and Congress, environmentalists, the poor and welfare recipients, and less positively toward George Bush and conservatives. As would be expected, women had more positive feelings than men toward the women's movement (49% to 38%) and feminists (31% to 27%), although these fairly low percentages for even women indicate the cleavage between feminists and traditional women noted above. Women also almost invariably had similar warmer feelings, in the 5% to 10% range, toward the wide variety of social groups included in the table. Since most of these groups are minorities, this finding implies a sympathy toward fellow outsiders. Finally, in a somewhat similar vein, women were more appreciative of police and lawyers than men, suggesting that women may feel more vulnerable as outsiders and, thus, more in need of the protection offered by these two sources.

The image of women as more liberal than men is confirmed by the data on general ideological positions in Table 3 and on spending priorities in Table 4. In terms of ideological and partisan self-image, women were 8% less likely than men to identify themselves as Republicans and as conservatives (approximately 37% to 45% each). Women were more supportive than men (generally in the range of 10%

Table 1

## GENDER GAP IN ALIENATION FROM THE POLITY

	Male	Female	Gender Gap
<u>Satisfaction with Conditions in U.S.</u>			
Love U.S.	90%	88%	-2%
U.S. going in right direction	20%	15%	-5%
National economy better	6%	4%	-2%
Personal finances better	34%	27%	-7%
<u>Trust of Government</u>			
Trust govt most of time	28%	30%	2%
Govt doesn't care about people	53%	52%	-1%
People have no say in govt	35%	36%	1%
Government wastes money	72%	65%	-7%
Govt run for big interests	79%	78%	-1%
US Reps good district contacts	75%	76%	1%
<u>Efficacy and Activism</u>			
Active in community	22%	22%	0%
Interest in govt & politics	75%	62%	-13%
Politics too complex to understand all the time	60%	73%	13%
Understand political issues	80%	72%	-8%
Better informed than most on pols	42%	27%	-15%
Can do a good job in office	42%	26%	-16%
Well qualified for politics	48%	37%	-11%
<u>General Alienation</u>			
Trust people	49%	42%	-7%

SOURCE: Computed from the data from the 1992 National Election Study of the Survey Research Center, distributed by the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research. Reprinted with permission.

Table 2

GENDER GAP ON FEELING THERMOMETERS  
(in percentage of scores over 60 on a scale of 0 - 100)

	Male	Female	Gender Gap
<u>Politicians</u>			
George Bush	40%	36%	-4%
Bill Clinton	47%	52%	5%
Ross Perot	30%	28%	-2%
<u>Political Ideologies</u>			
Conservatives	31%	26%	-5%
Liberals	19%	26%	7%
<u>Political Institutions</u>			
Federal Government	18%	23%	5%
Congress	19%	26%	7%
Military	63%	61%	-2%
Police	59%	64%	5%
<u>Political Interests</u>			
Big Business	29%	29%	0%
Unions	31%	29%	-2%
Environmentalists	53%	59%	6%
Lawyers	18%	29%	11%
<u>Women's Groups</u>			
Feminists	27%	31%	4%
The Women's Movement	38%	49%	11%
<u>Potential Public Service Recipients</u>			
Poor	55%	64%	9%
Welfare Recipients	19%	23%	4%

Table 2 (continued)

	Male	Female	Gender Gap
<u>Social Groups</u>			
Catholics	44%	48%	4%
Fundamentalists	27%	30%	3%
Jews	43%	49%	6%
Whites	57%	64%	7%
Blacks	41%	52%	11%
Hispanics	35%	42%	7%
Asians	31%	38%	7%
Southerners	45%	49%	4%
Immigrants	33%	33%	0%
Illegal Immigrants	7%	9%	2%
Gays	10%	18%	8%

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Table 3

GENDER GAP ON IDEOLOGICAL ISSUES, 1992

	Male	Female	Gender Gap
<u>Ideology</u>			
Conservative	45%	37%	-8%
Republican	44%	36%	-8%
<u>Role of Government</u>			
Government should expand	55%	70%	15%
Govt should become more powerful	29%	44%	15%
Strong govt over free market	64%	76%	12%
Govt involved in what people should do for themselves	45%	31%	-14%
Increase services vs. cut spending	32%	42%	10%
Govt provide health insurance	49%	54%	5%
Govt guarantee job and standard of living	26%	34%	8%
Government provide child care	56%	65%	9%
Willing to pay more taxes	29%	31%	2%
<u>Equal Rights Commitment</u>			
All should have equal rights	91%	91%	0%
Too much emphasis on equal rights in US	46%	45%	-1%
Support govt on school integration	40%	50%	10%
<u>Domestic Violence Issues</u>			
Favor death penalty	86%	71%	-15%
Draft avoiders right	47%	55%	8%
Police vs social services to control urban unrest	29%	21%	-8%

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Table 4

GENDER GAP ON FEDERAL SPENDING

	Male	Female	Gender Gap
Increase social security spending	41%	55%	14%
Increase spending for poor	48%	61%	13%
Increase spending for homeless	68%	77%	9%
Increase child care spending	44%	56%	12%
Increase AIDS spending	61%	63%	2%
Increase public school spending	62%	69%	7%
Increase college aid	59%	61%	2%
Increase spending on unemployed	35%	44%	9%
Increase spending for Blacks	23%	27%	4%
Increase spending for cities	21%	21%	0%
Increase welfare spending	13%	21%	8%
Increase food stamp spending	15%	21%	6%
Increase spending on crime	67%	73%	6%
Increase defense spending	20%	19%	-1%
Increase environmental spending	59%	63%	4%

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Table 5

## GENDER GAP ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

	Male	Female	Gender Gap
Women equal role in bus and govt vs. stay at home	75%	75%	0%
Women should form groups vs. act on own	53%	64%	11%
Sexual harassment serious problem	25%	38%	13%
Pro- Choice	46%	46%	0%
High interest in women's issues	77%	80%	3%
Pride in women's achievements	61%	72%	11%
Anger at women's treatment	61%	63%	2%

SOURCE: Computed from the data from the 1992 National Election Study of the Survey Research Center, distributed by the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research. Reprinted with permission.

to 15%) of expanding the role and powers of government, presumably because they believed that redistributive policies were necessary to help them and other marginal groups in society. The data on preferences for increased spending in Table 4 demonstrate that women were generally more favorable than men by 5% to 15% toward increased spending in a wide variety of liberal areas, as well as for fighting crime (again suggesting their greater concern with protection). Finally (returning briefly to Table 3), women were more supportive of school integration and more opposed to "domestic violence" than men, although there was no gender gap on the subject of "equal rights" at least in the abstract (90% of Americans expressed a commitment to equal rights, but near majorities thought that the U.S. was now placing equal emphasis upon them).

One would certainly expect a considerable gender gap on women's issues. For example, the "thermometer" data in Table 2 showed that women felt significantly more positively toward the women's movement and feminists than did men. The results in Table 5, then, are somewhat surprising since a significant gender gap emerges on only three of the seven items -- women were 11% to 13% more likely than men to say that sexual harassment was a serious problem, that women should form groups instead of acting individually, and that they felt pride in women's achievements. On three other items, there was a surprising consensus of approximately two-thirds to three-quarters of both men and women who expressed interest in women's issues, anger at the way that some women were treated, and the belief that women and men should have an equal role in business and government (as opposed to staying home). While a cynic might note greater male commitment to more abstract and symbolic issues, as opposed to the more concrete issues of feminism and women's organizing to increase their power, this generally strong support for women's equality is consistent with long-term secular shifts in American public opinion toward greater support for equality in gender relationships (Mayer, 1992).

### **The Abortion Issue: Two Sets of Women Outsiders**

Perhaps the most surprising finding in Table 5 is that 46% of both men and women professed a pro-choice opinion on abortion, generally viewed as the most central "woman's issue" of the 1980s and 1990s. In actuality, though, this "non-gender gap" continues a trend dating back to the 1970s in which the opposition of women with traditional values to the Equal Rights Amendment and abortion have pulled down women's overall level of support for these issues to or even slightly below that of men (Shapiro and Mahajan, 1986).



In the 1992 elections, moreover, this effect explained why the gender gap in the presidential vote was more muted than in the 1980s. Compared to men, women were 5% more likely to vote for Clinton, 1% less likely to vote for Bush, and 4% less likely to vote for Perot (Bendyna and Lake, 1994; Pomper et al, 1993). In contrast to 1988 when views on abortion were unassociated with presidential vote (despite Bush's pro-life and Dukakis' pro-choice positions), Table 6 demonstrates that abortion had a significant impact on the 1992 vote. For example, Bill Clinton ran 20% better among pro-choice than among pro-life voters (58% to 38%), while George Bush enjoyed a 25% advantage among pro-lifers (47% to 22%). Controlling for position on abortion, Table 7 indicates that this new impact of abortion on presidential vote did indeed attenuate the observed gender gap for the population as a whole. As for the electorate as a whole, there is almost no gender gap for George Bush among either pro-life or pro-choice voters. However, in both these subgroups women were approximately 10% more likely than men to support Clinton (62% to 52% for pro-choice voters and 44% to 33% for pro-life voters) -- approximately double the gender gap for the population as a whole. Thus, the increased salience of the abortion issue in 1992 attenuated the gender gap by diverting the votes of some pro-life women who normally would have voted for Clinton to Bush or Perot and, to a presumably lesser extent, some pro-choice women to Clinton.

The abortion issue in 1992, therefore, clearly tapped the alienation from a prime women's issue of women with traditional values. This argues for a closer examination of what types of women took a pro-life position. Table 8 presents the crosstabulations, for women respondents only, between beliefs on abortion and seven potential explanatory variables: views toward fundamentalists and liberals (as indicated by a score of 60 or higher on the feeling thermometer), income, education, age, and whether the respondent was a feminist or a homemaker. Table 9 then presents a multivariate analysis of variance to ascertain the combined impact of the significant factors on a woman's taking a pro-life or pro-choice position, as well as each individual predictor's independent contribution to the "explained variance" in the dependent variable.

As would be expected, a positive feeling toward fundamentalists has a very strong impact on a woman's position on abortion. For example, 70% of the women who liked fundamentalists were pro-life, while only 37% of the women who had less positive feelings toward fundamentalists took a pro-life stance. There were also moderate tendencies for women who liked liberals, were highly educated, and came from more affluent families to be more pro-choice than those with the opposite characteristics. Feminists (self-identified) were 12% more

Table 6

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VIEWS ON ABORTION  
AND 1992 PRESIDENTIAL VOTE

	Pro-life*	Pro-choice**
Clinton	38%	58%
Bush	47%	22%
Perot	15%	20%

Cramer's V = .26 Statistical sig = .001

\*Abortion should never be permitted, or only for rape and incest (37% of Americans).

\*\*Abortion should always be permitted (46% of Americans).

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Table 7

GENDER GAP ON VOTING CONTROLLING  
FOR POSITION ON ABORTION

PRO-LIFE\*

	Men	Women
Clinton	33%	44%
Bush	48%	46%
Perot	20%	11%

Cramer's V = .14    Statistical sig = .002

PRO-CHOICE\*\*

	Men	Women
Clinton	52%	62%
Bush	22%	22%
Perot	26%	16%

Cramer's V = .13    Statistical sig = .002

\*Abortion should never be permitted, or only for rape and incest (37% of Americans).

\*\*Abortion should always be permitted (46% of Americans).

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likely than nonfeminists (63% to 51%) to be pro-choice. While this difference is in the expected direction, it is considerably less than might have been expected, indicating that moral beliefs crosscut those about women's status. Finally, homemakers and women over 55 were slightly more pro-life than non-homemakers and younger women. The analysis of variance shows that in combination these independent variables have a moderate impact on women's views about abortion in the United States (the Eta squared of .22 is equivalent to an  $R^2$  of .22 and  $R$  of .47 in multiple regression). The relative influence of these predictions is generally consistent with the results in the bivariate tables -- fundamentalism and education are fairly strong, while liberalism, feminism, and income are weak but still significant (age and homemaker status were not significant).

These results imply that the political processes in America in the early 1990s have created two distinctive sets of women "outsiders." On the one hand, the changing socioeconomic conditions had made many women more liberal on a wide variety of issues concerning social compassion. On the other, the moral beliefs of many women alienated them from the mainstream of the women's movement with its pro-choice philosophy. While many of the women in this second set were religious fundamentalists and fell into low income and low education categories, the surprisingly weak correlation between feminism and support for the pro-choice position certainly indicates that the stereotype of pro-choice feminism is overdrawn and that the women's movement may be alienating some potential supporters. For example, while most feminists have positive feelings toward the women's movement, as would certainly be expected, almost a quarter (22%) do not.

### Attitude Differences Among Women: Types of Outsiders

The discussion of attitudes about abortion in the previous section confirms the suggestion that there are at least two distinct groups of women political outsiders. This section explores the question of different types of women outsiders more systematically through two types of data analysis. The first compares the attitudes of several groups of women, some of whom would be presumed to be liberal and some conservative, on representative items concerning economic and women's issues. To the extent that their predicted ideological variations emerge, our basic hypothesis about women as outsiders should be supported. In addition, though, some deviations from these predictions might also be suggestive about distinctive subgroups that merit being termed outsiders. Second, the width of the gender gap within these groups will also be examined to test whether several types of presumed outsiders display the predicted attitude patterns.

Table 8

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ABORTION BELIEFS  
AND POSSIBLE EXPLANATORY VARIABLES AMONG WOMEN

POSITIVE VIEW OF FUNDAMENTALISTS

	No	Yes
Pro-life	37%	70%
Pro-choice	63%	30%

Gamma = -.60 Statistical sig = .001

FEMINIST

	No	Yes
Pro-life	49%	37%
Pro-choice	51%	63%

Gamma = .24 Statistical sig = .01

HOMEMAKER

	No	Yes
Pro-life	44%	54%
Pro-choice	56%	46%

Gamma = -.20 Statistical sig = .05

POSITIVE VIEW OF LIBERALS

	No	Yes
Pro-life	50%	31%
Pro-choice	50%	68%

Gamma = .37 Statistical sig = .001

Table 8 (continued)

EDUCATION

	Grade School	Some High School	High School	Some College	College
Pro-life	76%	69%	51%	37%	23%
Pro-choice	24%	31%	49%	62%	77%

Gamma = .47 Statistical sig = .001

INCOME

	Under \$15,000	\$15,000-\$35,000	\$35,000-\$50,000	Over \$50,000
Pro-life	61%	41%	43%	27%
Pro-choice	39%	59%	57%	73%

Gamma = .36 Statistical sig = .001

AGE

	Under 35	35-55	Over 55
Pro-life	44%	43%	52%
Pro-choice	56%	57%	48%

Cramer's V = .14 Statistical sig = .001

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Table 9

MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE EXPLAINING  
POSITION ON ABORTION AMONG WOMEN

Eta Squared	.22
<u>Individual Effects</u>	% Explained SS (Variance)
Like fundamentalists	10.5%
Education	6.7%
Like liberals	1.9%
Feminist	1.8%
Family income	1.4%
TOTAL	22.3%

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Eight representative items from Tables 2 through 5 were selected for this analysis of women's issues -- positive attitude towards women groups, belief that women should have an equal role in business and government, and pro-choice views -- and of ideological and economic issues -- positive feelings toward Bill Clinton, a desire for government to increase services rather than cut taxes, and support for increasing spending on the poor, child care, and social security. The views of different subgroups of women on these eight issues were then compared to the percentage of all women holding an attitude in Table 10.

The first set of comparisons concerns indicators of a woman's status and philosophical orientation -- whether or not she was a feminist, a homemaker, or had a positive view of fundamentalists. Obviously, the former should have liberal attitudes; and the latter two conservative ones. Additionally, one would expect that the these differences to be more marked on women's issues than on economic ones. A second set concerns ideological orientations or socioeconomic characteristics closely associated with ideology -- whether a woman identified herself as a conservative or a liberal and whether she belonged to a minority group. Such ideological differences should hold over both economic and women's issues (except, perhaps, for minorities who

might focus on "bread and butter" concerns). A third comparison involves social class orientations as indicated by education, a college degree versus no more than a grade school education (almost exactly the same figures result from comparing those with family incomes over \$50,000 to those with under \$15,000). Here, the attitudinal differences should be greater on economic than women's issues; in fact, upper class women might well be expected to be more concerned with women's issues than working class ones. Our final comparison focuses upon age cohorts -- women under 35 and over 55. Younger women should be more liberal on both sets of issues with the possible exception of social security spending which is obviously of special concern to the elderly.

Our basic hypotheses about ideological differences are essentially confirmed by the data in Table 10, although several significant and suggestive exceptions exist. Feminists were quite liberal on the women's issues (with the exception of their limited liberalism on abortion discussed previously) and in support of Clinton while only moderately so on the four directly economic issues. In contrast, homemakers and fundamentalists were conservative on women's roles and abortion, quite so in the case of the fundamentalists' rejection of the pro-choice position. However, they differed little from women in general in their views on economic issues, Clinton, and even the women's movement. These surprising findings have two important implications. First, being a homemaker no longer seems to reinforce traditional socialization except in a couple of areas closely linked to a homemaker's social status and self-respect. Second, given the comparatively low socioeconomic status of many fundamentalists (e.g., 31% of women who liked fundamentalists had a grade school education or less, more than double the 14% of those who did not) their moderate stance on many issues may reflect an awareness of vulnerability which, in turn, makes them sensitive to the potential benefits of government assistance and organizing self-help groups.

The predicted differences among liberal, conservative, and minority women emerge quite well; and, as hypothesized, these variations are generally high for both economic and women's issues. One interesting exception to this general rule is that neither liberals nor conservatives deviate much from the average for all women on social security, an issue that once was at the core of ideological divisions in the U.S. Perhaps, this reflects social security's acceptance as an "entitlement" or "middle class welfare." Likewise, younger women were more liberal than older ones on almost all these issues as well. This is consistent with the theory of changing generational socialization, although the fact that the "age gap" is particularly wide on child care spending and narrow on social security hints at a bit of generational special interest as well. The presumption that less educated women would be much more liberal on the economic issues holds true except for child care spending which



college graduates want increased more than those with grade school educations by a significant margin (61% to 51%). This suggests the special needs of another group of outsiders -- women pursuing professional careers who do not wish to be shunted off to a "mommy track" (Clark and Clark, 1994 present data showing that many of these women form a group distinct from feminists). Conversely, college educated women are much more liberal than grade school educated ones on women's issues, confirming that education is an important agent of "countersocialization" (Fowlkes, 1983). Also regarding education, the association of low education with a prolife position accounts for minority women having a slightly conservative position on abortion when a liberal one would be expected (multiple table analysis not presented in paper).

When one looks at how the gender gap varies among groups of women, it is also possible to provide a more sophisticated test of the hypothesis that women are more "compassionate" than by simply determining if women in general are more liberal on social issues than men. In essence, the compassion hypothesis argues that women who would normally be expected to be conservative will support aiding the disadvantaged out of compassion. Since poor women would normally be expected to take such a position out of self interest, the problem arises of how to separate "compassion" from "self interest." If it is assumed that both men and women who are economically distressed will take liberal positions on government roles and spending policies, then one would expect that the gender gap should be significantly wider among more affluent than less affluent groups. In the former instance, compassion would pull women away from men's normal attitudes, while in the latter both men and women would be pulled in the same direction by self-interest. Similarly, the gender gap should be much greater among conservatives than liberals since most liberals should be pro-government, while compassion should pull women away from conservatives' anti-government inclinations.

The data in Table 11 strongly support this perspective. As predicted, the gender gap is much greater for conservatives than for liberals, for college-educated women than for grade-school educated ones, and, to a slightly lesser extent, for high-income than for low-income women. Thus, the compassion often attributed to women's gender consciousness (Gilligan, 1982; Rinehart, 1992; Shapiro and Mahajan, 1986) evidently exists even where it would not particularly be expected, thus providing much stronger support for this perspective than could be derived by simply comparing men and women.

Comparing the gender gap between generations can also provide an interesting test of the conflicting implications of the generational socialization and countersocialization perspectives. The first argues that



Table 10

## COMPARISON OF ATTITUDES OF SUBGROUPS OF WOMEN

	Like Women Movmt	Women Equal Role	Pro Choice	Like Clinton	More Govt Servs	Spend More Poor	Spend More Child Cr	Spend More Soc Sec
All Women	49%	75%	46%	52%	42%	61%	56%	55%
Feminists	78%	85%	55%	70%	49%	69%	67%	56%
Homemakers	49%	65%	39%	47%	40%	61%	52%	54%
Fundaments	57%	63%	26%	51%	35%	60%	54%	58%
Minority	71%	72%	42%	66%	62%	81%	74%	74%
Liberal	73%	91%	74%	78%	61%	76%	75%	52%
Conservative	34%	55%	27%	37%	30%	48%	40%	55%
College	58%	87%	67%	52%	38%	48%	61%	38%
Grade Sch	53%	52%	21%	57%	52%	74%	51%	74%
Under 35	54%	84%	50%	52%	51%	63%	71%	57%
Over 55	43%	63%	40%	53%	30%	57%	39%	51%

SOURCE: Computed from the data from the 1992 National Election Study of the Survey Research Center, distributed by the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research. Reprinted with permission.

Table 11

## COMPARISON OF GENDER GAPS IN THE ATTITUDES OF SUBGROUPS OF AMERICANS

	Like Women Movmt	Women Equal Role	Pro Choice	Like Clinton	More Govt Servs	Spend More Poor	Spend More Child Cr	Spend More Soc Sec
Population	11%	0%	0%	5%	10%	13%	12%	14%
Liberal	7%	-4%	4%	-3%	3%	6%	4%	8%
Conservatives	13%	-7%	2%	18%	12%	21%	16%	18%
College	22%	5%	13%	9%	13%	10%	20%	14%
Grade School	-3%	0%	-12%	-3%	1%	6%	3%	19%
Low Income*	2%	-1%	-6%	-7%	12%	13%	6%	10%
High Income*	6%	7%	12%	6%	7%	10%	16%	11%
Under 35	18%	6%	1%	7%	16%	8%	21%	15%
Over 55	-2%	-2%	5%	1%	0%	9%	4%	9%

\*Low income: family income under \$15,000.

High income: family income over \$50,000.

SOURCE: Computed from the data from the 1992 National Election Study of the Survey Research Center, distributed by the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research. Reprinted with permission.

the vastly changed nature of American society between the 1950s and 1970s means that all younger Americans are receiving different socialization experiences. If this is true, men as well as women under 35 should be much more liberal than older generations; and there is little reason to suppose that the gender gap would vary greatly among generations. In contrast, countersocialization theory would argue that women have to take special advantage of opportunities for obtaining countersocialization, such as increased access to higher education and more liberal cultural norms. Thus, it would predict that the expansion of these opportunities in the 1970s and 1980s should have created a comparatively wide gender gap within the younger generation. On this question, the data in Table 11 are unambiguous as the gender gap is significantly wider among those under 35 than among those over 55 for six of the eight items. Thus, the younger generation of educated women seemingly constitute another group of political outsiders in the sense that their expectations have clearly outrun the attitudes of their male peers.

### **Implications**

This paper has used the evidence of American public opinion in 1992 to examine the theory that women in the United States can be regarded as a group of "political outsiders." The raw data on the gender gap were generally consistent with this analysis. Moreover, a more detailed probing of women's opinions indicated that there is not just a single group of outsiders -- well-educated, liberal feminists. Rather there is a ring of "outsider" groups with interests that both overlap and crosscut each other -- liberal feminists, women pursuing professional careers who are not necessarily feminists, the new generation of women college graduates, women with blue and pink collar jobs and many minority women who respond to traditional liberal "bread and butter" issues, women with traditional values on such issues as abortion, and (although their distinct attitudes were not isolated in this analysis) destitute women.

Contemporary analysis of these differences usually does not go beyond the conflict between feminists and traditional women. However, this more complex picture might be advantageous for starting a process of identifying overlapping interests among some of the subgroups. For example, many traditional women share financial worries with blue collar women; professional women and feminists have shared interests on many women's issues; and so forth. This process could be vital because, if these groups of outsiders remain disunited and working at cross purposes, their shared status as outsiders is likely to continue.



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