

Women in the Corporate Channel: a Process of Natural Exclusion?*

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Participation is one of the cornerstones on which a democratic political system rests, and the study of participation and representation has been a central concern in political science. In its classic form political participation has been centered around the electoral process, influencing it by means of control over candidates and issues. That type of activity has been organized by political parties. The great majority of theoretical and empirical writings about participation and representation deal with the electoral system, or what Stein Rokkan (1966) called the 'numerical channel'. It is, however, clear that post-war political systems are characterized by other forms of participation in public life which are equally important in the political process, and which involve both private citizens and voluntary organizations on a large scale. This 'corporate channel' constitutes another and increasingly important form of access to the centers of power. Some political observers have even argued that the elective system is being undermined by the increasing power of economic and other interest organizations whose legitimacy is less established, largely because they

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evade public control, and are not sufficiently controlled by their own members. The question of their legitimacy in the constitutional sense of that term is not such a central issue in Norway or in other Scandinavian countries. The large economic interest organizations have been accepted as participants in the political process. What has been at issue are questions of their internal democracy as well as their increased contact with the bureaucracy – some fear at the expense of their support of and demands to the legislature (cf. Dettling 1977; Olsen 1978).

What differentiates the Scandinavian from other Western systems, for example those of Great Britain and the United States, is mainly that we find in the Scandinavian system comparatively more organizational representation than individual. In other words the Norwegian system is officially and legitimately more 'corporate' than the British or American one. Although recruitment always happens by appointment through the responsible ministry, there are differences among individual members in terms of their mode of selection. Some are appointed as administrative officials, a few serve by virtue of their individual expertise, and some come as representatives of organizational interests. These latter representatives may again be elected within their own organizations or appointed by the organizational leadership.

This article does not deal with the role and function of the various commissions or concern itself with the work they execute. Their central importance for public policy-making has been established in other writings, although the exact relationship between the various forms for participation in decision-making is as yet unclear (Moren 1974). Our present interest in the corporate channel is limited to the representation within it of women, who constitute an important part of the Norwegian female elite: as a group, they may serve as an important indicator of the extent and composition of that elite.

Norway has a highly developed system of commissions, councils, committees, and delegations (there are about 1150 of them under the various ministries) which serve as a channel of communication, mutual control, and support between the administrative apparatus and the world of organizations, mainly interest organizations. What is important for our purposes here is that large-scale organizations and public bureaucracies have become powerful participants in the political process, in other words they define 'the public interest'. Women are heavily underrepresented in both, especially at the decision-making level. Recruitment to public boards, committees, and commissions occurs largely from the central bureaucracy and from organizations. Representatives of the latter make

up about 30 per cent of these bodies, and of these 70 per cent come from large-scale industrial and employer/employee organizations. The eligible pool of women candidates from the central bureaucracy and organizations is limited, since only 15 per cent of all bureaucrats in the central administration, and 7 per cent of all fulltime employees in the central offices of economic interest organizations, as well as 9 per cent of their elected officials, are women (Laegreid & Olsen 1978, 93). These are on the other hand the most obvious candidates for representation.

1. Women in the Numerical vs. the Corporate Channel

If we compare the numerical and the corporate channels in terms of their access and recruitment, certain differences become apparent. Both are embedded in organizational patterns. However, the requirements of the electoral system are less formal in terms of education and occupational status. Political parties demand both a great deal in terms of personal loyalty and time spent at the grassroots level – a factor which tends to exclude women with children – as well as interest in many issues which are defined as ‘political’ – yet exclude many activities and issues such as child care and neighbours’ organisation which engage women. Both the political process and the content of public policy serve to reduce women’s political activity compared to men’s. We would assume, nevertheless, that women are represented at a higher rate in the electoral than in the corporate channels. Recruitment to public commissions is based on an individual’s occupational status, organizational membership, and position in the public hierarchies. Political affiliation is relevant but not decisive.

Compared to the other Nordic countries, women in Norway are strongly underrepresented in almost all professions and skilled occupations. They also have lower organizational membership in politically relevant organizations. In addition, women are discriminated against, since there is not the same correlation between education and income as there is for men. In other words, women have lower positions and lower income than men, regardless of formal education. Norwegian women’s political representation is higher in the electoral than in the corporate channel. Ideally we should weigh representation in local councils, the Storting, and public commissions against each other. If we use the amount of time necessary for participation as a scale, we could state that only service in the Storting is a fulltime position. Appointment in commissions happens usually on the basis of occupational and organizational ties, and

requires probably less work than representation in a local council, especially in cities. But service on such commissions is less a matter of choice for the individual than is political representation in the electoral system. Women of all parties campaigned during the past elections to increase the representation of women in parliament and local councils. But while this has been a *popular* movement, there has been an *official* policy in the case of representation in the public committee system. Considerable pressure has been put on organizations and other bodies with the right to supply candidates for appointment to have women as 50 per cent of their nominations. A royal resolution concerning equal representation of women and men was passed, but only in the form of guidelines, in 1973. These were sharpened in 1976. But the turnover for these commissions is slow and organizations have been highly reluctant to conform. New appointments have led to an increase in female representation, but the overall percentage of women is still much lower than in electoral positions. As of 1978 women made up 16.7 per cent of the regular membership and 20 per cent of the alternate membership.

Recruitment procedures might well supply a partial explanation for the differences in the numerical and the corporate channel. Women have clearly had more control over the electoral process, both by applying pressure in the nomination process and because the Norwegian electoral law permits voters at the local level to cross out names from party lists, thus assuring the 'cumulation' of candidates – in this case women – into office. There have been well-publicized campaigns to increase the number of women candidates at all levels. Appointment to public councils, commissions, and delegations is controlled by the ministry concerned, but proposals for candidates come from organizations and other institutions

Table 1. The Representation of Women on Public Bodies.

<i>Arena</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>% of women</i>
Storting	1969	9.3
	1973	16.0
	1977	23.0
Local councils	1967	9.5
	1971	14.8
	1975	15.4
	1979	22.0
Public commissions and councils	1967	7.0
	1971	10.5
	1975	11.2
	1978	16.7

who often will refuse to nominate 'anyone but the most qualified'. The Ministry of Consumer Affairs and Administration, which administers implementation of the Royal Resolution, can protest and has done so, but the process is cumbersome and tedious for all concerned. There is no 'women's lobby' comparable to that in the electoral system. There has as of yet been no case where an institution has been denied representation for refusing to nominate a woman candidate.

There are various aspects that must be covered in a study of the genderbased division of labor in the corporate political channel: the segregation of women within certain policy sectors, their geographic recruitment, and their political qualifications. Our empirical material is based on a parliamentary report on public commissions and on findings from our own survey of their members. Our questionnaire was sent to all women who sat in at least one public commission in 1977 as well as to an equal number of male representatives, selected randomly. The questionnaire was answered by 679 women (75 per cent) and 564 men (62 per cent).

In 1975 there existed 1155 different commissions. Of these 899 were permanent; 236 were temporary committees and taskforces charged with factfinding, inquiry, and implementation of policies, while 20 were delegations to international organizations of various kinds. Of the total number of persons involved (7160), 986 were women and 6174 men. Women occupied 1327 committee places: of the 986 women, there were 188 (19 per cent), who sat in two or more commissions. Women sat on the average in 1.3 committees, constituting 3.3 per cent of all chairpersons, 1.2 per cent of all reporting secretaries, 8 per cent of the full membership, and 1.8 per cent of all special counsels. Men occupied 9168 places. Of the total number of men there were 1526 (24.4 per cent) who sat in two or more committees. Men sat on the average in 1.5 commissions.

2. Where are the Women?

We shall first consider the distribution of men and women across sectors. Our findings are not surprising, given what we know of the division of labor among men and women in modern societies. Table 2 ranks departments according to the total number of committee seats, according to both the percentage of women *within* each department, and the cross-sectoral distribution of the total number of female representatives. The table shows where we find women and in which sectors their special skills are most in demand. It reflects rather accurately the occupational structure of women in the paid labor force as well as the underrepresentation of women in most

Table 2. Female Representatives in Public Commissions, Councils, and Delegations, 1976.

Column 1 Department/number of seats available	Column 2 Department per cent and numbers of women in committees	Column 3 Department/rank in terms of total number of female represen- tations (percentages)
1. Church and Education	1967	1. Social Affairs
2. Social Affairs	1529	2. Church and Education
3. Industry	1134	3. Justice
4. Agriculture	1114	4. Consumer and Administration
5. Foreign Affairs	623	5. Foreign Affairs
6. Interior and Labor	619	6. Interior and Labor
7. Commerce and Shipping	544	7. Finance
8. Traffic and Transport	530	8. Industry
9. Justice	526	9. Prime Minister's Office
10. Fisheries	505	10. Agriculture
11. Consumer and Administration	454	11. Traffic and Transport
12. Finance	343	12. Commerce and Shipping
13. Defence	292	13. Environmental Protection
14. Prime Minister's Office	231	14. Fisheries
15. Environmental Affairs	193	15. Defence
	27.6 (145)	30.1
	25.5 (116)	21.7
	25.1 (400)	10.9
	16.0 (288)	8.7
	16.0 (37)	6.4
	13.6 (85)	5.0
	12.2 (42)	3.0
	11.6 (72)	2.9
	5.6 (29)	2.8
	4.2 (23)	2.6
	3.8 (11)	2.2
	3.4 (38)	1.7
	3.1 (35)	1.4
	2.8 (14)	1.1
		0.8

of what is called the 'public sector'. Women are almost absent from many of those central sectors which traditionally define the core content of the public interest and of public policy. They have little or no say in questions concerning industry, the labor market, the budget, agriculture, foreign policy, and defense.

Existing social theories have sometimes been used to explain both women's absence from political life and their 'specialization' in terms of sectors. Structural-functionalism (e.g. Parsons 1942; 1955) produced explanations in terms of sexdifferentiated role behavior and social systems, exchange theory (e.g. Blau 1964; Homans 1961) in terms of rational choice and comparative advantage. Structural-functional explanations limited themselves to stating sexrole differences as facts, and women's lower rate of participation and representation as a natural byproduct of their expressive role which was functionally necessary for the maintenance of the domestic sphere. Structural functionalism was a macro-theory of society which assigned women a set status mainly on the basis of their biology and social functions. Exchange theory in contrast is an actor-oriented theory describing social life as a process of exchanges in which individuals act on the basis of comparative advantage. Women's lower rate of participation in elections is explained on the basis of a sexual division of labor where women have the comparative advantage in the domestic sphere, and men in the public sphere, which includes politics. The theory also explains the process by which female representatives specialize in certain sectors of the system concerned with social services and education. They transfer their skills from the domestic sphere to the paid labor market. The central point to be made about past explanations of women's political behavior is that they were compared to men and 'found to be wanting'. In other words women were mini-men, they performed in the same manner – only less so. This is true of women as voters, women as representatives, and women as public officials (cf. Duverger 1955; Hazarsfeld et al. 1948; Lane 1959; Campbell et al. 1964; Bourque & Grossholtz 1974; Constantini & Craik 1972).

Even more important is the fact that these theories are as much part of an ideology of expected role behavior and that these norms affect the selection process. We shall return to other forms of explanations below. According to the two theories mentioned here the ministries of Education and of Social Affairs should have the highest percentage of women since they have the highest number of available positions *and* they control sectors dominated by women. They do have the highest number of women, but rank as number 3 and 4 on the list in terms of percentage of

women within the ministry. The two departments which have the highest percentage of women among their representatives are the most 'law-abiding', albeit for obvious reasons. The Ministry of Justice is, so to speak, professionally obliged to follow rules and regulations, while the Ministry of Consumer Affairs and Administration is charged with the implementation of the Royal Resolution mentioned above.

The Department of Justice might at first sight constitute an exception among the three obvious departments, i.e. departments which deal with issues where women predominate in the labor force, namely Education, Social Affairs, and Consumer Affairs. Part of the explanation for this phenomenon is that law, as one of the oldest professions, has recruited relatively many women over time and that women lawyers tend to work in the public rather than the private sector. This again is not a question of free choice, but rather one of greater discrimination of women in the private than the public sector. We find a similar trend among women economists and business administrators who also tend to work in the public sector. But part of the explanation is more mundane, and lies in the fact that many of the committees in the Department of Justice are boards of overseers for prisons where women sit as lay representatives in their role as socially concerned citizens: in short, an indication of the fact that women serve by virtue of their traditional social service role.

One final and possible explanation of women's relatively high representation in the departments of Social Services, Justice, and Consumer Affairs is that these departments were until 1979 headed by women. That fact combined with the Royal Resolution, which might have influenced women department heads more than men, might partly explain women's relatively high rate of representation. The Department of Environmental Affairs was also headed by a woman: though it has the fewest seats available and ranks 15th in column 1 in Table 2; it nevertheless ranks 9th on the 'departmental percentage' list. Part of the explanation here might also be that it is a relatively new ministry and thus has more leeway in its own representation structure. Column 1 explains why the *total percentage* of women is so low. Some of those ministries with the most highly developed committee system, such as Industry and Agriculture, have extremely low female representation. Agricultural organizations are notorious for their exclusion of women despite the fact that farm women are highly organized. The Department of Church and Education has the most slots but does poorly despite the prevalence of women in that sector and despite women's overrepresentation in religious organizations. The reason is that 'even under the Ministry of Education and Religion

economic organizations hold 90% of the organizational representations, while religious organizations had 1% and the scientific and cultural organizations 6%' (Olsen 1977, 58/59). Column 2 indicates where women's collective professional profile coincides with the public sector, and column 3 indicates roughly which ministries find it easiest to find women among the pool of eligibles. A large proportion of the female workforce is in these sectors. But despite the fact that the Department of Social Affairs has the most highly developed system of committees and a relatively large number of women to choose from, given women's professional dominance, it seems amazing that fully one-third of all seats occupied by women are concentrated in that one department. But the social service sector also includes many of the appointments made by the Department of Justice and the Department of Consumer Affairs. The latter is responsible for matters concerning families and children. The vast majority of women are in committees appointed by these three ministries.

3. Who Are the Women?

From the question of *where* women are represented in the system we now turn to the question of *who* they are: their geographical, social, and political origins and profiles compared to men's.

Criteria of eligibility for public office are established over a long period of time. In Norway as in most Western systems, these criteria consist of a combination of educational background, professional status, political experience, membership in relevant organizations, and seniority. There exists at all times a 'pool of eligibles', and competition for positions occurs among those who belong to this pool. Until recently gender has not been among the relevant criteria, while there have been quotas to achieve, for example, geographical balance. Whenever a new relevant criterion is introduced, the selection process becomes more complicated. Objections to such changes are usual although the opposition to the introduction of gender as a relevant criterion has been stronger than most others, at times even virulent. The dilemma is of course that in all such cases the established criteria are regarded as necessary and essential, and should therefore not be changed. In other words one may *add* to the list of relevant criteria for selection, but not subtract or detract from it.

The incorporation of new groups into the political process is often motivated by the desire to give them access and representation as well as the desire to bring new kinds of experience, expertise, and insight into the

policy making process. Both aspects are very important for the innovation of the system as a whole. Although lip service is paid to both aspects, it is rarely admitted or understood that these kinds of innovations will also imply changes in the form of loss – either for certain groups or ways of doing things. How many changes the addition of gender as a relevant criterion for eligibility ought to bring about or will bring about is an unresolved issue. As our data will show, one has until now opted for a ‘policy of the least changes’, by that we mean that the search for ‘qualified women’ is limited to those who have all the other qualifications considered necessary. The pool of eligibles has thus expanded in numbers and the competition for seats has increased, but the criteria for eligibility have not really changed. All this policy means is that discrimination against women shall cease. We define discrimination simply as the exclusion of individuals who are qualified. We will now turn to a discussion of the similarities and differences among female and male representatives. We will also attempt to give a preliminary answer as to whether the women bring new kinds of experience, expertise, and insight into the process.

Given the country’s topography, there has always been a great deal of emphasis placed upon geography as a relevant political variable. We have therefore looked at the geographical distribution of men and women in order to check whether urban women were even more overrepresented than urban men are known to be. One of the more popular counter arguments to increased female representation has been that educated, urban women would displace politically ‘weak’ (viz, rural, peripheral) men and thus increase social inequalities. Rural women were automatically excluded in that rank ordering. We found practically no difference in regard to regional representation while there is some difference in terms of the urban/rural axis. Women have a higher rural representation than men (Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3. Percentage of Representatives, by Region and Sex.

	Oslofjord	Inner East	South	West	Trøndelag	North
Women	(531) 53.9	(94) 9.5	(39) 4.0	(39) 13.9	(68) 6.9	(117) 11.9
Men	(3434) 55.6	(54) 8.7	(190) 3.1	(986) 16.0	(424) 6.9	(600) 9.7

Note: The regional classification is that developed by Rokkan 1966.

Table 4. Percentage of Representatives by Center/Periphery and Sex.

	Cities	Rest	
Women	(516) 52.3	(470) 47.7	(N = 986) 100
Men	(3539) 57.3	(2635) 42.7	(N = 6174) 100

Note: Cities = Oslo, Asker, Bærum, Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim, Tromsø.

In our questionnaire we inquired about social status, membership in organizations, and participation in so-called ad-hoc political activities or issue-oriented ad-hoc organizations. The differences between men and women in our sample are most significant when it comes to social status, but we also found differences in political activism. The main finding on both organized and ad-hoc activity is that the gap between elites and non-elites is much greater among women than among men. Differences between men and women are much smaller within the elites than between men and women in the population in general.

Similarities and differences make for an interesting pattern. In terms of civil and social status our data support what women's research has shown before, namely that marriage is a positive resource for men, while being unattached increases a women's chance of success in terms of career and public life. Fully 32 per cent of the women in our sample are unattached, i.e. single, divorced or widowed as against 7 per cent of the men. The women are also younger than the men, but almost no one in our sample is under 30 years of age which is the age by which most people are married: 45 per cent of the women are under 50 years of age as against 31 per cent of the men. We find an interesting pattern when it comes to the number of children: 29 per cent of the women as against 13 per cent of the men are childless, but those women who do have children have more than the men. In education the pattern is rather similar for women and men, the main difference being that 62 per cent of the men as against 43 per cent of the women have university degrees. A similar gap appears in the form of nursing and teaching qualifications: 1 per cent of the men as against 20.5 per cent of the women report qualifications in teaching and nursing. We had two questions of special relevance for differences in men's and women's ties to the labor market. Full-time work and uninterrupted careers are usually considered rank prerequisites in a system based on seniority.

Of those who answered the question, 17 per cent of the women and 4 per cent of the men worked part-time, and 37 per cent of the women, but only 8 per cent of the men said they had interrupted their education and professional life at least once because of child care or care for others in their family. None of these numbers are surprising but these factors quite clearly reduce women's ability to compete on an equal footing with men in terms of 'eligibility'. The professional profile of the men and women reflects their educational background: 29 per cent more women than men are in teaching or the health services, 10 per cent fewer women than men are privately employed. Only 6.5 per cent of the women are housewives which makes that group probably the most underrepresented as a whole, since about 40 per cent of all Norwegian women are full-time housewives.

Women who succeed in the world of men are statistical exceptions, when compared to women at large. Male leaders are statistically more representative of male non-leaders than women are of female non-leaders, although neither of course are 'random samples'. Both men and women who become leaders have been socialized in a way that is atypical, but this fact is much more true for women when compared to each other than it is for men. International findings usually report that successful women come from families with higher status than successful men. This is not the case in Norway. There are practically no differences when it comes to class background for the men and women in our sample which destroys another myth, namely that women's emancipation will increase class differences. We have already seen that members of the female elite more frequently than men come from rural areas. However, like women in other countries they are much more often unmarried, divorced or widowed than men in similar positions, and many more women than men are childless. This is the single most important difference between men and women in our sample and should tell us a great deal about women's difficulty in exercising their democratic political rights as long as they live within families as wives and mothers.

Political experience and membership in politically relevant organizations are other aspects of eligibility. The most frequent reason given by organizations and institutions as to why there are so few women in decision-making positions is that there are so few qualified candidates. Women often counter by using the 'discrimination' argument which states that women have to be more qualified than men in order to be considered eligible at all. Our data support the latter contention when it comes to membership in organizations often considered a vital 'entrance ticket' into the Norwegian public domain: 87.8 per cent of the respondents in our

Table 5. Membership in Organizations: Representatives in Public Committees vs Population Sample (Percentages).

Membership	Representatives		Population sample	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Employer/employee organizations	75.4	66.4	49.4	16.3
Political organizations	45.7	60.2	18.0	9.0

sample are members of at least one organization, 86 per cent of all men and 89 per cent of all women. The difference is slight and does not become significant until we compare these results to those of a representative sample of the population (Table 5). We see that the gap between women in our sample and in the population sample (Levekårsundersøkelsen, Slutt-rapport 1976, 28) is much greater than that for men. It is also clear that there is only one type of organization where women representatives clearly have lower membership than men, namely the large (and powerful) industrial organizations. We know from another study (Gaasemyr 1977) that women make up only 7.1 per cent of their full-time employed officeholders. The large majority of these again are found within those employee organizations not connected with the Federation of Trade Union which is by far the dominant partner in public negotiations. There is no doubt that women's low membership and their underrepresentation in leading positions within various types of industrial interest organizations is the major bottleneck in terms of access to the corporate channel. The same trend towards underrepresentation occurs in Table 6. Women do not hold offices at the same rate as men in industrial organizations. This underrepresentation is especially striking when compared to membership and representative functions in political organizations.

It looks as though women come into the system of corporate representation via *political* organizations at a much greater rate than men. This is in part evident from Table 6: 49 per cent of the men as against 35 per cent of the women hold offices in employer/employee organizations, while only 20 per cent of the men compared to 36 per cent of the women hold office or have done so in political organizations. We find further support for our assumptions that women enter via the numerical channel in Table 7, which shows how many in our sample hold or have held elected political office in

Table 6. Representatives Who Are Members of Various Types of Organizations and Who Hold Elected Offices in These Organizations (Number and Percentages).

	Membership		Officeholders					
	Men	Women	Men	Women				
Employer/ employee org.	75.4	(425)	66.4	(451)	48.8	(275)	35.2	(239)
Political org.	45.7	(258)	60.2	(409)	20.7	(117)	36.1	(245)
Counter- cultural org.*	13.7	(77)	21.5	(146)	5.5	(31)	9.1	(62)
Leisure time org.	76.1	(429)	64.2	(504)	35.8	(202)	39.9	(271)

* Counter-cultural organisations: language, temperance, and religious organisations.

local councils, county councils, or the Storting. This table becomes doubly interesting when compared to Table 1, which showed how strongly underrepresented women are in general in these bodies when compared to men.

Compared to women in the population at large, the women in our sample are vastly more active, and more so than the men. In other words, women who become representatives on public boards, commissions, councils and

Table 7. Representatives Who Hold or Have Held Elected Political Offices (Percentages and Numbers).

	Men	Women		
Local councils	25.0	(145)	32.0	(217)
County councils	6.7	(38)	8.1	(55)
Storting	4.1	(23)	8.4	(57)
Total	28.0	(158)	35.0	(240)

delegations are less representative in the statistical sense than men. Compared to male representatives, they hold political office more frequently and thus have more political power than the men. This is reversed when it comes to industrial organizations. Tables 6 and Table 7 thus give some support to the claim that women have to overachieve in order to gain entry into the pool of eligibles. This is true for women of all ages. The combined impression from these tables is that women who are members of public boards, councils and commissions are a minority and exceptions – both when compared to women in the population and when compared to men.

It seems clear for women in general that they are recruited into the world of organizations via different channels than men, and that the male domination of industrial and political organizations is not true for other types of organizations. Men and women have about the same rate of membership in all other types of organizations: 33.6 per cent of the women and 35.8 per cent of the men are members of organizations other than industrial and political ones (Alvheim 1978). Men predominate in organizations which represent economic interests and in sports organizations. Women on the other hand predominate in organizations which work on behalf of others. Few of these types of organizations are represented in the public committee system. It is therefore wrong to say that women are passive and non-involved: they are involved in other channels and areas with much lower political visibility. Their organizations are not defined as politically relevant.

There is, however, another set of findings which shows even more clearly that women are as active as men, albeit within different modes of activity – namely in ad-hoc political activities. As is the case with organizational membership, the women representatives participate slightly more frequently in practically all types of ad-hoc activities. The rate of participation is 65.7 per cent for women and 57.7 per cent for men (Table 8). What is more surprising is that the result of a population poll taken under the auspices of the Norwegian Power study shows that about the same percentage of men (49 per cent) and women (47 per cent) have been involved in one or more ad-hoc actions. Johan P. Olsen and Harald Sæthren (1980, 57) comment: 'The young are less active in all political forms of expression: The same is true for women. There are no differences among men and women in regard to ad-hoc political involvement while women are less active than men in other forms of political activity.'

Women come into their own in this type of activity. There are various types of explanations as to who participates in ad-hoc activities and why they do so. We can classify these theories into three types: *a resource*

Table 8. Participation in Issue-Oriented Political Activity, Men and Women (Percentages and Numbers)

	Men	Women
National issues	35.6 (201)	44.9 (305)
Local issues	37.6 (212)	44.6 (303)
Religious issues	12.2 (69)	23.6 (160)

argument, a 'bottleneck' argument, and a gender preference argument.

The resource argument raises the question as to whether those who participate have fewer political resources than those who do not. Our data and other findings show that these political activities are not a channel for the underprivileged but rather an additional and alternative channel for those who are also active in other areas. The exceptions are the women in the population sample, since they are quite clearly politically 'poorer' than the men, yet they participate. This finding neither supports nor falsifies the resource hypothesis when it comes to women. There are no differences between men and women in the population, in other words the differences between the politically 'rich' and the politically 'poor' show no gender difference.

Table 9. Frequency of Members' Disagreement with Decisions Made in Committees.

	Men	Women
Often/sometimes	68.2 (352)	77.5 (474)
Rarely/never	31.8 (164)	22.4 (137)
Total	100.0 (516)	100.0 (611)
DK/NA	8.5 (48)	10.0 (68)

Note: Question: Does it happen that you disagree with the proposals put forward or the decisions made in the committees of which you are a member?

The 'bottleneck' argument raises the question as to whether certain groups, regardless of resources, will have difficulty in channelling issues and demands through the organizations they are members of because they have difficulties in having their views accepted. We have certain indications that this might be the case for women (see Table 9). Here is a slight tendency for women to disagree more than men with the decisions taken in the committees of which they are members (70 per cent against 62 per cent). By contrast, 30 per cent of the men as against 20 per cent of the women say they never or rarely disagree. Men are thus less likely than women to be in conflict with collective decisions. Læg Reid and Olsen (1978, 293) find that women executives in the central administration have greater difficulties than the men in getting their views accepted. Whether this is a consequence of their minority status in decision-making units or of their gender is not clear. But there is some evidence that formal settings and organizations do indeed serve as bottlenecks and will therefore encourage women to use other areas for articulating their interests and acting upon their behalf.

The third type of explanation – the gender preference argument – would lead one to hypothesize that certain kinds of activities are gender specific, and that women prefer to raise issues and solve problems in different types of organizational settings than men. That this is the case can be seen from our findings. The reasons for such a preference are not clear and we will here only point towards some possible reasons and modes of explanation. We have no empirical support in our own data for this third set of explanations but they can be regarded as the outlines for a theory about women's modes of political participation.

- (1) **TIME:** Women in general have much less control over their time than men in general. Planning and long term investment in formal organizations offer thus fewer rewards for women and encourage them to use more immediate forms of organization centered around specific issues.
- (2) **PROBLEM SOLVING:** Women are expected to be backup crews for male bosses as well as for husbands and children at home and solve especially problems which arise and disturb schedules and routines. They quite often personify the so-called 'slack' in organizations – that surplus time and energy which make flexibility possible. They develop therefore skills which can be described as practical, problem solving skills. This makes it easier to solve problems on an ad-hoc basis rather than through more formal and 'sluggish' channels. This lends support

to the popular notion that women are more practical and issue-oriented than men.

- (3) NETWORK: Many ad-hoc activities are organized in neighbourhoods where women who are not in the paid labor force predominate. Women may be used to helping each other and mobilizing each other when private problems arise. These networks can also be used to solve public problems. It is also quite possible that women use networks built up by the non-political women's organizations.

The importance of women's preferences for ad-hoc, issue-oriented political activities lies in the fact that *women in general* seem to prefer this type of participation in the political process. It is the only type of activity where women participate on an equal footing with men in the population in general. The fact that the women in our sample are more active than the men only supports the fact also shown in regard to organizational membership: female members of the elite are more active than male members of the elite in issue-oriented activities. A future theory which would account for this preference on the part of women in general will probably combine aspects of the time-use, problem-solving and network arguments and arrive at an organizational theory which accounts for the structural constraints of most women's lives. We will work out this theory in another context as this article is limited to a discussion of the findings from our own survey.

We conclude this article with a discussion of the female representatives' status as a minority and as an exception. They are a minority within the public committee system and they are exceptions when compared to women in the population more so than is the case for men. But even if this group of women is not statistically representative of women in general, they represent women in other ways.

Symbolically, they may represent a vision of the future possibilities for women, despite their status as exceptions. This is particularly important to younger women, but also to the public at large. Secondly, there is the question of *representation of interest*. To what extent can we expect women to defend women's interests in the decision-making bodies? Are there in fact specific women's interests? It is clear that the few women holding important positions in the decision-making bodies of our society have great influence. They are part of the elite which makes decisions affecting society at large, women included. They are influential in the shaping of public opinion, and also in creating attitudes among their male colleagues. For these reasons, among others, the question of feminist

consciousness is of great importance. We asked ourselves whether women representatives, despite the fact that they were so different from women in general, were aware of their gender (or rather its relevance in these settings) and whether they thought gender was of importance in politics. As we discussed above, the inclusion of gender as a relevant

Table 10. Frequency of Members' Expectations that Decisions Would Turn Out Differently if There Were More Female Representatives.

	Men	Women
Yes, very much	2.5 (11)	16.0 (85)
Some	14.7 (64)	37.0 (197)
Not very much	54.0 (235)	38.2 (203)
Not at all	28.3 (123)	8.8 (47)
Total	100.0 (435)	100.0 (532)
DK/NA	22.9 (129)	21.6 (147)

Table 11. Attitudes towards Policy of Increasing the Number of Women Representatives in Public Committees.

	Men	Women
Yes, Important	79.1 (318)	96.0 (528)
No, Not important	20.9 (884)	4.0 (22)
Total	100.0 (402)	100.0 (550)
DK/NA	28.7 (162)	19.0 (129)

Question: Is it important to increase the number of women representatives in public committees?

criterion for selection is a rather recent phenomenon. We did not expect to find great differences between men and women in terms of their answers and were therefore surprised at the number of women who felt that gender definitely did make a difference in the decisions arrived at (Table 10). Even more surprising was the disagreement among men and women about the importance of a more equal balance between male and female membership in the committee system (Table 11).

Tables 10 and 11 show that female representatives are aware of their minority position as women and that they as women are different from their male colleagues. It is therefore not surprising that they wish to change that minority status. Conversely the tables also are a comment on men's lack of awareness of gender differences and their relatively lower support for the Royal Resolution demanding equal representation of men and women.

Both politicians and political scientists have claimed that an increase in female representation will not make much of a difference in policy output. Writing of women in bureaucracy, Laegreid and Olsen (1978, 239) state that increasing the number of women will only affect the content of decisions if the following conditions exist: the number of women will have to be increased greatly, women have to develop a great degree of unanimity among themselves, women must build networks and informal organizations among themselves, and the socialization and discipline potential of the bureaucracy has to be strongly reduced. We agree in general with this set of observations and attempted to see to what extent our data allow us to say anything about the existence of any of these. The women in our sample seem to have developed attitudes and opinions that show a fairly high degree of feminist consciousness. They also seem to have organizations

Table 12. Relationship between Membership in Women's Organizations and Feminist Political Activities. (Women's Volunteer Organizations *Included*).

		Women's Issues					
		Nonparticipant		Particip.			
Women's org.	Non- member	82.8	(405)	17.2	(84)	100.0	(489)
	Member	58.4	(111)	41.6	(79)	100.0	(190)

Table 13. Relationship between Membership in Women's Organizations and Feminist Political Activities. (Women's Volunteer Organizations *Excluded*).

		Women's Issues				
		Nonparticipant		Particip.		
Women's org.	Non- member	82.8	(463)	17.2	(96)	(559)
	Member	44.2	(53)	58.4	(67)	(120)

and networks among themselves, as Tables 12 and 13 show. Out of a total of 679 women there are 190 who are members of organizations that consist only of women.

If we exclude women's volunteer organizations which are not explicitly feminist and include only those that consider themselves to be feminist there remain 120 women (18 per cent) in our sample who are members of feminist organizations, a higher percentage than the number of feminists in the population at large. The tables also show that organized women participate in political activities concerning women's issues to a larger extent than do unorganized women: this is especially true of members of feminist organizations (Table 13). We may conclude from these two tables that membership in women's organizations, and feminist organizations in particular, increase the level of feminist consciousness as well as the level of political participation in general (Olsen and Sætren 1980).

4. Conclusion

Women's participation and representation raise important problems in regard to individual and organized political influence in a democratic system. There are many different channels of access and forms of participation and this article describes only a few of them. If we compare the numerical channel, the corporate channel, and issue-oriented ad-hoc forms of political action the question of *what* is organized becomes as important as that of *who* participates and organizes.

The corporate channel is quite clearly designed and developed to represent interests, sectors, and 'affected groups': *what* is represented is of central concern. The committee system reflects the existence of already

aggregated preferences in a much more formalized manner than the electoral system, while ad-hoc movements quite clearly and consciously attempt to circumvent established organizational patterns in order to articulate and perhaps later aggregate new demands. A formalized system will of necessity favour formalized interests – in other words organizational strength and professional power will be legitimately reflected. The system of institutional as opposed to personal representation is probably the most difficult one to affect and to change as long as its basic structure remains. It gives access and power exactly to those bodies where the 'politically poor' and the unorganized are missing. After all, criteria of individual eligibility reflect only a system of public roles and public standards which have developed to defend entrenched interests. A 'policy of the least changes', as mentioned above, is bound to fail in the short term since women as a group are not part of the professional and organizational elite from which the corporate system recruits its representatives. Changing the structure of representation would revolutionize the Norwegian political system, while changing women's social position would revolutionize the educational system and the family system. No public policy statement which has demanded equality of the sexes in political and professional life has predicted or analyzed the truly revolutionary consequences such a policy implies or would bring about.

The numerical channel and the electoral system of representation are formalized in some respects, but the system of representation is more individualized and leaves more room for adjustments. Despite political parties' considerable control over the nomination process there is room for group pressure in that process and room for individual manipulation at the polls. Changes in popular demands and preferences will of necessity be reflected earlier and faster in the electoral system which is, in addition, based on competition among parties. The recent campaigns for increased female representation have had considerable impact, and nothing points to the fact that this will be reversed. There is thus a possible trend toward a division of labor between the sexes in the two channels of access.

The so-called grassroots level of political participation in which members of the political and organizational elite also seem to participate at a great rate, especially women, leaves even more room for non-formalized and non-routinized behavior. It is an arena where political competence and especially perseverance and energy are bound to have greater impact than in other more formalized settings. It is questionable whether the competence which is achieved in these forms of political activity can be transferred to the corporate channel, but the likelihood that it will give individual

competence in the numerical channel is much greater. Such activities can on the other hand be used by participants in the corporate system to support their interests there. The chains of influence between these three channels should therefore be studied from a woman's perspective to see to what extent women compensate for their weakness in one arena with competence and support from the other.

Women in the corporate system have entered the elected system at a greater rate than men. There are gender differences when it comes to ad-hoc issue-oriented political action, and women participate more fre-

Table 14. Participation in Issue-Oriented Political Action and Demonstrations (Men and Women)

Issues	Men		Women	
	%	numbers	%	numbers
Community action	21	(121)	28	(191)
Environmental protection	10	(58)	15	(102)
Regional development	17	(97)	18	(120)
School-actions	11	(62)	20	(136)
Language and dialects	6	(33)	8	(53)
Feminist and women's issues	3	(15)	20	(133)
For free abortion	3	(16)	14	(93)
Against free abortion	3	(18)	8	(51)
Fishery boundaries	3	(15)	5	(34)
Peace prize	2	(11)	8	(55)
Price, wage and tax policies	7	(39)	7	(48)
Foreign policy	10	(55)	15	(99)
EEC membership	30	(170)	36	(242)
Others	6	(31)	7	(44)

Note: Women participated in 1344 different types of ad-hoc activity (an average of 2), while men participated in 741 (an average of 1.3).

quently there. It seems as though the degree of formalization and formalized criteria for access are as good a predictor of where we will find women as any other. There is in addition an ever-increasing division of labor in terms of the issues taken up among the three channels (Olsen & Saetren 1980, 192 ff).

Criteria of eligibility are a system's main method of communicating to individuals where power is located and what constitutes its basis. The more formalized the power hierarchy and the more established its claims, the more difficult it is to change it. Criteria of exclusion are just as formalized, but they challenge the idea of democracy when they become obvious and have attracted attention. Women's collective and individual efforts to break down traditional barriers of exclusion will meet many formal obstacles before they succeed in changing the nature of recruitment and selection.

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