
**ADVANCING WOMEN’S POLITICAL POWER IN THE
NEXT CENTURY**

KELLY DITTMAR*

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* Associate Professor, Department of Political Science at Rutgers University-Camden; Scholar, Center for American Women and Politics (“CAWP”), Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University.

INTRODUCTION

The ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment marked a point of progress for women in American politics. For the first time, the U.S. Constitution directly barred any denial or abridgment of the right to vote on the basis of sex, opening the door to women's ability to leverage the electoral franchise into political influence nationwide. But the Nineteenth Amendment was just a step toward gender equality in American politics, and it yielded disparate results for women, most specifically for Black and Indigenous women whose full enfranchisement in practice, if not in law, was delayed for decades to come.

Likewise, political progress for women since 1920 has neither been universal nor complete. Today, while women outnumber and outvote men at the ballot box,¹ they remain underrepresented on ballots and in elected offices. Women's votes are a hard-fought and effective tool by which they influence representation, but women are still less likely than men to be political representatives. The underrepresentation of women, and more specifically women of color, within our formal political institutions should top the agenda as we contemplate the next one hundred years of work to advance gender equality in political power. According to the Center for American Women and Politics, women account for 23.7% of members of the U.S. Congress, 28.9% of statewide elected executive officeholders (including 9 of 50 governors), 29.3% of state legislators, and 27% of mayors in the 100 most populous cities nationwide.² Women of color account for 9% of all members of Congress, 4.5% of statewide elected executive officeholders, 7.4% of state legislators, and 10% of mayors in the 100 most populous cities nationwide.³

The 2018 election marked the first time that Indigenous and Muslim women were elected to Congress,⁴ that a woman of color was elected as a Democratic

¹ See CTR. FOR AM. WOMEN & POLITICS, GENDER DIFFERENCES IN VOTER TURNOUT (2019), <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/resources/genderdiff.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/HCR9-W8HK>].

² *Current Numbers*, CTR. FOR AM. WOMEN & POL., <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/current-numbers> [<https://perma.cc/F7AD-AVD2>] (last visited Sept. 27, 2020).

³ *Women of Color in Elective Office 2020*, CTR. FOR AM. WOMEN & POL., <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/women-color-elective-office-2020> [<https://perma.cc/WWZ2-NRZH>] (last visited Sept. 27, 2020).

⁴ KELLY DITTMAR, CTR. FOR AM. WOMEN & POLITICS, UNFINISHED BUSINESS: WOMEN RUNNING IN 2018 AND BEYOND 9 (2019), https://womenrun.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Unfinished-Business_Full.pdf [<https://perma.cc/RD3C-U445>]; see also *Milestones for Women in American Politics*, CTR. FOR AM. WOMEN & POL., https://cawp.rutgers.edu/sample/timeline?field_timelinegroup_tid=323 [<https://perma.cc/AAS2-GGRJ>] (last visited Sept. 27, 2020) (identifying Representatives Sharice Davids (D-KS) and Deb Haaland (D-NM) as first Indigenous women and Representatives Ilhan Omar (D-MN) and Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) as first Muslim women elected to Congress).

governor, and that a Black woman won a major party nomination for governor.⁵ As of August 2020: 2 Asian or Pacific Islander women, 1 Latina, and 1 multiracial woman serve in the U.S. Senate; 22 Black women, 12 Latinas, 6 Asian or Pacific Islander women, 2 Indigenous women, and 2 Middle Eastern woman serve in the U.S. House of Representatives; 6 Latinas, 5 Black women, 3 Asian or Pacific Islander women, 1 Indigenous woman, and 1 multiracial woman serve among the 311 statewide elected executive officeholders nationwide; and 313 Black women, 127 Latinas, 48 Asian or Pacific Islander women, 30 multiracial women, 23 Indigenous women, and 6 Middle Eastern or Northern African women serve as state legislators across the United States.⁶ Of the 10 women of color serving as mayors in the nation's 100 most populous cities, 6 are Black, 2 are Asian or Pacific Islander, and 2 are Latina.⁷

In the next century, women must continue the work to translate the power of the vote into political representation and the power of their activism into seats at tables of political decision-making. Advancing women's political progress will require addressing the persistent gender and racial disparities in political representation. That means embracing and applying a truly intersectional approach in both scholarship and practice to understanding and advancing women's political power, and to interrogating the past, present, and future with attention to the diversity *among* women in their access and approach to power and their influence on political and policy outcomes. Finally, we must also address the gender and racial disparities in presence and power among all actors within our formal political institutions—not simply candidates and officeholders but also those who support, influence, and elect them.

As we contemplate the unfinished business of women's political progress 100 after the Nineteenth Amendment's ratification, I offer 5 recommendations that focus on advancing gender parity in America's political institutions for the next century: (1) reject a single story of women's political past and present; (2) make a strong case to women for candidacy and office holding; (3) address structural barriers to women's political inclusion and power; (4) disrupt gender dynamics and expectations in American political institutions; and (5) advance women's presence, diversity, power, and influence among *all* actors in American political institutions.

I. REJECT A SINGLE STORY OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL PAST AND PRESENT

In anticipation of the one hundredth anniversary of the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, advocates and experts warned about telling a single—and incomplete—story about the fight for and reality of women's suffrage. Two

⁵ DITTMAR, *supra* note 4, at 13 (identifying Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-NM) as country's first Democratic woman of color elected governor and Stacey Abrams (D-GA) as first Black woman major party gubernatorial candidate).

⁶ *Women of Color in Elective Office 2020*, *supra* note 3.

⁷ *Id.*

years ahead of this anniversary, Tammy Brown wrote in an essay titled “Celebrate Women’s Suffrage, but Don’t Whitewash the Movement’s Racism”:

The history of women’s suffrage in America is not nice or neat, because the impact of white supremacy is broad and human nature is messy. Furthermore, a nation built on stolen land from Native Americans and stolen labor from African slaves is flawed from the start. We must constantly acknowledge this truth and engage in an intersectional celebration of women’s rights activists and landmark events.⁸

Just one month prior, *New York Times* editorial board member Brent Staples published a warning about the persistent oversight of Black women in mainstream narratives of the suffrage movement.⁹ He wrote of forthcoming suffrage centennial celebrations that “[b]lack feminists in particular are eager to see if these remembrances own up to the real history of the fight for the vote—and whether black suffragists appear in them.”¹⁰ These are just two of many warning flags waved well in advance of 2020, challenging us to tell the true, multifaceted, and much more complicated story about women’s suffrage.

Two decades earlier, Rosalyn Terborg-Penn published the influential *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920*, providing us all with a necessary guide for rejecting the whitewashed version of the suffrage movement that Brown warned against.¹¹ She is joined by other scholars who have sought to highlight the key roles and distinct experiences of women of color in the fight for political enfranchisement.¹² The marginalization of women of

⁸ Tammy L. Brown, *Celebrate Women’s Suffrage, but Don’t Whitewash the Movement’s Racism*, ACLU (Aug. 24, 2018, 5:45 PM), <https://www.aclu.org/blog/womens-rights/celebrate-womens-suffrage-dont-whitewash-movements-racism> [<https://perma.cc/QM45-QAEZ>].

⁹ Brent Staples, Opinion, *The Racism Behind Women’s Suffrage*, N.Y. TIMES, July 29, 2018, at SR8.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ See generally ROSALYN TERBORG-PENN, *AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN THE STRUGGLE FOR THE VOTE, 1850-1920* (1998) (recounting Black women’s efforts to secure the right to vote for all women and to counter racist efforts to exclude Black women from enfranchisement).

¹² For other book-length examples, see *AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN AND THE VOTE, 1837-1965* (Ann D. Gordon et al. eds., 1997) (offering essays that highlight Black women’s activism in more than a century of political movements); MARTHA S. JONES, *ALL BOUND UP TOGETHER: THE WOMAN QUESTION IN AFRICAN AMERICAN PUBLIC CULTURE, 1830-1900* (2007) (exploring Black women’s role within and as creators of nineteenth-century Black intellectual and social institutions that addressed matters of public import such as politics, gender divisions in missionary work, lynching, and temperance); CORRINE M. MCCONNAUGHY, *THE WOMAN SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT IN AMERICA: A REASSESSMENT* (2013) (exploring officials’ political motivations to support woman suffrage and examining both failure and success of coalitional politics in campaign for expanding voting rights); SALLY

color, from both contemporaneous and historical accounts of women's political movements, has persisted in the century since 1920. But we should rely on the works of many scholars and activists who appreciate and give voice to the richness and diversity of women's political experiences, priorities, and behaviors as we move forward in efforts to further expand women's political power.¹³

When it comes to expanding women's power as officeholders, the dearth of intersectional and nuanced research contributes to a reality wherein the distinct hurdles to representation for specific groups of women are not only unaddressed but also sometimes invisible. A recent review of existing research on gender differences in candidate emergence, evaluation, strategy, and success reveals that there still remains too little research done with an intersectional lens in the realm of gender, candidacy, and office holding.¹⁴ This means that conclusions drawn and actions taken from this research are not universally applicable or effective. As Sarah Allen Gershon and Jessica Lavariega Monforti write, for example, existing scholarship on gender and racial stereotypes of candidates "overwhelmingly focuses on only female or one racial group," adding that "[t]here is a limited amount of work that focuses on co-racial candidates and voters."¹⁵ This research gap stunts our understanding of how these dynamics affect Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, Indigenous, Latina, and multiracial women candidates. Similarly, the research on gendered challenges in fundraising has rarely looked at racial or ethnic differences among women, yielding conclusions that are dominated by how White women fare. Recent findings from the Center for Responsive Politics show that Black women were especially disadvantaged among large individual campaign donors in 2018, defining a problem in need of addressing for this particular group of women

ROESCH WAGNER, *SISTERS IN SPIRIT: HAUDENOSAUNEE (IROQUOIS) INFLUENCE ON EARLY AMERICAN FEMINISTS* (2001).

¹³ See *supra* note 12 and accompanying text; see also PAULA GIDDINGS, *WHEN AND WHERE I ENTER: THE IMPACT OF BLACK WOMEN ON RACE AND SEX IN AMERICA* (1984) (detailing narrative history of Black women's experiences with race and feminism since the seventeenth century); *NO PERMANENT WAVES: RECASTING HISTORIES OF U.S. FEMINISM* (Nancy A. Hewitt ed., 2010) (compiling essays applying intersectional lens to history of U.S. feminist movements); *THIS BRIDGE CALLED MY BACK: WRITINGS BY RADICAL WOMEN OF COLOR* (Cherríe Moraga & Gloria Anzaldúa eds., 4th ed. State Univ. of N.Y. Press 2015) (offering essays, poetry, and journal entries by women of color on matters of class, culture, sexuality, racism, and homophobia).

¹⁴ DITTMAR, *supra* note 4, at 36.

¹⁵ Sarah Allen Gershon & Jessica Lavariega Monforti, *Intersecting Campaigns: Candidate Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Voter Evaluations*, *POL. GROUPS & IDENTITIES*, Mar. 20, 2019, at 1-2 (citing *DISTINCT IDENTITIES: MINORITY WOMEN IN U.S. POLITICS* (Nadia E. Brown & Sarah Allen Gershon eds., 2016); Sarah Allen Gershon, *Media Coverage of Minority Congresswomen and Voter Evaluations: Evidence from an Online Experimental Study*, 66 *POL. RES. Q.* 702 (2012)).

candidates.¹⁶ There are also political opportunities that may be missed by researchers and practitioners if analyses do not take women's multiple and interlocking identities into account. Christina Bejarano's work on the "Latina advantage," for example, demonstrates the dangers of either ignoring the diversity among women or assuming that women of color are only presented with greater disadvantages than White women.¹⁷

Distinct Identities: Minority Women in U.S. Politics, a collection of essays compiled and edited by Nadia Brown and Sarah Allen Gershon, lifts up research that enriches our understanding of the racial and ethnic differences among women candidates and officeholders.¹⁸ The editors outline their goals for the volume by noting, "We seek to elucidate how being a woman of color leads to unique political experiences, viewpoints, and behaviors."¹⁹ Gender and politics research and practice should follow their lead. Moreover, we should approach defining problems and identifying solutions related to women's political power with an even broader lens. Our analyses and practice must, as Wendy Smooth urges, "[e]mbrac[e] the coexistence of privilege and marginalization acknowledging that they are not mutually exclusive."²⁰ That includes addressing multiple axes of privilege and marginalization, including but not limited to gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and age. Finally, we know that women's political opportunities and experiences differ along ideological and party lines, especially when it comes to candidacy and office holding. Research has done well in identifying some distinct hurdles for Republican women in

¹⁶ Sarah Bryner & Grace Haley, *Race, Gender, and Money in Politics: Campaign Finance and Federal Candidates in the 2018 Midterms* 18 (Mar. 15, 2019) (unpublished working paper), <https://www.pgpf.org/sites/default/files/US-2050-Race-Gender-and-Money-in-Politics-Campaign-Finance-and-Federal-Candidates-in-the-2018-Midterms.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/M8AV-9JF9>].

¹⁷ CHRISTINA E. BEJARANO, *THE LATINA ADVANTAGE: GENDER, RACE, AND POLITICAL SUCCESS* 1-2 (2013) (challenging hypothesis that minority women candidates face "double disadvantage" and arguing that they "encounter a positive interaction of their gender and race/ethnicity that results in fewer electoral disadvantages" and "perform better electorally than minority men among some key voters"); see also *DISTINCT IDENTITIES*, *supra* note 15 (offering essays on women of color's unique experience in political participation, campaigning, and office holding); Tasha S. Philpot & Hanes Walton, Jr., *One of Our Own: Black Female Candidates and the Voters Who Support Them*, 51 *AM. J. POL. SCI.* 49, 58-60 (2007) (noting that interlaced social identities of Black women candidates can engender support from Black women voters and that Black women candidates with political experience are as likely to receive support from White as Black voters).

¹⁸ See generally *DISTINCT IDENTITIES*, *supra* note 15.

¹⁹ Nadian E. Brown & Sarah Allen Gershon, *Introduction* to *DISTINCT IDENTITIES*, *supra* note 15, at 1, 2.

²⁰ Wendy G. Smooth, *Intersectionality from Theoretical Framework to Policy Intervention*, in *SITUATING INTERSECTIONALITY: POLITICS, POLICY, AND POWER* 11, 21 (Angelia R. Wilson ed., 2013).

candidate emergence and success.²¹ As we envision steps toward reaching gender parity in political representation, we must further understand and address partisan differences as well.

Crafting an agenda to advance women's political power and representation in the next century requires challenging the singularity of both conclusions of and processes for research so that they better account for the diverse challenges and opportunities that women face en route to positions of political power.

II. MAKE A STRONG CASE TO WOMEN FOR CANDIDACY AND OFFICE HOLDING

Scholars and practitioners alike have spent much time and energy making a case for why women's political inclusion and empowerment matters. In outlining positive and distinctive benefits of increasing women's representation, this work can too easily reinforce an unequal standard by which women need to justify their inclusion while men do not.²² But there are good reasons to believe that our time is well spent making the case to women directly to overcome well-documented—and gendered—hurdles to candidate emergence and recruitment.

If we are to see a significant rise in women's political representation as officeholders, we need women to also represent a greater proportion of the candidate pool. Despite breaking records in candidacy and office holding, women still accounted for less than one-third of candidates across levels of office in 2018.²³ As of August 2020, less than one-third of candidates on primary ballots for the U.S. House were women.²⁴ While increasing women's candidacies will not alone ensure gender parity in representation, it is very likely a necessary and notable step to progress. In her work on what motivates candidate emergence, Shauna Shames emphasizes the importance of making an affirmative case for candidacy to potential candidates that provides evidence that taking on the challenges of running for office—many of which are gendered,

²¹ See generally THE RIGHT WOMEN: REPUBLICAN PARTY ACTIVISTS, CANDIDATES, AND LEGISLATORS (Malliga Och & Shauna L. Shames eds., 2018) (compiling essays about circumstances facing Republican women as voters, activists, and candidates and their practices once elected); Danielle M. Thomsen, *Which Women Win? Partisan Changes in Victory Patterns in US House Elections*, 7 POL. GROUPS & IDENTITIES 412 (2019) (cautioning that partisan gap in women's representation favoring Democrats may persist considering that, compared to 1980, today's Republican women are less frequently incumbents, face more competitors in primaries, and run in less favorable partisan environments).

²² See Kelly Dittmar, *Making the Case for Women's Representation: What, Who, and Why*, in WOMEN IN POLITICS, WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP (Peter John Loewen et al. eds., forthcoming May 2020).

²³ DITTMAR, *supra* note 4, at 3.

²⁴ *Women as Percentage of 2020 Major-Party Candidates and Nominees*, CTR. FOR AM. WOMEN & POL., <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/women-percentage-2020-candidates> [<https://perma.cc/RCG2-NPTB>] (last updated Sept. 16, 2020).

raced, and/or intersectional—are worth the advantages of government service.²⁵ She finds that well-situated recruits are influenced by their potential to “do good”²⁶ while in office, connecting political ambition to perceptions of the “usefulness of politics to solve problems.”²⁷ Research that focuses on women specifically shows that the capacity to make substantive policy change—closely related to problem-solving—is especially motivating to women officeholders’ decisions to run.²⁸

Focusing on benefits might overlook forces that alter women’s candidacy calculations in ways that lead them to believe that the costs of *not* running are too high to ignore. In an analysis of women candidates’ motivation to run for the U.S. House in 2018, I found that a sense of threat *from* the political system in 2018 contributed most to the urgency with which progressive White women approached their emergence as candidates.²⁹ While some research showed threat and anger as a mobilizing force for Latinx voters and for Black women’s activism,³⁰ other research demonstrates how these emotions may shape political behavior for diverse groups of political actors differently.³¹ Still, these findings raise the possibility that making a negative case for candidacy to some women—

²⁵ SHAUNA L. SHAMES, *OUT OF THE RUNNING: WHY MILLENNIALS REJECT POLITICAL CAREERS AND WHY IT MATTERS* 167 (2017).

²⁶ *Id.* at 75-80.

²⁷ *Id.* at 33.

²⁸ See SUSAN J. CARROLL & KIRA SANBONMATSU, *MORE WOMEN CAN RUN: GENDER AND PATHWAYS TO THE STATE LEGISLATURES* 58 (2013); KELLY DITTMAR, KIRA SANBONMATSU & SUSAN J. CARROLL, *A SEAT AT THE TABLE: CONGRESSWOMEN’S PERSPECTIVES ON WHY THEIR PRESENCE MATTERS* 2 (2018).

²⁹ Kelly Dittmar, *Urgency and Ambition: The Influence of Political Environment and Emotion in Spurring US Women’s Candidacies in 2018*, 3 *EUR. J. POL. & GENDER* 143, 151 (2020).

³⁰ See Tehama Lopez Bunyasi & Candis Watts Smith, *Get in Formation: Black Women’s Participation in the Women’s March on Washington As an Act of Pragmatic Utopianism*, 48 *BLACK SCHOLAR* 4, 12 (2018) (quoting Women’s March participant stating that her motivation to march was “the racist, misogynist and xenophobic tone of Trump’s campaign”); Angela Gutierrez et al., *Somos Más: How Racial Threat and Anger Mobilized Latino Voters in the Trump Era*, 72 *POL. RES. Q.* 960, 969-70 (2019) (finding that anger during 2016 election was positively correlated with political participation); Adrian Pantoja, *Latino Voters Will Turn Anger into Action in the 2018 Congressional Midterm Elections*, *LATINO DECISIONS* (July 30, 2018), <http://www.latinodecisions.com/blog/2018/07/30/latinos-voters-will-turn-anger-into-action-in-the-2018-congressional-midterm-elections/> [<https://perma.cc/EXN3-L7ET>] (citing survey showing Latinx voters’ anger towards President Trump’s Administration as driving force behind eagerness to vote in 2018 elections).

³¹ See DAVIN L. PHOENIX, *THE ANGER GAP: HOW RACE SHAPES EMOTION IN POLITICS* 71 (2019) (arguing that anger’s mobilizing effect on political participation is weaker for Black Americans than their White counterparts); Dittmar, *supra* note 29, at 152 (finding that smaller proportions of Latinas and Black women compared to White and Asian or Pacific Islander women “publicly attributed feelings of threat with spurring their candidacy in 2018”).

emphasizing the problems arising from their lack of representation—might also increase their likelihood of running for office.

Whatever the substance of the case for candidacy, the research shows that making overt appeals matters more for women than for men. More specifically, Professors Susan J. Carroll and Kira Sanbonmatsu find that who makes that case to women matters. In a study of state legislators, they find that direct recruitment and encouragement—especially from political sources—is more predictive of candidacy for women than for men.³² These conclusions have informed political practice, whereby women's political organizations and leaders have offered encouragement-based approaches to recruiting women to run for office. But, as I have argued previously, encouragement alone is not enough to spur candidacy.³³ Women have to see a path to success and know that they will be supported from that point of encouragement until Election Day.³⁴ Organizations and programs committed to women's recruitment and training in the United States have helped to build this support infrastructure, whether alternative or adjunct to more traditional electoral institutions like political parties.³⁵ And research to date demonstrates their success, showing potential for these programs to reduce women's doubts and reinforce their willingness to run.³⁶

III. ADDRESS STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S POLITICAL INCLUSION AND POWER

The work to empower women with the vote took more than changing hearts and minds; it required removing structural barriers that excluded, formally and informally, women's political participation. Likewise, efforts to increase the number of women who run for and win elected offices has and will continue to necessitate personal, political, social, and structural change. Building support infrastructure for recruiting, training, funding, and advising women candidates addresses structural hurdles to women's political representation in the United States. These interventions work most often to enable women to navigate and succeed within political structures that were built for and continue to function to the advantage of White men. But advancing women's political power will also require addressing the bias of the structures themselves. In an essay for *Boston Review*, Jennifer Piscopo argues that the solution to women's political

³² CARROLL & SANBONMATSU, *supra* note 28, at 59.

³³ Kelly Dittmar, *Encouragement Is Not Enough: Addressing Social and Structural Barriers to Female Recruitment*, 11 POL. & GENDER 759, 761 (2015).

³⁴ *Id.* at 761-62.

³⁵ See Rebecca J. Kreitzer & Tracy L. Osborn, *The Emergence and Activities of Women's Recruiting Groups in the U.S.*, 7 POL. GROUPS & IDENTITIES 842, 842, 848-49 (2019) (determining that nearly 600 women's candidate groups exist in United States, including EMILY's List, Greater Missouri Leadership Challenge, and NEW Leadership).

³⁶ See *id.* at 850; Jennie Sweet-Cushman, *See It; Be It? The Use of Role Models in Campaign Trainings for Women*, 7 POL. GROUPS & IDENTITIES 853, 859 (2019).

underrepresentation must encompass positive action that promotes systemic, structural change instead of putting the onus on women to remedy their own marginalization.³⁷ Drawing from other countries' efforts to shift the concept of women's political office holding to a positive right, Piscopo suggests procedural changes, like lowering candidate filing fees for women, giving women preferred access to public funding for campaigns, and pressuring political parties to abide by gender quotas among their own leadership and governing boards.³⁸

Previous research on the influential but sometimes gatekeeping role that party leaders play in shaping women candidate emergence and success in the United States suggests that Piscopo's call for challenging men's dominance among party leaders is an important step to clearing the path to women's political power.³⁹ Biased perceptions among party leaders about women's electability—and even more specifically their heightened skepticism about Black and Latinx candidates' capacity to win—make it harder for women to navigate the electoral structures that precede office holding.⁴⁰ Melody Crowder-Meyer finds that women party leaders are more likely than men to recruit women candidates, demonstrating that increasing women's representation and power in party structures can help to address women's underrepresentation among candidates and officeholders.⁴¹

Other advocates have drawn from cross-national research showing potential for women's heightened success in systems awarding representation by proportion (versus winner take all) and in multimember districts (where voters can select more than one candidate on a ballot) to push for reforming electoral rules and processes—including increasing multimember districts and adopting ranked-choice voting—in the United States that might enhance women's chances.⁴² Quotas requiring a specific proportion of women candidates or

³⁷ Jennifer M. Piscopo, *The Right to Be Elected*, BOS. REV. (Aug. 3, 2020), <https://bostonreview.net/forum/jennifer-m-piscopo-what-does-it-take-get-women-elected> [<https://perma.cc/JE5A-CFD7>].

³⁸ *Id.*

³⁹ See KIRA SANBONMATSU, WHERE WOMEN RUN: GENDER AND PARTY IN THE AMERICAN STATES 119 (2006); Melody Crowder-Meyer, *Gendered Recruitment Without Trying: How Local Party Recruiters Affect Women's Representation*, 9 POL. & GENDER 390, 409 (2013).

⁴⁰ See SANBONMATSU, *supra* note 39, at 119; Crowder-Meyer, *supra* note 39, at 409; see also David Doherty, Conor M. Dowling & Michael G. Miller, *Do Local Party Chairs Think Women and Minority Candidates Can Win? Evidence from a Conjoint Experiment*, 81 J. POL. 1282, 1283 (2019).

⁴¹ Crowder-Meyer, *supra* note 39, at 409.

⁴² See REPRESENT WOMEN, RANKED CHOICE VOTING AND WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION 1 (2018), <https://fairvote.app.box.com/s/mp3eoagwqljlxaiieibpuluahmoiqr4> [<https://perma.cc/FD7K-WDNJ>] (finding that, in U.S. cities that allow voters to rank candidates in order of preference, women on average comprise 50% of city councils compared to 25% in 100 most populous U.S. cities); REPRESENT WOMEN, WHY RULES AND SYSTEMS MATTER: LESSONS FROM AROUND THE WORLD 11 (2018), <https://fairvote.app.box.com/s>

officeholders have also increased women's political representation in other countries but are largely incompatible with candidate-centered U.S. electoral systems.⁴³

Less gender-specific changes to electoral rules have also been touted as specifically helpful to women. Within the past few years, for example, women candidates and legislators have fought for administrative rule changes or for legislation to allow the use of campaign funds for campaign-related childcare expenses.⁴⁴ By making it easier for parents—women or men—to afford political candidacy, these reforms make political campaigns and institutions more accommodating to caregivers, who are still disproportionately women. Creating more family-friendly campaign environments is especially difficult in U.S. campaigns that are candidate centered, lengthy, and expensive. It is not much easier to alter executive and legislative political institutions to be more gender sensitive, but U.S. political structures could heed international guidance to create structures and rules that better accommodate women.⁴⁵ Just as women candidates and officeholders have led the way in pushing for caregiver-friendly electoral reforms, they have also championed structural changes in legislatures that address oversights and inequities within institutions originally built by and for men.⁴⁶ These changes not only make it easier for women already serving but also create conditions more appealing to those considering candidacy.

Previous political reforms presumed to address gender inequality offer some caution in adding these to any agenda for the next century. For example, while many assumed that women stood to benefit from state legislatures' adoption of term limits, different analyses of their impact have shown different results: some researchers have found benefits to women in certain settings,⁴⁷ while others have

/n7ozbg7yfqdpipa5i8lvjlz862ur63hs [https://perma.cc/2GGA-T8DW]. For a concise review of research on electoral systems and gender in the United States, see *Women's Representation*, FAIRVOTE, https://www.fairvote.org/women_s_representation [https://perma.cc/V7RB-3LJH] (last visited Sept. 27, 2020).

⁴³ See Mona Lena Krook & Pippa Norris, *Beyond Quotas: Strategies to Promote Gender Equality in Elected Office*, 62 POL. STUD. 2, 10-17 (2014).

⁴⁴ See *State Candidates and the Use of Campaign Funds for Childcare Expenses*, CTR. FOR AM. WOMEN & POL., <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/use-campaign-funds-childcare-expenses> [https://perma.cc/8M7J-XAPC] (last updated July 2020).

⁴⁵ See, e.g., SARAH CHILDS, *THE GOOD PARLIAMENT* 12-40 (2016), <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/news/2016/july/20%20Jul%20Prof%20Sarah%20Childs%20The%20Good%20Parliament%20report.pdf> [https://perma.cc/F5TH-7GBR] (providing 43 recommendations to make U.K. parliament more gender-inclusive); *Gender-Sensitive Parliaments*, INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION, <https://www.ipu.org/our-impact/gender-equality/gender-sensitive-parliaments> [https://perma.cc/QG9G-GKEN] (last visited Sept. 27, 2020).

⁴⁶ See, e.g., DITTMAR, SANBONMATSU & CARROLL, *supra* note 28, at 187-88.

⁴⁷ Lisa García Bedolla, Katherine Tate & Janelle Wong, *Indelible Effects: The Impact of Women of Color in the U.S. Congress*, in *WOMEN AND ELECTIVE OFFICE: PAST, PRESENT, AND*

found a decrease in women's representation after term limits were adopted,⁴⁸ and still other researchers have found no difference in women's representational gains between state legislatures with and without term limits.⁴⁹ Perhaps the most important takeaway from this research is that determining the impact of structural reforms on women's candidacies and representation must be done with attention to both time and related factors (such as building a pool of women to run) and that the effects of these reforms might vary over place and time. In a U.S. electoral system where rules are established at subnational levels, states and cities provide a site for testing hypotheses that advancing representational diversity will take changing both the informal *and* formal rules of the game.

IV. DISRUPT GENDER DYNAMICS AND EXPECTATIONS IN AMERICAN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Much of my work to date has investigated how to transform political institutions in ways that alter the balance of gender power so that White male dominance is disrupted.⁵⁰ Campaigns and government are gendered institutions wherein, as Joan Acker outlines, "gender is present in the processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distributions of power."⁵¹ Professor Joni Lovenduski adds that "institutions have distinctively gendered cultures and are involved in

FUTURE 235, 240 (Sue Thomas & Clyde Wilcox eds., 3d ed. 2014) ("Term limits in the state of California seem to be promoting the election of Latinas to Congress . . ."); Barbara Norrander & Clyde Wilcox, *Trends in the Geography of Women in the U.S. State Legislatures*, in WOMEN AND ELECTIVE OFFICE, *supra*, at 273, 285; Valerie O'Regan & Stephen J. Stambough, *Term Limits and Women's Representation: A Democratic Opportunity and a Republican Dead-End*, 6 POL. GROUPS & IDENTITIES 650, 658-60 (2018).

⁴⁸ Susan J. Carroll & Krista Jenkins, *Do Term Limits Help Women Get Elected?*, 82 SOC. SCI. Q. 197, 198 (2001).

⁴⁹ STANLEY M. CARESS & TODD T. KUNIOKA, TERM LIMITS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES 69 (2012).

⁵⁰ See, e.g., KELLY DITTMAR, NAVIGATING GENDERED TERRAIN: STEREOTYPES AND STRATEGY IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS 11 (2015) (interviewing campaign practitioners, applying feminist-institutionalist framework to campaign strategies, and finding that "innovative campaign decisions . . . have the potential to disrupt, instead of replicate, institutional norms and power structures"); DITTMAR, SANBONMATSU & CARROLL, *supra* note 28, at 219-20 (finding that Congresswomen "have succeeded in altering both physical structures and institutional rules that were not initially created to accommodate women," including gaining access to congressional swimming pool, changing outdated dress codes, and acting as role models). For a discussion of gender power, see GENDER POWER, LEADERSHIP, AND GOVERNANCE (Georgia Duerst-Lahti & Rita Mae Kelly eds., 1995).

⁵¹ Joan Acker, *From Sex Roles to Gendered Institutions*, 21 CONTEMP. SOC. 565, 567 (1992).

processes of producing and reproducing gender.”⁵² Relatedly, Professor Meryl Kenny clarifies that “gender is not something people *have*, it is something they *do*.”⁵³ For most of American history, “doing gender” in politics meant that candidates and officeholders who aligned with stereotypically masculine conceptions of leadership were viewed as legitimate and appropriate contenders.⁵⁴ Adaptation to these standards has allowed their replication and persistence over time.⁵⁵ But disruption is also possible—and I would argue essential—to creating American political institutions in which women’s inclusion is more likely and women’s political power is won and exercised on their own terms.

Women and men alike—and their teams—play key roles in shaping our collective expectations of what it means to be a political candidate or officeholder. In the images they present, messages they put forth, and tactics they adopt, they make decisions about whether to adhere to or reject the prevailing rules of political engagement—rules that have, until this point, favored masculinity and men. Candidates and officeholders can disrupt gendered norms and rules of political engagement in multiple ways.

First, candidates and officeholders have the capacity to expand both the expected image and the credentials for political leadership. In 1974, Jeane Kirkpatrick wrote: “A woman entering politics risks the social and psychological penalties so frequently associated with nonconformity.”⁵⁶ In her 1981 volume on women candidates, Ruth Mandel wrote: “When he runs for public office, a man does not exhibit behavior unusual for his sex. Because he is performing in an arena where men have always been active, he is playing a role consistent with established social patterns.”⁵⁷ These early assessments of women’s nonconformity in electoral politics have been backed by research that demonstrates how expectations of officeholders align with traits and expertise most associated with men.⁵⁸ In their analysis of stereotypes of gender and

⁵² Joni Lovenduski, *Gendering Research in Political Science*, 1 ANN. REV. POL. SCI. 333, 348 (1998) (citing Sally J. Kenney, *New Research on Gendered Political Institutions*, 49 POL. RES. Q. 445 (1996)).

⁵³ Meryl Kenny, *Gender, Institutions and Power: A Critical Review*, 27 POL. 91, 93 (2007) (citing Candace West & Don H. Zimmerman, *Doing Gender*, 1 GENDER & SOC’Y 125, 126 (1987)).

⁵⁴ DITTMAR, *supra* note 50, at 80.

⁵⁵ *See id.* at 124.

⁵⁶ JEANE J. KIRKPATRICK, POLITICAL WOMAN 15 (1974).

⁵⁷ RUTH B. MANDEL, IN THE RUNNING: THE NEW WOMAN CANDIDATE 65 (1981).

⁵⁸ *See, e.g.*, ALICE H. EAGLY & LINDA L. CARLI, THROUGH THE LABYRINTH: THE TRUTH ABOUT HOW WOMEN BECOME LEADERS 97 (2007) (showing that significant portion of U.S. population believe “[m]ost men are better suited emotionally for politics than are most women” because public perceives men as more agentic); Alice H. Eagly & Steven J. Karau, *Role Congruity Theory and Prejudice Toward Female Leaders*, 109 PSYCHOL. REV. 573, 575 (2002); Mirya R. Holman, Jennifer L. Merolla & Elizabeth J. Zechmeister, *Sex, Stereotypes,*

leadership, Alice Eagly and Steven Karau wrote, “[I]n thinking about female leaders, people would combine their largely divergent expectations about leaders and women, whereas in thinking about male leaders, people would combine highly redundant expectations.”⁵⁹ This reality has pressured political women to adapt to prevailing expectations of political leaders by proving their masculine credentials. While this approach has found some success in reassuring voters of women’s capacity to lead,⁶⁰ it also risks backlash from women’s violations of gender expectations.⁶¹

Instead of working to prove that they can mirror the men who have typically served in elected office, modern candidates and officeholders can redefine the ways in which stereotypically masculine credentials—like strength or toughness—are conveyed. Women candidates have offered examples in recent elections, sharing personal experiences with abuse or discrimination as evidence of the resilience that they will bring to their public service. This is a start to challenging established norms, but it still elevates masculinity as the measure by which political fit is determined.⁶² More than two decades ago, Linda Witt, Karen Paget, and Glenna Matthews concluded that “[w]omen candidates are increasingly able to present themselves to voters without cloaking themselves in

and Security: A Study of the Effects of Terrorist Threat on Assessments of Female Leadership, 32 J. WOMEN POL. & POL’Y 173, 186-87 (2011) (finding that approval of women leadership decreased in the context of a terrorist threat because women are not viewed as strong leaders); Leonie Huddy & Nayda Terkildsen, *Gender Stereotypes and the Perception of Male and Female Candidates*, 37 AM. J. POL. SCI. 119, 140-41 (1993); Leonie Huddy & Nayda Terkildsen, *The Consequences of Gender Stereotypes for Women Candidates at Different Levels and Types of Office*, 46 POL. RES. Q. 503, 518-22 (1993); Anne M. Koenig et al., *Are Leader Stereotypes Masculine? A Meta-Analysis of Three Research Paradigms*, 137 PSYCHOL. BULL. 616, 634 (2011).

⁵⁹ Eagly & Karau, *supra* note 58, at 575.

⁶⁰ See Nichole M. Bauer, *The Effects of Counterstereotypic Gender Strategies on Candidate Evaluations*, 38 POL. PSYCHOL. 279, 291-92 (2017); Kathleen Dolan, *The Impact of Gender Stereotyped Evaluations on Support for Women Candidates*, 32 POL. BEHAV. 69, 85 (2010) (finding evidence that bolstering credibility on “male issues” like economy and terrorism would help women candidates succeed).

⁶¹ See Bauer, *supra* note 60, at 291; Nichole M. Bauer & Colleen Carpinella, *Visual Information and Candidate Evaluations: The Influence of Feminine and Masculine Images on Support for Female Candidates*, 71 POL. RES. Q. 395, 403 (2018); Erin C. Cassese & Mirya R. Holman, *Party and Gender Stereotypes in Campaign Attacks*, 40 POL. BEHAV. 785, 799-800 (2018) (finding that women candidates are particularly vulnerable to campaign attacks on gendered traits and issues); Monica Cecile Schneider, *Gender Bending: Candidate Strategy and Voter Response in a Marketing Age 130* (June 2007) (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota) (on file with Wilson Library, University of Minnesota) (finding women candidates who “bend their gender” in campaign rhetoric experienced decrease in integrity ratings).

⁶² See DITTMAR, *supra* note 50, at 124; DITTMAR, *supra* note 4, at 27-28.

male authority.”⁶³ Their assessment may have been somewhat premature, as women are still not free of this pressure more than two decades later.

However, women have already and will continue to offer alternative credentials for political leadership that have the capacity to change what voters demand and expect in candidates and officeholders. If our collective expectations of political leadership are less strictly congruent with stereotypically masculine norms, traits, and expertise, then candidates and officeholders—women and men alike—will be less constrained in how they present themselves, perform gender, and engage in political behavior. One example of this disruption in recent elections has been how women have embraced their experiences and perspectives *as women*—and *as women of color*—as an electoral asset instead of treating their gender or race, and the intersection of both, as a hurdle to overcome on the campaign trail. This aligns with Jane Mansbridge’s claims that we should recognize gender as one among multiple credentials for office holding instead of—for women, at least—a variable to neutralize.⁶⁴ The benefits of women’s inclusion go beyond simple descriptive representation; women bring distinct experiences and perspectives *as women* that contribute to policy deliberation, process, and outcomes.⁶⁵ Hillary Clinton may have made this claim most clearly while campaigning for President in 2015. She explained, “I’m not asking people to vote for me simply because I’m a woman. I’m asking people to vote for me on the merits. . . . I think one of the merits is I am a woman.”⁶⁶

In addition to touting benefits of being women, women candidates also challenge assumptions that men are better suited for the business of politics. This is not new; women have argued against claims that they are ill suited for politics for more than a century. But that work must continue, especially at the highest levels of political power, not only to disrupt expectations but also to inform behavior. Christina Ladam, Jeffrey Harden, and Jason Windett find that high-profile women officeholders motivate other women to run for office, and previous research suggests that this mobilizing effect is not limited to women officeholders.⁶⁷ Lonna Rae Atkeson finds that competitive female candidates cue women citizens who align ideologically with them to increase their political

⁶³ LINDA WITT, KAREN M. PAGET & GLENNA MATTHEWS, *RUNNING AS A WOMAN: GENDER AND POWER IN AMERICAN POLITICS* 296 (1st paperback ed. 1995).

⁶⁴ See Jane Mansbridge, *Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent “Yes,”* 61 J. POL. 628, 647 (1999).

⁶⁵ DITTMAR, SANBONMATSU & CARROLL, *supra* note 28, at 5.

⁶⁶ Eric Bradner, *Hillary Clinton: ‘One of the Merits Is I Am a Woman,’* CNN (July 23, 2015, 4:32 PM), <https://www.cnn.com/2015/07/23/politics/hillary-clinton-gender-merits/index.html> [<https://perma.cc/834P-XZ7K>].

⁶⁷ Christina Ladam, Jeffrey J. Harden & Jason H. Windett, *Prominent Role Models: High-Profile Female Politicians and the Emergence of Women as Candidates for Public Office*, 62 AM. J. POL. SCI. 369, 379 (2018).

engagement.⁶⁸ These findings support a conclusion made by Nancy Burns, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Sidney Verba that “the more it looks as if politics is not simply a man’s game, the more psychologically involved with politics women are.”⁶⁹

Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) provides an example of how women both expose and disrupt the established norms of candidacy, and offers an alternative image and approach to winning elected office. The first line of her introductory campaign video of the 2018 cycle was: “Women like me aren’t supposed to run for office.”⁷⁰ But she did run, and she ran in a way that did not seek to apologize or compensate for being a young Latina. That has symbolic effects that might inspire other women, and specifically other young Latinas, to run. But women candidates and officeholders like Ocasio-Cortez do more than that. By pointing out their differences instead of trying to minimize them, they confront and hopefully contest expectations of who is meant to be electorally successful.

Like Ocasio-Cortez, other women in politics have directly challenged biases that have hampered their political power. At an October 2018 rally to oppose Justice Brett Kavanaugh’s confirmation to the Supreme Court, now-Representative Ayanna Pressley (D-MA) took the podium and said, “I’ll tell you the truth. As a woman of color, who has a platform, I have been asked to not come off as outraged or angry for fear of being labeled an angry black woman.”⁷¹ She added, “Well, I am angry. And I am outraged. Because this is outrageous.”⁷² In that moment, Pressley defined the bias that Black women confront on political stages, forcing her audience to recognize what might otherwise be accepted or implicit, and then proceeded to reject that bias as a constraint on her own behavior. During the 2020 presidential campaign, Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) took a similar approach when accused of being too angry to be an effective president. In a fundraising email with the subject line “I am angry and I own it,” she wrote: “Over and over, we are told that women are not allowed to be angry. It makes us unattractive to powerful men who want us to be quiet”⁷³ In

⁶⁸ Lonna Rae Atkeson, *Not All Cues Are Created Equal: The Conditional Impact of Female Candidates on Political Engagement*, 65 J. POL. 1040, 1053 (2003).

⁶⁹ NANCY BURNS, KAY LEHMAN SCHLOZMAN & SIDNEY VERBA, *THE PRIVATE ROOTS OF PUBLIC ACTION: GENDER, EQUALITY, AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION* 347 (2001).

⁷⁰ Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, *The Courage to Change | Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez*, YOUTUBE (May 30, 2018), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rq3QXIVR0bs>.

⁷¹ Jacqueline Tempera, *What Drives Ayanna Pressley? Inside the Mind and Motivations of Massachusetts’ First Black Congresswoman*, MASSLIVE (Sept. 17, 2019), <https://www.masslive.com/news/g66l-2019/01/1d9513df302122/what-drives-ayanna-pressley-in.html> [<https://perma.cc/2W27-Q732>].

⁷² *Id.*

⁷³ Sahil Kapur, *Elizabeth Warren Ignores Biden, Implies Sexism in Fund-Raising Note*, BLOOMBERG (Nov. 9, 2019, 4:42 PM), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-11-09/warren-ignores-biden-on-road-implies-sexism-in-fundraising-note>.

campaign speeches and on the debate stage, Warren—along with her fellow Democratic women candidates for president in 2020—also challenged voters' biased perceptions of presidential electability, offering evidence contrary to prevailing notions that nominating a woman—especially a woman of color—was riskier than selecting a White man. These are just a few examples of women candidates shifting the burden to voters to adapt *their* thinking about gender, race, and candidacy, instead of putting the burden on themselves to adapt to stereotypical norms that primarily served to reinforce White male privilege in American politics. Some may perceive this strategy as politically risky in the short term—risking backlash by causing voter discomfort—but challenging biases instead of accepting that women need to do additional labor in navigating and overcoming them to find political success is institutionally essential in the long term.

The above examples emphasize the role that women play in disrupting institutional norms and expectations, but the responsibility for disrupting gender power dynamics in American politics does not fall only on women. Men, who make up the majority of candidates and officeholders, must play a more active role in creating more equitable political institutions and advancing women's political power. For White men especially, this means recognizing the ways in which their gender and race have constrained their experiences and understanding of what is at stake in politics and policy instead of assuming that these identities make them most fit to lead.⁷⁴

Men also shape the gendered standards of political leadership in how they behave as candidates and officeholders. President Donald Trump offers the most explicit example of maintaining masculinity as the standard by which political timber is measured. Not only has President Trump sought to portray himself as the manliest candidate and officeholder but he also emasculates his opponents—both male and female—as one of his primary strategies to undermine them. But other male politicians have offered examples of the role that men can play in creating new conditions for political success. For example, male candidates in recent elections have both contributed to and taken advantage of shifting gender dynamics and dialogue to reject patriarchal, heteronormative, and toxic models of masculinity while embracing traits and behaviors stereotypically associated with women. Some men have prioritized gender equality in agendas and messaging, explicitly acknowledging and calling for disruption of the gender power dynamics that have worked against women. In the 2020 presidential race,

⁷⁴ While campaigning for the Democratic nomination for president, Governor Jay Inslee (D-WA) told CNN, “I think I have evinced a humility about being a straight white male that I have never experienced discrimination like so many do . . . I’ve never been pulled over as an African American teenager by an officer driving through a white neighborhood. I’ve never been a woman talked over in a meeting. So I approach this with humility.” Eugene Scott, *Jay Inslee’s Insightful Comments on White Privilege and Discrimination*, WASH. POST (Mar. 12, 2019, 2:29 PM), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/03/12/jay-inslees-insightful-comments-white-privilege-discrimination/>.

for example, Democratic candidate Julián Castro spoke openly about intersectionality, demonstrated awareness of and sensitivity to nonbinary gender identities, and even pointed to Black feminism as guiding some of his policy agendas and priorities.⁷⁵

Key to men's positive influence on institutional progress is not only recognizing their own limitations in perspective and experience but also lifting up perspectives and experiences that have too often been underrepresented or undervalued in American politics. In the aftermath of Senator Warren's departure from the 2020 presidential race, MSNBC commentator Zerlina Maxwell said, "I would like more men to be vocal about the fact that they want to see women in positions of leadership."⁷⁶ Maxwell's request is simple, but what she hopes for from men is surprisingly rare. For centuries, women have performed the labor of advancing gender equality, often in spite of the efforts of men. In the next century, more of the burden of advancing gender parity in American politics must be shifted to men—whether they are candidates, officeholders, political practitioners, or voters.

V. ADVANCE WOMEN'S PRESENCE, DIVERSITY, POWER, AND INFLUENCE
AMONG ALL ACTORS IN AMERICAN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Cindy Simon Rosenthal wrote that "our understanding of institutions is inextricably bound to the dominant individuals who populate them."⁷⁷ The ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment altered both the understanding of and approaches to electoral politics due to the inclusion of women voters. Similarly, as women have increased their representation as officeholders across levels of office, political agendas, priorities, and processes have changed. But political principals—officeholders and candidates—and those who select them are not the only institutional actors that shape the distribution and exercise of gender power in American politics. In my own work, I have emphasized the importance of evaluating the presence, power, and influence of women and minorities as congressional and campaign staff and strategists.⁷⁸ In order to upend the White male privilege of our political institutions, women with diverse backgrounds and

⁷⁵ DITTMAR, *supra* note 4, at 32.

⁷⁶ Charlie Nash, *Ex-Hillary Aide on Warren Exit: Men Should Push for Women to Lead, Not Just When They Get Daughters and Discover 'Women Are People,'* MEDIAITE (Mar. 5, 2020, 11:51 AM), <https://www.mediaite.com/tv/ex-hillary-aide-on-warren-exit-men-should-push-for-women-to-lead-not-just-when-they-get-daughters-and-discover-women-are-people/> [<https://perma.cc/7XJV-PXQV>].

⁷⁷ Cindy Simon Rosenthal, *Gender Styles in State Legislative Committees: Raising Their Voices in Resolving Conflict*, 21 WOMEN & POL. 21, 41 (2000).

⁷⁸ See, e.g., DITTMAR, *supra* note 50, at 162-67; Kelly Dittmar, *Invisible Forces: Gender, Race, and Congressional Staff 4* (Aug. 2020) (unpublished working paper), https://sites.rutgers.edu/kelly-dittmar/wp-content/uploads/sites/491/2020/08/KDittmar_Invisible-Forces_November-Draft.pdf [<https://perma.cc/HA32-ZC6J>].

perspectives must not only be present but also be empowered at, around, and at the head of tables where political and policy decisions are being made.

The assumption of male dominance among political staff has pervaded scholarship and practice. Professor David Rosenbloom's 1973 volume on campaign staff was titled *Election Men*,⁷⁹ and David Price wrote three years earlier about congressional staff as "staff men."⁸⁰ My own analysis in 2009 showed that men made up at least 75% of political consultants with strategic influence in U.S. campaigns.⁸¹ And while women are much better represented among congressional staff overall (more than 50%), they remain underrepresented at the highest levels of staff leadership and power.⁸² In both fields, the underrepresentation of communities of color is even more stark; among congressional staff, for example, just 13.7% of House chiefs of staff, legislative directors, communications directors, and committee staff directors were people of color as of June 2018.⁸³ Gender and racial disparities in political institutions are not found in numbers alone. Gender and racialized power dynamics within them have long privileged masculinity and Whiteness, shaping both the behavior and experiences of all actors, staff included.

Revealing the numeric underrepresentation of women and minorities in these roles, and especially in positions of greatest political influence and power, is the first step to making visible the institutional realities and dynamics that have concentrated institutional power in the hands of White men. But we must go further in addressing these disparities in presence and power to contribute to structural and cultural changes that are more likely to foster women's political progress.

When I suggested to a political strategist that campaigns have the capacity to disrupt images and norms of political leadership, he told me, "I'm not a social change agent here. I'm a campaign manager, and I got to win."⁸⁴ But making social—or institutional—change in political campaigns *is* winning. In the short

⁷⁹ DAVID LEE ROSENBLOOM, *THE ELECTION MEN: PROFESSIONAL CAMPAIGN MANAGERS AND AMERICAN DEMOCRACY* (1973).

⁸⁰ David E. Price, *Professionals and "Entrepreneurs": Staff Orientations and Policy Making on Three Senate Committees*, 33 J. POL. 316, 334-35 (1971).

⁸¹ DITTMAR, *supra* note 50, at 163.

⁸² Casey Burgat, *Among House Staff, Women Are Well Represented. Just Not in the Senior Positions.*, WASH. POST (June 20, 2017, 6:00 AM), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/06/20/among-house-staff-women-are-well-represented-just-not-in-the-senior-positions/>; *see also* Casey Burgat (@CaseyBurgat), TWITTER (Sept. 27, 2019, 3:19 PM), <https://twitter.com/CaseyBurgat/status/1177664014622568448> [<https://perma.cc/AZ55-BQB6>].

⁸³ ELSIE L. SCOTT ET AL., JOINT CTR. FOR POLITICAL & ECON. STUDIES, RACIAL DIVERSITY AMONG TOP U.S. HOUSE STAFF 11 (2018), <https://jointcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Racial-Diversity-Among-Top-US-House-Staff-9-11-18-245pm-1.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/J7R5-6V73>].

⁸⁴ DITTMAR, *supra* note 50, at 160.

term, disrupting expectations of both gender and candidacy on the campaign trail pushes voters to rethink what they value in our elected leaders and offers more than one path to victory for candidates. In the long term, challenging the masculine-dominated status quo in campaigning—and an even broader homogeneity in race, class, age, sexuality, and other candidate characteristics—expands the pool of potential candidates who will run and win. That is why the perceptions, experiences, and approaches of campaign practitioners matter. Together with candidates, campaign professionals influence to what extent and in what ways gender shapes campaign strategy, and whether those strategic decisions have the potential to maintain or disrupt prevailing gender norms and expectations in American politics.

Apart from campaigns alone, diversity of all kinds—gender, racial, ethnic, generational, and more—at strategic tables brings numerous advantages to any political institution. Diverse staff and practitioners can assist principals to ensure that they appeal to and serve the interests of broad and diverse constituencies. Diversity of viewpoints and backgrounds also offers innovative approaches to political leadership that need not replicate male models nor create distinctively female ones but instead offer alternative routes toward political success.

The limited but important work on gender and racial diversity among congressional staff reveals the ways in which women and minority staffers contribute to political progress by offering multilayered perspectives, challenging institutional norms and biases, and providing alternative images of who holds political power.⁸⁵ To be sure, the influence of this type of inclusion is not uniform. As Mansbridge explains: “[B]ecause the content and range of any deliberation is often unpredictable, a variety of representatives is usually needed to represent the heterogeneous, varied inflections and internal oppositions that together constitute the complex and internally contested perspectives, opinions, and interests characteristic of any group.”⁸⁶ Increasing the gender and racial diversity of all political actors—not only principals—does not guarantee a universal style of disruption or agenda for change, but it will bring distinct and otherwise missing perspectives to political institutions and will make them less likely to reinforce the White male status quo in the distribution, norms, and exercise of power.

My interviews with high-level women congressional staffers are revealing on this point. For example, Denise Desiderio, staffer on the Senate Committee on Tribal Affairs, noted the value of having tribal women staff at the table when Congress was debating reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act in 2013, which sought to cover Indigenous women on reservations for the first

⁸⁵ See Dittmar, *supra* note 78, at 23-31; see also James R. Jones, *Racing Through the Halls of Congress: The “Black Nod” as an Adaptive Strategy for Surviving in a Raced Institution*, 14 DU BOIS REV. 165, 182 (2017) (framing “black nod” as “a cultural tool that advances Blacks on Capitol Hill both as a community and as individuals”).

⁸⁶ Mansbridge, *supra* note 64, at 636.

time.⁸⁷ She explained: “You can learn issues. You can read about issues. [But] . . . the experience factor of living in a community that you are representing, of being a female when you are [talking] about violence against women, it adds an extra layer to the conversation.”⁸⁸ Desiderio also described the symbolic importance of holding her position on Capitol Hill.⁸⁹ She explained the importance of hosting children from tribal communities at her congressional office, telling me, “The relatability of being a woman and an Indian in those positions, I think, was something that I was incredibly proud of . . . to let them know that it’s something that they could do, too.”⁹⁰

In the next century, the work to advance women’s political power must extend to empowering women in professional political roles. Identifying social, political, and structural barriers to equality for women political professionals—including but not limited to inequities in power, political networks dominated by White men, and the incompatibility of political careers with persistent disparities in care burdens at home—and creating pathways to political involvement of all types for women are necessary steps to promoting gender progress across political settings and spaces.

MOVING FORWARD

In the same year that we are celebrating one hundred years since the Nineteenth Amendment, many women are also mourning the fact that the presidency remains elusive for women, even after a record number of women ran for the 2020 Democratic nomination. The six women presidential candidates who ran this year faced some of the persistent hurdles and biases that have precluded gender parity in politics for more than a century. But their candidacies also indicated progress—not only in their presence on the campaign trail, debate stages, and primary ballots but also in how they challenged monolithic ideas of how women should or do run and how they disrupted norms of candidacy that have long advantaged men.

At the congressional level, that progress looks likely to continue, albeit at a less brisk pace than we saw in 2018. A record number of Republican women filed as U.S. House candidates in 2020,⁹¹ and Democratic women matched the

⁸⁷ Dittmar, *supra* note 78, at 26.

⁸⁸ *Id.* (first and second alterations in original).

⁸⁹ *Id.* at 30.

⁹⁰ *Id.* at 31 (alteration in original).

⁹¹ Press Release, Ctr. for Am. Women & Politics, GOP Women Surpass Previous High for Filed House Candidates; Filing Deadlines in Nearly Half of States Yet to Pass (Mar. 31, 2020), <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/resources/press-release-gop-women-filers.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/5NUC-DTTN>]; *see also* Kelly Dittmar, *What You Need to Know About the Record Numbers of Women Candidates in 2020*, CTR. FOR AM. WOMEN & POL. (Aug. 10, 2020), <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/election-analysis/record-numbers-women-candidates-2020> [<https://perma.cc/2GEK-AT5H>].

historic House candidate filing record.⁹² Women also represent a greater percentage of all U.S. House candidates in 2020, demonstrating that they are not only expanding representation in the candidate pool by raw numbers but also by comparison with men.⁹³

Because women sit at different intersections of axes of privilege and marginalization, their current levels of and future paths toward greater political power and influence vary. That heterogeneity among women must be recognized, addressed, and better understood as we contemplate the next century of women's political empowerment. Partisan and ideological differences, for example, are evident in the very notion that more women should hold elected office. While the majority of women value gender parity among officeholders, an August 2019 The Economist/YouGov poll found that 81% of Democrats and 52% of Republicans preferred 50% or more women in elected offices.⁹⁴ The same poll showed that Democratic respondents were more likely to identify distinct strengths and benefits of women's political representation.⁹⁵ Relatedly, recent research on White women voters points to the intersections of race and party in shaping whether or not women even identify gender discrimination or inequality as a problem in need of solving. Drawing from system justification theory, Professors Erin Cassese and Tiffany Barnes write: "[W]hite women's interdependence with white men and their desire to maintain their privileged status relative to more socially distant racial and ethnic groups, may lead to a greater endorsement of hostile sexist beliefs and a reluctance to attribute gender-based inequality to discrimination."⁹⁶ In other words, some White women reject claims of gender-based inequality because those claims—and efforts to address them—might disrupt the very systems that uphold and protect their racial privilege.

These findings reveal the important and persistent intersections between gender and race in understanding women's political experiences, opportunities, and priorities. They also demonstrate the importance of moving beyond numbers alone to both assess and address unequal distributions of power within our political institutions. The next century of efforts to advance women's political

⁹² Press Release, Ctr. for Am. Women & Politics, Correction: Democratic Women *Match*, but Do Not Surpass, House Candidate Filing Record (Aug. 10, 2020), <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/resources/press-release-end-of-filing-correction.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/55FW-ALCK>]; see also Dittmar, *supra* note 91.

⁹³ See *Women as Percentage of 2020 Major-Party Candidates and Nominees*, *supra* note 24.

⁹⁴ YOUGov, THE ECONOMIST/YOUGOV POLL 251 (2019), https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/mujbtdyiti/econTabReport.pdf [<https://perma.cc/B9SW-K9KR>].

⁹⁵ *Id.* at 199-223.

⁹⁶ Erin C. Cassese & Tiffany D. Barnes, *Reconciling Sexism and Women's Support for Republican Candidates: A Look at Gender, Class, and Whiteness in the 2012 and 2016 Presidential Races*, 41 POL. BEHAV. 677, 688 (2019).

power must grapple with the axes of privilege that have biased distribution of voice and power within women's political movements and the secondary marginalization that some women have experienced in seeking greater representation and influence within the formal political sphere. Disrupting gender dynamics in political institutions requires not only increasing women's presence but also challenging the status quo in how power is distributed, exercised, and defined.

Finally, as noted above, the commitment to and labor toward these efforts cannot fall only on women's shoulders. Men must shoulder the burden of advancing gender parity in American politics. Like women, men do not share universal perceptions of what needs to be done to promote women's political power (or whether that should be a priority at all). They also vary in the privilege and power that they hold within political institutions and thus in their capacity for effecting change. But as long as men hold the majority of positions and power within American political institutions, they are key to making the institutional changes required to disrupt the status quo from which they have historically benefitted.