

Variation in Female Political Participation: a collection of theories

- ❑ Political participation declines with complexity
(i.e., women have more power in bands than in states)
- ❑ Correlated with contribution to subsistence
(female participation increases with contributions to the economy)
- ❑ Social structure: fraternal interest groups
(patrilineages and age-grades)
- ❑ War: negatively correlated with female participation
(male supremacist complex)
- ❑ Psychocultural dispositions
(child rearing practices)
- ❑ Father absence and protest masculinity

Ross, M. (1986). "Female Political Participation: A Cross-Cultural Explanation." American Anthropologist. 88: 843-858.

Definition of Political Participation

Actions on the part of individuals which either directly or indirectly affect the **authoritative allocation of scarce resources**, either material or symbolic, in their community or between communities either within or outside their society.

Measures of female political participation

- participation in community decisions
- participation in private arenas
- access to political positions of authority
- existence of exclusive female organizations

Important Negative Findings

- No relationship between status and social complexity
- No relationship between warfare intensity and status
- No relationship between existence of female only groups and status

*Factors that have a **positive** effect on female political participation*

- high internal conflict and violence
- low external warfare
- weak fraternal interests groups
- high local endogamy
- warm and affectionate child-rearing

A Note on Political Office

- In 9 of the SCCS (186 societies) women can hold political office.
- 5 of these 9 are matrilineal or duolineal societies (of a total of 18 such societies).
- Nevertheless, in all cases holding of political office was rare or exceptional (e.g., no male heir)

The Value & Presence of Female Allies

- Female allies are close kin & other women who are supportive
- Using the HRAF Catherine Yanca and Bobbi Low show that the following factors affect the presence of female allies indexed by:
 - a woman's distance from her natal village (matrilocality versus patrilocality)
 - degree of non-sororal polygyny
 - sororal polygyny
 - female capture

Presence of female allies leads to

- Greater resource control as measured by
 - Greater property inheritance
 - Less marriage payment
 - Greater control over male labor
 - Greater control over dwellings
- Greater kin authority
- Attitudes and behavior
 - Lower machismo emphasis
 - More frequent extra marital affairs and weaker punishment