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

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, it all cases holding of political office was rare or exceptional (e.g., no male heir)

Low, 1992 “Sex, coalitions, and politics in preindustrial societies.” Politics and Life Sciences
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