

PUDDLES TO DABBLE IN:  
POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION OF  
AMERICAN WOMEN, 1760-1860

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This thesis is dedicated to . . .  
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## ABSTRACT

### PUDDLES TO DABBLE IN: POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION OF AMERICAN WOMEN, 1760-1860

by Wendy Booth

Political socialization is defined as the way a society conveys political culture through the generations. Contemporary political socialization research reveals that political culture is first transmitted in the home from parent to child. In adulthood, peers and public interaction become important socializers as well. Historians of early American women have demonstrated that women acted politically, but none have questioned how those women obtained their political socialization. Would the contemporary findings of the process of political socialization apply to early American women as well? Were these women socialized first at home by their parents, and through peers and public gatherings later in life? Discovering how American women from 1760 through 1860 were politically socialized informs us of the impetus and means of education for the political activity that historians have documented, thus making comprehensible why women did what they did. Over 6,000 letters and diaries of American women from 1760 to 1860 were culled to discover from whom women were learning about political issues, actors, attitudes and behaviors. Newspaper accounts during this period were also used. The extant evidence is primarily from northern, middle- to upper-class white women, and the findings from this research are clear. The primary political socializers of these women were the male figures of authority in their household: fathers and husbands. Girls were most often first socialized in the home primarily by their fathers, but a few cases of mothers and brothers socializing were found as well. In adulthood, many women's husbands fostered their education and interest in political matters and issues. In the early nineteenth century, as the political party systems solidified and

the national political capitol was created, political debates and activities and electoral campaigns brought politics out into the public and women were socialized through their participation in these events. Women furthered and reinforced their socialization with other women through their epistolary networks. This new understanding of from whom women became educated and interested enough to spur their participation in political activities makes their participation more comprehensible and rational and provides clear delineation between political socialization and activity that did not exist before.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Women's political activity has been a fruitful area of research for historians since the 1980s and political socialization – when it is mentioned, which is not often – is usually confused with political activity. Action in the political realm, much like cricket or doubles tennis, requires first a stimulation of interest in the game, an introduction to the rules and means of play, the team structure, the methods of scoring, and the etiquette of the game, prior to swinging the first bat or racket. By conflating women's political socialization and activity, historians of early American women have missed the importance of that stimulation of interest in and introduction to the sport.<sup>1</sup> That women acted politically in early America has been well documented, and is not in dispute. How they developed the interest and education enough to act is not yet clear in the historiography.

There were plenty of opportunities to think and act politically in early America, as the great upheaval of casting off one government and forming another were the great challenges of the era. The American political system and culture as we understand it began to form, reform, and solidify after 1763, when America first began disputing British rule, yet remained somewhat in flux until after the Civil War, roughly 1763 through 1860. Historians record that from the earliest period of American resistance to the English King and Parliament, women began to pay attention to the political matters that filled the air of colonial America. The group Sons of Liberty

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see Paula Baker's "The Domestication of Politics," from which many historians draw their definitions and boundaries of political activity. Baker states that women "combined political activity, domesticity, and republican thought through motherhood" and "this definition [would] become an expansive doctrine: home was anywhere women and children were" (pages 624-625, and 631, respectively). It isn't until 2010 that some historians disagree that the boundaries historians like Baker had set for political activity encompassed actions which should not be considered activity at all, but socialization instead. In Ronald J. and Mary Saracino Zboray's monograph of 2010, *Voices Without Votes*, the concept of political socialization is used and is demarked as a separate concept from political activity.

– the first organized protestors to British attempts to tax the colonials – was formed and did most of its planning in the home of Mercy Otis Warren. Warren and other women took their knowledge and spread it to other female correspondents in their epistolary networks across the colonies where they discussed political philosophy, issues and actors.<sup>2</sup> This evidence of epistolary activities should not be considered political activity, but definitely demonstrates political socialization.

Why and how did many late eighteenth and early nineteenth century American women develop an interest in politics? From whom did they learn about political issues, actors, and parties, and why in a patriarchal society were they motivated enough to participate at all? By researching only the political activity in which these women participated, most historians have missed or underdeveloped the didactical and emotional drivers behind women's actions. We must take a step back to see how women were socialized to politics to fully understand how and why they acted in the political realm, as they would in increasing ways throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. We must understand the political socialization of women before we can fully comprehend why they did what they did.

Political socialization has been a research topic of great interest for political scientists such as Stanley Renshon, David C. Schwartz and Sandra Kenyon Schwartz, Kenneth Langton, and Barrie Stacey since the 1960s, and is defined as the way “society transmits its political culture from generation to generation,” or, the “process, mediated through various agencies of society, by which an individual learns politically relevant attitudinal dispositions and behavior

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<sup>2</sup> Kate Davies, *Catharine Macaulay and Mercy Otis Warren: The Revolutionary Atlantic and the Politics of Gender*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 186.

patterns.”<sup>3</sup> Both parts of the definition are relevant and related, as political scientists generally agree that children’s political socialization and early partisanship attachment is obtained from the parents, while in adolescence and adulthood, peers, friends, work colleagues and the public media are greater factors in socialization.<sup>4</sup> Although early American society differed greatly from the late twentieth century when these political socialization theories were developed, do these findings also provide explanatory power regarding the political socialization of early American women? Were early American women first socialized at home? In adolescence and adulthood, did popular print media, peers, and public political events influence women’s interest and knowledge in the political realm? Women’s letters and diaries, biographies and newspaper articles and editorials provide evidence that the process of political socialization for contemporary society holds true as well for early American women.

The evidence shows that Northern white, middle- to upper-class American women from about 1760 through 1860 were politically socialized through various mechanisms. Fathers and husbands emerge as the most important drivers to girls’ and women’s political socialization. There is less evidence that mothers provided the earliest socialization, but some instances of this are found. Other family and friends of the family also promoted and furthered women’s socialization. Public outdoor political events including electoral campaigns and rioting, as well as indoors in areas of high politics such as in Washington City provided a means of political socialization for women of all social classes, as did newspapers and political pamphlets. And

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<sup>3</sup> Kenneth P. Langton, *Political Socialization* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1969), 4-5. See also Stanley Allen Renshon’s “Assumptive Frameworks in Political Socialization Theory.” in *Handbook of Political Socialization: Theory and Research*, edited by Stanley Allen Renshon, 3-44 (New York: Free Press, 1977); editors David C. Schwartz and Sandra Kenyon Schwartz’s *New Directions in Political Socialization* (New York: Free Press, 1975); and Barrie Stacey, *Political Socialization in Western Society: An Analysis from a Life-Span Perspective* (New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1977).

<sup>4</sup> Stacey, *Political Socialization in Western Society*.

women and girls, through their epistolary networks with female friends and family, shared their socialization with other women and girls.<sup>5</sup>

Factors which allow political socialization research in the present day were not always extant in America. When political socialization research began in America in the 1960s there existed mandatory schooling for children, a well-established and entrenched American political governance and party system, and a mass of free, democratic public media. Public polling and longitudinal studies are possible in contemporary America, which allows political socialization research. In the late colonial and early Republic period, however, no formal national government system or even cohesive colonial government system existed, and there was little regular public media. Also, literacy was not ubiquitous, and many could read but not write, though by the 1830s the literacy gap had closed significantly for northern women.<sup>6</sup> Even in the antebellum period, the political governance and party systems were in flux, and though improved, mandatory schooling for male and female children was not widespread. However, even given these limitations, discovering the ways in which political socialization occurred could provide new insights into our understanding of early American political culture, how it spread, and how it impacted women's connection to the politics and the political systems of their time.

While some historians of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American women have bantered about the term *political socialization*, few have defined it clearly or used that definition consistently. The one exception is Ronald J. and Mary Saracino Zboray, who in their 2010

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<sup>5</sup> Free and enslaved black women, and Southern women were likely socialized very differently as the political culture and society in which they lived were very different from that in the North. Evidence of socialization of these women is more scant and while a few examples of Southern women's socialization are presented, the South is generally not addressed in this study.

<sup>6</sup> Richard D. Brown, *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 163.

monograph *Voices Without Votes* define and use the concept consistently throughout their work, but it is not the central tenet of their work; they only note that socialization existed. Prior to 2010, the most clear definition and use of political socialization came from Linda Kerber in the mid-1970s, but she mostly abandoned the use of the concept in later writings. Kerber, in her 1976 article presaging her foundational text *Women of the Republic*, presented a clear argument that the ideology of Republican Motherhood *was* political socialization of women, and that the task of political socialization of children had been given to mothers in the early republic. “The ideology of Republican Motherhood,” wrote Kerber in 1976, “also represented a stage in the process of women’s political socialization,” which she defined as “a *process* in which an individual develops a definition of self as related to the state.”<sup>7</sup> She continued, “The notion that mothers perform a political function is not silly; it represents the recognition that political socialization takes place at an early age, and that patterns of authority experienced in families are important factors in the general political culture.”<sup>8</sup> The historiography that descended from Kerber’s later monograph *Women of the Republic* understood her argument to be that Republican Motherhood was a political *activity* for the republic, not political *socialization*, as that concept was mentioned little and defined less in her work of 1980.<sup>9</sup> Mothers who raised virtuous republicans did not perform a direct political activity to influence the course of government, but did perform socialization of her children, designed to introduce them to the political realm. Many historians such as Robert J. Dinkin, Michael McGerr, and Susan Branson have argued

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<sup>7</sup> Linda Kerber, “The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment – An American Perspective,” *American Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1976), 203.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>9</sup> Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

with Kerber that raising virtuous children for the republic was not the only political activity in which women participated.

As historians began to write about political activity, their definition of what constituted “activity” varied until Paula Baker, writing in 1984, provided the definition of political activity which has permeated women’s history. Baker’s definition states “‘Politics’ is used here in a relatively broad sense to include any action, formal or informal, taken to affect the course or behavior of government or the community.”<sup>10</sup> This expansive definition has been used to describe as political activity many actions such as epistolary communications or attendance at political rallies or public debates, at which women had no means and perhaps no intention to influence the behavior of government, but they simply acted out of personal interest toward the subject matter. Use of such a broad definition encompasses that which is rightfully socialization, not political activity. However, with only slight modification, the definition is usable, and useful.

Political activity is then best defined as *any action, formal or informal, taken to affect the course or behavior of government*, while political socialization is *the transmission of political interest, learning, or culture from one person to another*. Political activity and socialization could occur nearly simultaneously, such as if one is asked to sign a petition, education about the petition issue (most likely a political issue) and the act of signing the petition to sway the government toward or away from a particular action would constitute both socialization and activity. A person could also spend years being socialized to politics without ever acting.

Political socialization requires: a) development of an interest in the political realm, which could

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<sup>10</sup> Paula Baker, “The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920,” *The American Historical Review* 89, no. 3 (1984), 622.

be inspired by family or friends, personal impact of political policy, economics, or public events such as campaign rallies or mobbing; b) a means for education about politics, and c) an outlet of personal expression. These requirements are necessary, but not sufficient, to induce female political socialization, as some women appear to have been completely apolitical.

For example, we know from many women's historians that female epistolary communications contained much political news and opinions, and historians have called this political activity.<sup>11</sup> Yet, female-to-female political education and spreading of news and opinions in epistolary communications is not political activity, unless one of the females was in a position to affect governmental policy or decisions. When women chose to display campaign paraphernalia in their home or on their person in the antebellum period, something – family, a friend, or peer pressure – induced these women to do so, and while they sought to promote the party of their choice they could not vote for them directly. Only to the extent to which their displaying of campaign paraphernalia induced men to vote a certain way could these activities be considered political activity, but such adornment does demonstrate political socialization. This set of definitions provides more clear delineation between activity and socialization, and clarifies the waters muddied by early American women's historians. This delineation also provides for more precise categorization of women's activities.

For clarity, the historiographical review in this section will be separated into those scholarly works addressing women's connection to politics in the late colonial/early Republic period, and those which address the antebellum period. Because the historiography on political socialization is nearly nonexistent, the scholarly works most closely related – that of women's

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<sup>11</sup> Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray, *Voices Without Votes: Women and Politics in Antebellum New England* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2010), 12.

political connections and activity – are presented. Throughout these periods, women were being politically socialized at home and through epistolary networks, but as political parties took their campaigns to the public, political socialization opportunities broadened to outside the home as well. Therefore, Chapter I will address political socialization at home, by family, friends, and epistolary networks, while Chapter II will address political socialization in more public settings. The Conclusion will review and synthesize key findings and provide suggestions for future research.

### Late Colonial/Early Republic Period

The connection to politics and political activity of American women from the late colonial and early Republic period has been a productive topic of research for scholars for the past few decades. Kerber's definition of Republican Motherhood would become the major theoretical framework in the historiography for some time to come for understanding women's relationship to the polis in the early Republic.<sup>12</sup> Republican Mothers/Wives of the late colonial and early Republic period were expected to remain in domesticity and raise virtuous sons and ensure the virtuosity of their husbands so that they might become good republican citizens, according to Kerber. Many historians writing after Kerber would demonstrate that women did not remain contentedly in domesticity, but instead carried their prescribed role into the society through their work in reform associations and partisan activities.

Kerber's construction of Republican Motherhood began to be deconstructed in just a few short years, but that framework has remained in the writings of early American women's historians ever since. Paula Baker's influential article "The Domestication of Politics" of 1984,

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<sup>12</sup> Kerber, *Women of the Republic*.

along with providing the much-used definition of political activity, argued that early nineteenth-century women did not stay in domesticity but instead conferred their concerns for home and family into their republican ideology and work in their communities.<sup>13</sup> The depreciation of the Republican Motherhood framework continued when, writing in 1990, two scholars agreed with Baker that women did not stay in domesticity, but took their domestic concerns into their work in reform associations. Both Michael McGerr and Nancy Fraser found that, despite women's lack of entrance to high politics they were impacting political decisions through their reform work.<sup>14</sup>

While much of the historiography points to women's reform work as a continuation of their domestic concerns for family and hearth, not all historians agree. Some find a much more personal motive for those women who chose to get involved in political matters. In 1995, Robert J. Dinkin argued that Baker and McGerr's findings that northern women waded into the partisan fray because of their concerns for hearth and home were incomplete; some women sought personal power or status through their reform work, especially after the 1830s.<sup>15</sup>

One woman who inarguably used personal power and status in the colonial period was Abigail Adams, who was not afraid to express her own political opinions while responding to her husband's male correspondents in the long periods of his absence from home. In 1994, Rosemary Keller told in *Patriotism and the Female Sex* of Abigail Adams' attempts to influence the political events of her time through her husband as well as through her friends – both male and female. Demonstrating the confidence and willingness to step outside the defined feminine

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<sup>13</sup> Baker, "The Domestication of Politics".

<sup>14</sup> Michael McGerr, "Political Style and Women's Power, 1830-1930," *Journal of American History* 77, no. 3 (Dec. 1990). Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." *Social Text* 25/26 (1990).

<sup>15</sup> Robert J. Dinkin, *Before Equal Suffrage: Women in Partisan Politics from Colonial Times to 1920* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1995).

boundaries of her time while her husband was away to Congress and abroad in diplomatic work, Adams began to assert her own political opinions in letters to female friends of her own, as well as to men writing to her husband, as she answered much of John's correspondence when he could not, explained Keller.<sup>16</sup> Adams was also the prism through which Elaine Forman Crane viewed women's connections to politics in her 1999 article, "Political Dialogue and the Spring of Abigail's Discontent." Crane found that Republican Motherhood was a stultifying role defined for women by men and that Kerber, in defining the term, did not intend to indicate that women's ability to contribute to and function in the polis was improved as a result of America's independence.<sup>17</sup>

As the successive federal capitols were being utilized in the early republic, women found in those places of concentrated political power new avenues of socialization, expression, and activity. Catherine Allgor, in her *Parlor Politics* monograph of 2000 argued that women functioned as a mediating force through social spaces and occasions to temper hot-headed partisan males in the new federal city of Washington. The opportunities presented to rub elbows with powerful political figures in these new power centers were unique because of the nature of men gathering to govern, and these opportunities were not present in rural or even other urban areas in the country. Having overcome proximity as a challenge, female relatives of male politicians also mediated patronage assignments to the many new governmental positions that needed to be filled, according to Allgor.<sup>18</sup> Allgor continued this argument in her work on Dolley

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<sup>16</sup> Rosemary Keller, *Patriotism and the Female Sex: Abigail Adams and the American Revolution* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Pub., 1994).

<sup>17</sup> Elaine Forman Crane, "Political Dialogue and the Spring of Abigail's Discontent," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 56, no. 4 (1999).

<sup>18</sup> Catherine Allgor. *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000).

Madison of 2006, *A Perfect Union*. Madison, while her husband was Jefferson's Secretary of State, sometimes served in the role of hostess at Jefferson's gatherings and created a neutral ground in the President's house where partisan competitors could meet and talk civilly.<sup>19</sup>

Further deconstruction of Kerber's argument of woman's political impotence is found in *These Fiery, Frenchified Dames*. Susan Branson, writing in 2001, furthered the historiography that women did not remain in their circumscribed role of Republican Motherhood/Wifeness as they chose sides and attended very public rallies and demonstrations in support of and in opposition to the French Revolution and other causes. Women demonstrated their political attitudes through their apparel and adornments, their purchases at market, and their selection of mates. Women were more able to participate in political activity for several reasons, says Branson, including increased newspaper and other print media available to women and the entire public, cultural institutions and political salons, and the development of political parties which provided alternative views and the chance to pick sides in political debates.<sup>20</sup>

Historians had thus far explained that the prescribed role of Republican Motherhood did not stick. Women still chose to exercise influence through their work in reform associations and public demonstrations, and chose sides on such public, political issues such as whether or not America should support the French Revolution. Jefferson's use of women as social lubricants drew them into an essential political role in the creation of the new federal city of Washington.

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<sup>19</sup> Catherine Allgor. *A Perfect Union: Dolley Madison and the Creation of the American Nation* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2006).

<sup>20</sup> Susan Branson, *These Fiery Frenchified Dames: Women and Political Culture in Early National Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

Capping all this historiography nicely is Rosemarie Zagarri's 2007 work, *Revolutionary Backlash*. Zagarri proffers that women's public participation in political events produced a backlash in society. Political men – such as Jefferson – welcomed women's participation when it suited their purposes, but when women acted for their own purposes, men realized they had a tiger by the tail and they could not fully control the effects or direction of women's participation. A social discourse thrashed on the evils of women participating in politics and the need for women to return to their sphere of domesticity. As a result, Zagarri finds, women were effectively shut out of participation in many avenues of expression in politics from the 1820s through the 1830s or so, when historians generally agree that women began participating again; women's political participation in the early nineteenth century was not a linear process. Parties began formalizing their nominating procedures, such as using caucuses open only to men, and women were not welcome at public political events. In response, women increased their use of the petition to effect change, but their most powerful tool of participation was taken from them.<sup>21</sup>

#### Antebellum Period

Early American women's religious participation is well understood to be stronger than men's, and through their association with religion, women were sometimes able to extend their ability to act in the realm of propriety. In 1981, Joe Kincheloe studied how the culture of early nineteenth-century religious camp meetings, where women were allowed to participate publicly except in leadership positions, laid the foundation for the culture of later political camp meetings

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<sup>21</sup> Rosemarie Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

where women also participated to an extent not allowed in general society.<sup>22</sup> Not only through religious activity did they find new opportunities to participate, but once politics moved out-of-doors, women were drawn in as well. In 1983, Jean H. Baker produced *Affairs of Party* in which she described how early nineteenth-century Democratic Party culture spread throughout the society almost as if through osmosis.<sup>23</sup> While she did not focus on women in this work, women in the affected societies were also inculcated with Democratic culture.

While historians began to definitively demonstrate that women did participate in partisan and electoral rallies, their role and the reasons for their participation would be debated for some time. In her 1990 work *Women in Public*, Mary P. Ryan found that an exclusively male political public sphere developed beginning in the 1820s, and women were included in electoral activities only as symbols or decoration. Women first emerged into public partisan activities in the 1840 presidential campaign, which included much iconography and pageantry through public parades and festivities, but not as equal participants to the men.<sup>24</sup> Ryan's finding that women participated at partisan events solely on the periphery would persist in the historiography for some time.

Agreeing with Ryan that 1840 marked a turning point for women's public participation, yet disagreeing on their status at these events, Elizabeth Varon found in her 1992 work "The Ladies are Whigs" that the Whig Party actively and intentionally drew women to their cause as a path to earn their men's votes. Women cooked, cleaned, and decorated for Whig events as they

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<sup>22</sup> Joe L. Kincheloe, Jr., "Transcending Role Restrictions: Women at Camp Meetings and Political Rallies," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 40 (Summer 1981).

<sup>23</sup> Jean H. Baker, *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1983).

<sup>24</sup> Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

had for earlier partisan activities, but the Whigs of 1840 also allowed women to make political speeches and write pamphlets for selected events. “Whig womanhood,” as Varon put it, also included wearing and displaying campaign paraphernalia such as clothing decoration and home goods with Whig logos and sayings.<sup>25</sup> Varon continued her argument in her 1995 article “Tippecanoe and the Ladies, Too” in which she pointed out that girls and women alike were caught up in the campaign excitement and participated in public political events.<sup>26</sup>

Digging a little deeper into women’s partisan activities, Robert J. Dinkin wrote in 1995 that women’s activities throughout the antebellum period became increasingly more public and more frequent.<sup>27</sup> Dinkin agreed with earlier historians that women did provide traditional domestic work for partisan events, but they also increased their partisan vocalization through personal conversations and epistolary communications, and in public writings such as newspaper editorials and pamphlets. Ronald J. and Mary Saracino Zboray followed up on Dinkin’s finding of increased partisan activities and examined women’s rationale behind those activities in their 1997 work “Whig Women, Politics, and Culture” in which they argue that women did not participate as an extension of their traditional gender role, but instead exercised judgment of their partisan choices based on a “blend of kin and neighborhood affiliation, party loyalty, and rational judgment of current economic and political issues [which] motivated them as it did men.”<sup>28</sup>

Writing on a later time period, in 1997 Rebecca Edwards in *Angels in the Machinery* purports that Whigs, by including and appealing to women so prominently, had prompted a new

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<sup>25</sup> Elizabeth R. Varon, “‘The Ladies are Whigs’: Lucy Barbour, Henry Clay, and Nineteenth-Century Virginia Politics,” *Virginia Cavalcade* 42, no. 2 (Autumn 1992).

<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth Varon, “Tippecanoe and the Ladies, Too: White Women and Party Politics in Antebellum Virginia,” *Journal of American History* 82, no. 2 (Sept. 1995).

<sup>27</sup> Dinkin, *Before Equal Suffrage*.

<sup>28</sup> Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray, “Whig Women, Politics, and Culture in the Campaign of 1840: Three Perspectives from Massachusetts,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 17, no. 2 (Summer, 1997).

“gendered ideology of state power” which justified women’s influence into political campaigns. Women’s central role in the family and their moral superiority led them to work for social reforms, which then led them to participate in politics. Whig men recognized and honored women’s moral role in the family and therefore welcomed them – albeit with a large measure of restraint – to party politics. The Republican Party of the future would build on this Whig ideology and allow women an even greater role in electoral politics as male suffrage expanded and political parties became ever more important to the exercise of power.<sup>29</sup>

In 1998, Varon compiled her previous arguments into a monograph in which she – contrary to Dinkin and the Zborays – reiterated that Whig women participated as an extension of their traditional gender role of domesticity and their presence conferred respectability on the male world of politics.<sup>30</sup> The following year, Janet Coryell followed the Dinkin-Zboray line more closely than the Varon line of thinking, and studied what she termed “the woman politico,” or women who alternated between semi-political work such as reform activities, and more formal politics such as speechmaking. Coryell took to task those historians who have dismissed as anomalies the women who played more active roles in partisan activities and explained that women saw their available range of activities and participation levels as much more flexible than that granted to them in the historiography to date.<sup>31</sup>

In 2004, Marilyn Schultz Blackwell presented a more cynical argument of women’s participation with Whig electoral campaigns. Women’s participation was welcome only as long

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<sup>29</sup> Rebecca Edwards. *Angels in the Machinery: Gender in American Party Politics from the Civil War to the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth Varon, *We Mean to be Counted: White Women & Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1998).

<sup>31</sup> Janet L. Coryell, “Superseding Gender: The Role of the Women Politico in Antebellum Partisan Politics,” n.p.

as they continued to support the party planks, and they were not encouraged to help decide upon or to change those planks, according to Blackwell.<sup>32</sup> While Varon attributes Whig inclusion of women in hopes of greater moral high-ground and electoral success, Blackwell views women's inclusion as a tool of men.

In *Voices Without Votes*, their massively-researched monograph of 2010, the Zborays shatter much of the previous historiography in what is sure to become a foundational text in the area of antebellum women's connection to politics. Surveying thousands of letters and diaries, the Zborays found that women were not passive tools of male partisans, but instead exercised agency of their own. Women's writings demonstrated a political sophistication heretofore not attributed to women. Women understood the issues and the parties' stance on the issues and their writings revealed a deeply-felt partisanship of their own found the Zborays.<sup>33</sup> The Zborays were the first historians of this period since Linda Kerber in 1976 to explore political socialization. These historians convincingly demonstrate that women formed and held partisan attitudes and beliefs of their own and were socialized through family and public political events, although socialization is not the central theme of their work and is instead sprinkled throughout the text.

Also in 2010 – as was due in the historiography – Carol Lasser and Stacey Robertson produced a synthesis of the studies of women's connections to politics up through the antebellum period in their work, *Antebellum Women: Private, Public, Partisan*. These historians present a useful definition of a set of stages of partisan activity through which women generally passed. First, women passed through a “deferential” stage where they demurred and apologized for their

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<sup>32</sup> Marilyn Schultz Blackwell, “Meddling in Politics: Clarina Howard Nichols and Antebellum Political Culture,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 24, no. 1 (Spring, 2004): 27-63.

<sup>33</sup> Zboray and Zboray, *Voices Without Votes*.

interest in political affairs, but wrote and thought about politics nonetheless. Second was a “companionate co-laborers” stage, in which women participated in reform associations to impact laws and morality. Finally, women arrived at a stage of being a “passionate partisan” in which they participated in partisan politics in any way open to them.<sup>34</sup>

It appears very clear that the arguments of earlier historians who found that women participated only on the periphery and as an extension of their traditional gender role have been deconstructed and overruled. Instead, the historiography of antebellum women and their connection to politics now demonstrates that women actually were acting in much more partisan ways, and much more frequently than was earlier believed to occur. The remainder of this study will examine from where women obtained their political socialization in the late colonial and antebellum eras, from whom they gained their partisan attitudes and political understandings, and how they shared and reinforced this socialization with others.

Alexander Street Press’ online database *North American Women’s Letters and Diaries* was the primary source repository used to gather much of the evidence that follows. Over 6,000 letters and diary entries written by American women from 1760 to 1860 were examined to find evidence of women’s writing on political topics. Selected entries were recorded into a database, which was then combined with another database containing biographical information of political actors from this time period. Each letter or diary entry was keyworded and the full text of the letter or diary was saved into the database. One limitation of this source is that only *women’s* letters and diary entries are in the database, and it does not include letters from the men to whom the women were writing; therefore the researcher is limited to only seeing one side of the

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<sup>34</sup> Carol Lasser and Stacey Robinson, ed. *Antebellum Women: Private, Public, Partisan* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010).

epistolary conversation. The full epistolary conversation would have been helpful, but the lack of such was not harmful for this project. Various other biographies and Gale Digital Collections' online database of *19th Century Newspapers* were used as well.

## CHAPTER II

### POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION AT HOME

*“This is my Private opinion, but how I came to give it is a Mistry,  
for Politicks is a puddle I never choose to dabble in.”*

Mrs. Henry Barnes, November 20, 1769

Like Mrs. Henry Barnes, many women of the late colonial and early Republic period in America acquired a deep interest in politics without realizing how they had done so. Many women expressed surprise at their level of interest in politics, so it is apparent that they were absorbing political socialization as if through osmosis, unaware of what was happening. Women in this period were politically socialized through their fathers and mothers, as well as husbands and other male family members and acquaintances, through the community where politics was a major topic of interest to all, through epistolary communications with friends and family, and through didactical means such as contemporary literature, newspaper articles and editorials, and sermons. There was ever more to talk about, since from the 1760s, for at least the next century, political debates and the exercise of political power became ever more prevalent in American society and as suffrage increased (and sometimes decreased) and Americans wrestled governmental control away from the British, Americans debated, discussed, thought about, wrote about, voted and petitioned to get their political, societal, and economic concerns heard and acted upon.

When the English colonists in America began rebelling in 1763 against the British Parliament's attempts to tax them directly, many forms of protest were instituted, but colonial leaders quickly realized that to hit the mother country in the pocketbook would be one of their

most effective forms of protest.<sup>35</sup> As T.H. Breen explains, there existed an “empire of goods” between Great Britain and the colonies, and disrupting that flow of merchandise and currency required that those most responsible for the home economy – women – participate fully in the nonimportation/nonconsumption efforts.<sup>36</sup> Women’s participation in the boycotts and their tremendous work done to replace the tea and cloth and other goods formerly purchased from England was lauded by colonial leaders and women’s patriotism was demonstrated through their efforts and adherence to the boycotts. Mary Beth Norton describes women’s efforts to not only adhere to the boycott but to encourage its enforcement and spread throughout the society as women’s first exercise of political power in America which marked them as “participants in the polity rather than a female with private concerns.”<sup>37</sup> Colonial leaders expressed both publicly and privately that the rebellion would not have proceeded without the boycotts, and the boycotts would not have succeeded without the women’s efforts. Women continued their strong support for the rebellion throughout the revolutionary period by giving of their time, their property, their money, and their labor. Women supported the Revolution in uniquely feminine ways, such as those women who fitted spinning and weaving homespun cloth so as not to buy cloth from the British into an already exhausting day. Some women – like those whom Abigail Adams witnessed capturing and carting away an intractable shopkeeper who was hoarding goods and gouging consumers – supported the Revolution in somewhat un-feminine ways as well.<sup>38</sup>

Women whose husbands remained loyal to Great Britain often lost their home and all their

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<sup>35</sup> Carol Berkin, *Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the Struggle for America's Independence* (New York : Knopf : Dist. by Random House, 2005), 15.

<sup>36</sup> T.H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 182.

<sup>37</sup> Mary Beth Norton, *Major Problems in American Women's History: Documents and Essays*, ed. Mary Beth Norton and Ruth M. Alexander (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), 88.

<sup>38</sup> See Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1980* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), ppgs. 15-20, and Berkin, *Revolutionary Mothers*, pg. 32.

possessions as they, too, were considered traitor loyalists. Sadly, too many women made the ultimate sacrifice of their own lives or those of their fathers, spouses or sons to the revolutionary cause.

During the Revolutionary period, many realized the need for a more robust and widespread educational system. A republic required an educated, virtuous citizenry to make the laws, and interpret and enforce the laws, and to ultimately understand and follow the laws. Educated, virtuous men were needed to fill the many layers of state and local government positions which would now be vacant in lieu of monarchical appointments. A republic of self-government simply required much more educated manpower, and the country – most especially in the North – responded by creating more schools and mandating some level of education for American children. Girls were not exempted from this push. As Linda Kerber and Mary Beth Norton first told us in 1980, it was during the Revolutionary period that schools for girls were created and the curriculum expanded to include such studies as history and political philosophy.<sup>39</sup> The role of motherhood in the republic was defined during this time period which mandated that women be educated in order to raise virtuous, educated, civic-minded sons. Women were able to argue for education of their daughters as well as their sons in order for these daughters to be able to someday educate their own children. By the middle of the next century perhaps 75 percent of children in the North were receiving a basic education from primary schools.<sup>40</sup>

In the 1790s, after the Revolutionary War was settled and the Constitution was ratified, politics synergized with popular culture and, as Simon Newman put it, “ordinary Americans

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<sup>39</sup> Kerber, *Women of the Republic*. Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*.

<sup>40</sup> Baker, *Affairs of Party*, 92.

propelled the politics of the street into the mainstream of American politics, thereby renegotiating the political relationship between rulers and ruled by forever changing the very way in which Americans experienced and participated in politics.”<sup>41</sup> Political news abounded in the public print media of the period, and local elections allowed women to see and hear candidates for office directly. When partisan divides hardened in the 1820s and 1830s during the Second Party System of Democrats and Whigs, women were impelled into choosing sides just as were men, as electoral candidates broadcast their messages widely to gain the most votes.<sup>42</sup> As women became increasingly vocal and present at political gatherings and in political debates, male leaders in the society began to fear the masculinization of women if their presence in the political realm continued or deepened.<sup>43</sup>

This fear produced a backlash in the society during the early decades of the nineteenth century toward women’s participation in political debates and rallies, and as parties formalized their nomination and debate procedures they moved these gatherings behind closed doors, away from prying female eyes and voices. Women were admonished to stay out of public debates and out of politics, and stay in their sphere in the home. But women contorted this admonishment into a role in society through their domestic concerns. After all, it is impossible to raise a healthy and vigorous family in a society that is thick with evil. Women thus enlarged their proscribed domestic concerns for the household to that of the society. Thus the backlash temporarily removed women from high politics, but instead drove them into peripheral politics such as

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<sup>41</sup> Simon P. Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 192.

<sup>42</sup> Zboray and Zboray, *Voices Without Votes*.

<sup>43</sup> See Varon, “The Ladies are Whigs” for a discussion on female participation at Whig electoral events, and Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray’s “Gender Slurs in Boston’s Partisan Press During the 1840s,” *Journal of American Studies* 34, no. 3, for examples of the backlash and fears of masculinization of political women.

reform associations beginning in the 1830s and 1840s, which lasted throughout the nineteenth century. Yet they would not remain solely on the periphery for long.<sup>44</sup> Beginning with this intervening period, women created and joined benevolent societies to cure social ills such as poverty and slavery, and to work for temperance. These reform efforts had varying levels of success at the local level, but it is very difficult to achieve widespread change without substantive political power. Political power is dependent on winning elections, and by the early 1840s, the Whig Party would draw women back into their folds as they saw a path to electoral success through the avenue of women who could compel their men to vote Whig.

As is well documented by Elizabeth Varon in various articles and in her monograph of 1998, Whigs saw that to win the election of 1840 they would need to “agitate the people” to political action toward their cause, which included both men and women.<sup>45</sup> They held rallies and picnics, barbeques and parades, and women were included, often prominently. Recent research indicates that women were indeed agitated to participate, but were not compelled solely by their domestic interests. Women were instead acting on their own political rationalizations and economic concerns, just as were men.<sup>46</sup>

This is not to say that women did not discuss politics at home; they certainly did, as evidence presented later will demonstrate. In fact, much of women’s earliest political socialization occurred at home, often in youth. The discursive relationship that existed between fathers and mothers to daughters, then daughters to their spouses and children, strengthened and deepened women’s political socialization through at least the first half of the nineteenth century. While Linda Kerber found a role for Republican Mothers in the early Republic, Republican

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<sup>44</sup> Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash*.

<sup>45</sup> Varon, *We Mean to be Counted*, 75.

<sup>46</sup> Zboray and Zboray, *Voices Without Votes*, 80.

Fathers often played an equally important role in a republican society by introducing the subject of politics to their daughters.

Fathers stoked much of women's earliest political interests and education, as we would expect from the research on political socialization, as the earliest socialization often takes place at home while children and in youth and adolescence. Fathers were the ones able to vote (for the most part) and to serve in elective office, and were the ones most visibly operating in public, where politics occurred, and thus were favorably positioned to be the ones to educate their children on political issues. Fathers such as Marion Harland's were stimulating an interest in political affairs and issues in their young daughters, which demonstrates an openness and eagerness for females to be knowledgeable and passionate about the new republic and its affairs. Harland was raised in rural Virginia and became one of America's most productive and respected female authors of fiction and didactical literature in her adulthood, having moved to the North after marrying. Her father's influence on her political interests remained in her consciousness throughout her life. Harland's father was a staunch Whig supporter in the early Republic who socialized her through political talk at home. Harland's mother agreed with their politics, but was not the enthusiastic partisan that Marion was. Still, politics was a popular subject of conversation at home, especially when the time for elections drew near. An upcoming election, tariffs and the national debt were all hot topics in Marion's father's parlor and her father encouraged her enthusiasm. She recalled that as a child, she and others were enthralled as they "peeped" over the fences to watch the election parades passing by. "Children are violent partisans," she said, "and we separated the sheep from the goats – *id est*, the Whigs from the

Democrats – as soon as the horsemen became visible . . .”<sup>47</sup> Harland later struck up a friendship and epistolary relationship with Junius Fishburn, a college-educated man who encouraged and furthered her political interests through their correspondence.

A republican government opened up vast new economic opportunities for Americans, and business owners such as Harriet Low’s father made political decisions such as whom to support in electoral contests based on the candidates’ economic policies. These fathers shared their determination of these political calculations on to their daughters as well. Low’s family was opposed to Andrew Jackson as his economic policies negatively impacted the family business and Low came to regard her father’s political attitudes as her own. After reading a biography of Napoleon, she began comparing Jackson with the French dictator in her diary.<sup>48</sup> “Uncle brings us dreadful news from America *via* the Sandwich Islands” she wrote in her diary in 1833, while abroad. “That is, the re-election of Jackson . . .” Low predicted the reelection would cause “the dissolution of the Union” and that next “Jackson will be declared king, emperor, or something of the kind, and about the time we are ready to come home there will be civil war, and all sorts of evils may be anticipated.”<sup>49</sup> Low was age 23 when she wrote these words and she was obviously firmly situated in her political opinions at this young age.

Emma Hart Willard wrote in 1830, at age 43, that she became interested in politics “from a child upon my father’s knee.” Willard was the sixteenth of seventeen children, the daughter of a Connecticut farmer, so it is likely that her father politically socialized his other children as well. Willard’s political education continued after marriage, as she later told a friend that her

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<sup>47</sup> Marion Harland, *Marion Harland's Autobiography; The Story of a Long Life* (New York, London: Harper & Brothers, 1910), 121.

<sup>48</sup> Zboray and Zboray, *Voices Without Votes*, 24-29.

<sup>49</sup> “Diary of Harriet Low Hillard, May, 1833.” NAWLD (S746-D049).

husband enjoyed “instructing me in the principles of general politics.”<sup>50</sup> This makes sense, as women who were socialized – and perhaps inculcated with partisanship – at home at their father’s knee would likely seek a mate whose ideals matched their own, although sometimes women’s partisan attitudes were altered through their experiences with their mate, as with Margaret Bayard Smith, to be discussed later.

Americans came to value primary education for their children and as educational opportunities opened up for girls, families with means sometimes sent their daughters away to school. Some fathers of absented youths provided political socialization through epistolary conversations, rather than through direct exposure at home, yet this method of socialization was no less effective than face-to-face socialization. Harriet and Maria Trumbull, daughters of a wealthy Connecticut family, were sent to New York to attend school in 1800. The girls wrote their parents regularly, relaying news of their studies as well as the political events in their area and seeking education of a different sort. Harriet bemoaned the lack of political news in her new location. “I have one grievance, that of not hearing any news, I never hear any but when I accidentally overhear gentlemen talking and that but seldom,” complained Harriet to her father in a letter of December, 1800. “I want to know your opinion, Papa” of Jefferson and Burr as President and Vice President, continued Harriet, “as I consider [your opinion] almost infallible.”<sup>51</sup> That Harriet’s father was transmitting a strong influence of interest in the political realm is evident by her pleadings for information and his opinions.

Mothers did not always share their daughter’s enthusiasm for politics. Harriet expressed disappointment in a letter a few weeks later that her mother – who was away from her father on a

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<sup>50</sup> “Letter from Emma Hart Willard, November 08, 1830,” NAWLD (S753-D005).

<sup>51</sup> “Harriet Trumbull Silliman to Jonathan Trumbull, December 25, 1800,” NAWLD (S76-D010).

visit – was not as interested in politics as were she and her sister. Harriet expressed hope that her father’s neighbors would visit him during her mother’s absence so that he could talk politics with someone.<sup>52</sup> Maria tried to interest her mother in political events, describing for her in a March, 1801 letter how a large ox was paraded through the streets during a Jefferson/Burr inauguration parade and that she was glad the ox was cut up and distributed to the poor on that “ugly day” of celebration for those of whom she did not approve.<sup>53</sup>

Daughters of famous male politicians were especially privileged to political philosophy and debates. Theodosia Burr was born in 1783 and her mother died when she was ten, leaving her father Aaron Burr to raise her alone. Burr saw his daughter as a *tabula rasa* onto which he could craft his ideal of proper female education. By age eighteen, she was “without question the best educated woman in the United States,” according to historian Richard Côté. “However,” Côté continued, she was being educated not “solely for adulthood, marriage, and motherhood,” but for her to be “president, queen, or empress.”<sup>54</sup> Burr not only provided a broad classical education for Theodosia, but he also included her in his own political intrigues at the same time he urged her “not to become a partisan in politics.” She should read the newspapers and be knowledgeable about political issues, not just in America but abroad as well, but she should not stoop to wade into the political fray herself, urged her father.<sup>55</sup> This was a strange sort of political socialization by the father, in that while he inculcated knowledge and interest in political affairs, he did not appear to have allowed her to act on that socialization in any way. In any case, she didn’t have much time or opportunity to become politically active, as her father

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<sup>52</sup> “Harriet Trumbull Silliman to Jonathan Trumbull, January 10, 1801,” NAWLD (S76-D015).

<sup>53</sup> “Maria Trumbull Hudson to Eunice Backus Trumbull, March 5, 1801,” NAWLD (S76-D026).

<sup>54</sup> Richard N. Côté. *Theodosia Burr Alston: Portrait of a Prodigy*, Preface, Paragraph 2, [Kindle edition]. Retrieved from Amazon.com.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, Chapter 5, Paragraph 75.

was considered a political and social pariah after his duel with Alexander Hamilton, and she was sickly all throughout her short adulthood before she died in her early thirties.

Some women were first socialized at home by their fathers, but continued their political socialization under the influence of their husbands later in life. Husbands not only provided further political socialization, but often provided women the entrée to political events and figures as well. Eliza Bancroft Davis paid no attention to politics and expressed nothing political in her writings until her husband was appointed by President Polk as Secretary of the Navy in 1846.<sup>56</sup> Expanding and securing the Republic required many more men to serve in appointed and elective office than ever before, which naturally involved many more men's wives as well into the business of the country. Once their husbands were in a political office, many wives like Bancroft Davis gathered information, paid social calls with a sometimes covertly or and often overtly political mission, campaigned and advocated, and advised their husbands.

As political parties solidified beginning in the early 1800s, Americans began to choose sides, and many parents would pass their partisan choices along to their daughters. Margaret Bayard Smith was politically socialized under her Federalist father's roof and was raised to abhor Thomas Jefferson. Later, Bayard Smith married a powerful and politically well-connected Washington newspaper editor through whom she would continue her political education, and her life in Washington would dramatically alter her partisan choices. She expressed shock when she met Jefferson as she found not the devil she had been raised to expect, but a man "so meek and mild, yet dignified in his manners, with a voice so soft and low, with a countenance so benignant and intelligent." Bayard Smith became a dear friend and big supporter of Jefferson, and

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<sup>56</sup> Zboray and Zboray, *Voices Without Votes*, 51.

expressed to a friend that through this friendship her “virulence of party spirit” had diminished.<sup>57</sup> Her degree of interest in politics surprised even her, when she wrote to her husband in 1803, “I did not know the interest I felt in political concerns, until lately, and this event has given me such real satisfaction that were you to hear me, you would not again tax me with indifference. I have reserved all my political thoughts and observations for conversation.”<sup>58</sup> Husband Samuel appears to have been concerned about his wife’s “indifference” to current affairs, but she assured him that was not the case.

Mothers – especially domineering ones – could also be important sources of political socialization for young girls, which demonstrates that the mother was politically socialized herself, as you cannot teach what you do not know. A woman with loyalist leanings, Kezia Coffin – who was a cousin to Ben Franklin – was the dominant force in the family’s mercantile business during the time of the Revolution. Coffin’s daughter, also named Kezia, followed her mother’s guidance and loathed the patriots. Kezia the junior fumed in her diary and described the “Provincial soldiers as ‘rebel low lived fellows’ and declared . . . ‘It is Liberty which they pretend they are fighting for and yet don’t allow others liberty to think as they please.’” She also wished for the members and supporters of the Continental Congress to be “strung 50 feet in the air.”<sup>59</sup> Coffin’s mother obviously had a strong influence on her daughter’s political attitudes and interest during the Revolutionary War.

Brothers sometimes provided a measure of political socialization to their siblings. Jane Mecom, sister to Ben Franklin, wrote to him often and sought his political opinions while

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<sup>57</sup> Margaret Bayard Smith, *The First Forty Years of Washington Society in the Family Letters of Margaret Bayard Smith*, ed. Gaillard Hunt (New York: F. Ungar Pub. Co., 1966), 6.

<sup>58</sup> “Margaret Bayard Smith to Samuel Harrison Smith, July 8, 1803,” NAWLD (S74-D011).

<sup>59</sup> As quoted in Sarah C. Chambers and Lisa Norling, “Choosing to be a Subject: Loyalist Women in the Revolutionary Atlantic World,” *Journal of Women’s History* 20, no. 1 (2008), 44-45.

recording the opinions and events in the colonies while he was serving as an American agent in England. Mecom lived in Philadelphia and was an eyewitness to the antipathy of the Americans to the Stamp Act of 1765. As Ben's house was threatened in the midst of a riot, Mecom wrote to her brother of the need for a strong government to protect property, exclaiming, "What a wretched world would [this] be if the vile of mankind had no Laws to [re]strain them!"<sup>60</sup> She, in turn, became the socializing force to the women around her as in 1779, when she wrote Franklin, "The few friends I have hear flock about me when I recve a leter & are much disapointed that they contain no Politicks [*sic*]. . ." <sup>61</sup> Mecom's connection to this famous politico provided her a measure of political socialization through their epistolary communications while he was abroad, which she then shared with her female neighbors.

Mercy Otis Warren was surrounded by politically active men in her native Massachusetts, and was politically socialized foremost by her brother, but also father and husband as well.<sup>62</sup> Also well educated, Warren was a close collaborator with her brother James, who was one of the earliest and most vocal opponents of British actions against the colonies in the 1760s. Close friends with Abigail Adams and correspondent with Catharine Macaulay, Britain's outspoken female supporter of the colonies, Warren's political sophistication showed in her well-received anti-British plays and writings during the Revolution, as well as her didactical history of the Revolution published in 1805.

Women most often assumed the political attitudes of their husband to remain loyal to the crown or rebel during the Revolution, but not always. Henry Barnes was a wealthy merchant who remained loyal to Great Britain and escaped to Boston in 1775 to seek the protection of the

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<sup>60</sup> "Letter from Jane Mecom to Benjamin Franklin, February 27, 1776," NAWLD (S18-D007).

<sup>61</sup> "Letter from Jane Mecom to Benjamin Franklin, July 27, 1779," NAWLD, (S15-D023).

<sup>62</sup> Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 80.

British when his property was threatened. Henry's loyalty surely impacted his wife, and she, too, remained loyal to Great Britain and expressed her opposition to the rebel patriots in letters to her friend, Elizabeth Murray Smith Inman. The "daring Sons of Liberty," she wrote, made it treason even to speak "disrespectfully" of the patriot cause, but when "the deluded multitude finds they have been led astray by false maxims they may Possibly turn upon them with their own wepons. . . . This is my Private opinion, but how I came to give it is a Mistry, for Politicks is a puddle I never choose to dabble in [*sic*]." <sup>63</sup> Mrs. Barnes may never have chosen to dabble in that puddle, but her feet were wet nonetheless, as the couple's loyalty cost their family their home and property when it was confiscated by the patriots, precipitating the family's move to London. Whether Mrs. Barnes remained a loyalist due to her husband's political choices or through choices of her own remains unclear, but the deference paid to a husband surely affected her choices to a certain degree.

Abigail Adams was well educated by her father and, later, by a family friend, but her primary political education and socialization seems to have taken place alongside her husband, John. <sup>64</sup> Adams expressed in her letters to John a sophisticated mind for his legal work and during the political crisis in 1765 and afterward, appeared as well versed on the philosophical arguments of the colonists against Great Britain as he. Adams' many writings are well known and display a sophisticated understanding of political philosophy and the great questions of governance at hand. Six months prior to the Continental Congress' decision to declare independence, Adams urged her husband to spur Congress to action. Sounding the philosophe herself, she pondered, "If a form of government is to be established here, what one will be

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<sup>63</sup> "Letter from Mrs. Henry Barnes to Elizabeth Murray Smith Inman, November 20, 1769," NAWLD (S697-D005).

<sup>64</sup> Lynn Withey, *Dearest Friend: A Life of Abigail Adams* (New York: Free Press, 1981).

assumed? Will it be left to our Assemblies to choose one?” Recognizing the danger of putting too much power in the hands of the mob, she queried, “And will not many men have many minds? And shall we not run into dissensions among ourselves?”<sup>65</sup> Possessing a true Federalist ideology long before there actually was a Federalist party, Adams’ letters often show great concern for the need for – yet lack of – a strong central government.

Adams would later politically educate and socialize other family members, including her son, John Quincy, while he was abroad with his father in service to the country. The “haughty tyrant of Britain,” she told him, “has departed from justice, [and] eluded and subverted the wise laws which formerly governed it,” causing it to sink into “derision and infamy.”<sup>66</sup> Her firm belief that women ought to be as informed as men about the political issues of her time was demonstrated in a 1786 letter to her niece, Lucy Cranch. Adams wrote to Cranch from France on the nature of good governments and the warning signs of bad government, before apologizing for growing “too serious” and describing for her the accoutrements of the ladies at a ball she had recently attended.<sup>67</sup> She was not shy about dispensing political advice to anyone in her family, and would later counsel her son-in-law against partisan demagoguery and urge him toward “impartial discharge of the duties of your office” as a congressional Representative.<sup>68</sup> Adams certainly did not see herself as disqualified to dispense political wisdom and advice because of her sex.

Being thoroughly politically socialized allowed some women to operate in the sphere of political philosophers. Adams maintained a long epistolary relationship with one of the most

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<sup>65</sup> “Abigail Adams to John Adams, November 27, 1775,” NAWLD (S23-D030).

<sup>66</sup> “Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, June, 1778,” NAWLD (S23-D042).

<sup>67</sup> “Letter from Abigail Smith Adams to Lucy Cranch Greenleaf, April 02, 1796.” NAWLD (S1284-D021).

<sup>68</sup> “Abigail Adams to William Stephens Smith, May 3, 1801,” NAWLD (S1284-D052).

famous American philosophers – Thomas Jefferson – which continued for a while even after the bitter presidential election battle between her husband and Jefferson and the two would often debate political philosophy and specific political issues. Incensed by some of Jefferson’s rhetoric and actions against her husband, Adams took up the pen as sword in several exchanges in 1804 to defend her husband and to charge Jefferson with political impropriety. It is important to note that Jefferson was *the* sitting American President at the time of these epistolary exchanges, so Adams’ actions could be considered political activity, as she sought to influence Jefferson’s political actions from that point forward. But the high degree of Adams’ political socialization is evident nonetheless. “If there is no check to be resorted to in the laws of the land, and no reparation to be made to the injured,” she wrote, reminding Jefferson of the social contract all men make under a democratic government, “will not man become the Judge and avenger of his own wrongs, and, as in a late instance, the sword and pistol decide the contest?” Adams then launched into a denunciation of Jefferson’s partisan attacks on Adams’ presidential record. If Jefferson’s goal to undo much of what her husband did while in office is realized, she charged, “where is the difference between a republican and a despotic government?”<sup>69</sup> The matriarch of the Adams family was so thoroughly socialized and knowledgeable that she could hold her own in a political argument with one of the greatest philosophical minds of the age.

Young women still living at home were especially responsive to political socialization, such as George Washington’s granddaughter, Eleanor Parke Custis, and Catharine Maria Sedgwick. Writing to a friend in 1798, Custis noted, “I am full as patriotic as you can be Bett, [Elizabeth] & to speak truth, I am becoming an outrageous politician, perfectly federal, &

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<sup>69</sup> “Letter from Abigail Smith Adams to Thomas Jefferson, August 18, 1804,” NAWLD (S1284-D056).

determined even to lend a hand” if the country should be in danger.<sup>70</sup> Catharine Sedgwick was obviously perfectly comfortable discussing politics with her father, and after reporting the political news of her area, wrote, “Thus you see, my dear papa, I have become quite a politician; but I have written this merely for your information.”<sup>71</sup> It is clear to see that historians Lasser and Robertson were right that many young women began their political interests in a “deferential” stage, where they presented a façade of political disinterest, but thought and wrote about politics nonetheless.<sup>72</sup>

Sometimes women were socialized by males other than family members with whom they cohabitated. Dolley Todd Madison was introduced to politics and politicians at an early age, when then-senator Aaron Burr came to stay at Todd Madison’s mother’s boarding house when she was an adolescent. Burr became “Dolley Todd’s close friend and advisor,” states Richard Côté in his book on Burr and his daughter Theodosia.<sup>73</sup> Although no letters from Todd Madison of this time period appear extant, her social charm and enthusiasm and affection for Burr would likely have led her to inquire about his line of work. Political socialization surely occurred in such a social and convivial atmosphere.

Women’s writings show how political socialization was transmitted and reinforced through their epistolary networks. Women wrote to each other from across town, across the country, and overseas and often included political news and opinion alongside family news, small talk, and advice. Mercy Otis Warren often discussed sophisticated political philosophy with her correspondents, Abigail Adams and Catharine Macaulay, and Adams and Macaulay

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<sup>70</sup> "Letter from Eleanor Parke Custis Lewis to Elizabeth Bordley, May 14, 1798," NAWLD (S610-D015).

<sup>71</sup> "Diary of Catherine Maria Sedgwick, April, 1804," NAWLD (S75-D003).

<sup>72</sup> Lasser and Robertson, xii.

<sup>73</sup> Côté. *Theodosia Burr Alston*, Chapter 3, Paragraph 58.

struck up a correspondence as well.<sup>74</sup> In 1770, loyalist Mrs. Henry Barnes wrote her friend Elizabeth Murray Smith Inman that though “It is long since I have dabbled in politics, and sorry I am to resume the subject,” she couldn’t help but pity the “poor deluded [patriots] with whom we have lived so long in peace and harmony” who had been “influenced by the Sons of Rapin[e] [Sons of Liberty] to take every method to distress us.”<sup>75</sup> Deborah Norris Logan had evidently quarreled with her friend previously about politics, as she wrote in 1778, “I intreat thee, by our friendship, not to enter on any Political disquisitions with us; it is not our province, and will only serve to create disagreeable sensations.”<sup>76</sup> As women’s partisan feelings grew, so sometimes did their disagreements with friends who held different opinions.

Although Northern women are considered by historians to have been more politically active and vocal than Southern women, a few women do provide evidence of an exception to that narrative. South Carolinian Eliza Yonge Wilkinson was widowed while very young, after which she returned to her family homestead. Yonge Wilkinson was eyewitness to the period of British occupation of Charleston, South Carolina, and this appears to have only strengthened her patriotic resolve. Wilkinson’s reticence and the Southern mores against women involving themselves in political discussions impacted her, however, as demonstrated in one letter in particular. Wilkinson, while writing to her friend Mary, after a rousing paragraph filled with patriotic fervor and love of country, asked her friend to “Pardon this digression, my dear Mary – my pen is inspired with sympathetic ardor, and has run away with my thoughts before I was

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<sup>74</sup> See Kate Davies, *Catharine Macaulay and Mercy Otis Warren: The Revolutionary Atlantic and the Politics of Gender*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) and Edith B. Gelles, “Bonds of Friendship: The Correspondence of Abigail Adams and Mercy Otis Warren,” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 108 (1996): 35-71.

<sup>75</sup> “Letter from Mrs. Henry Barnes to Elizabeth Murray Smith Inman, June, 1770,” NAWLD (S697-D016).

<sup>76</sup> “Letter from Deborah Norris Logan to Sally Wister, 1778,” NAWLD (S45-D011).

aware. I do not love to meddle with political matters; the men say we have no business with them, it is not in our sphere!”<sup>77</sup> Women also sometimes cautioned other women against appearing too partisan to their husbands as it would reduce their sway over the men, as Susan Mansfield Huntington warned a friend in 1815. “If men once think we are actuated by the spirit of party, farewell to the hope of doing them good,” warned Huntington, then women’s ability to guide their husbands toward both political and religious righteousness would be diminished if they wore their partisanship openly.<sup>78</sup>

Women shared and experienced socialization through educating each other on political matters in their epistolary networks as well. Rachel Lazarus explained to Marie Edgeworth the history and function of a political caucus, alongside news of the birth of her daughter and details of how she planted her garden.<sup>79</sup> In a later letter, Lazarus expressed that “party feeling appears to be subsiding into a calm” since the election of Andrew Jackson was over.<sup>80</sup> Living in Texas in 1831, Mary Phelps Holley wrote to an unknown correspondent and stated that although she held little interest in politics, she knew the recipient was interested in the status of the political system in the territory. Phelps Holley then propounded on a detailed discussion of the prudence of U.S. statehood or Mexican confederation, showing that while she claimed disinterest in the subject, she understood quite well the political debates over Texas’ future.<sup>81</sup> California territorial politics figured in a letter back home from Mary Jane Megquier. Megquier was obviously not impressed with the abilities of local politicians, stating that “there is not as much talent as you could put in a nut shell” in the male leaders of the area, before accusing the Town Council of misappropriation

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<sup>77</sup> “Letter from Eliza Yonge Wilkinson, 1782,” NAWLD (S238-D007).

<sup>78</sup> “Letter from Susan Mansfield Huntington, January 3, 1815,” NAWLD (S93-D074).

<sup>79</sup> “Letter from Rachel Mordecai Lazarus to Marie Edgeworth, October 04, 1825,” NAWLD (S104-D019).

<sup>80</sup> “Letter from Rachel Mordecai Lazarus to Marie Edgeworth, March 14, 1828,” NAWLD (S104-D039).

<sup>81</sup> “Letter from Mary Phelps Holley, December, 1831,” NAWLD (S227-D043).

of funds for personal gain.<sup>82</sup> Megquier was demonstrating a certain measure of sophistication of understanding, and therefore political socialization, in her judgment of her town leaders, and she was sharing that basis of judgment with her unknown correspondent.

Once politically socialized, women often explored political philosophy more broadly and deeply. Catharine Sedgwick wrote a female friend in 1832 and expressed how lucky Americans were to live in such a civil society when “the nations of Europe are about to pour their blood like water and tears like rain for political existence.”<sup>83</sup> Also in 1832, Rebecca Gratz wrote her sister that she would like to be able to run for political office not to “seek honors for the lucre of gain”, but so that she could demonstrate the “public spirit” she saw missing from male politicians around her.<sup>84</sup> Democratic virtue was also at the heart of the letter sent by Lydia Child to Convers Francis in 1835 where Child expressed her anger at the dissembling of those who persecuted abolitionists.<sup>85</sup>

An 1837 letter from abolitionist Sarah Grimkè to her friend and President of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, Mary Parker, demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of political philosophy, and therefore, demonstrates political socialization. Grimkè expressed that “there is no natural inferiority in woman” and men have no natural right to rule over women.<sup>86</sup> Shortly afterward, Grimkè wrote to Parker again, equating women’s status with that of slavery and fulminating over women’s lack of legal and property rights.<sup>87</sup> There was no consensus, however, on women’s natural or political rights, even amongst women. Lydia Huntley

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<sup>82</sup> “Letter from Mary Jane Megquier, February 26, 1850,” NAWLD (S209-D017).

<sup>83</sup> “Letter from Catharine Maria Sedgwick to Margaret Bayard Smith, March 01, 1832,” NAWLD (S74-D086).

<sup>84</sup> “Letter from Rebecca Gratz to Maria Gist Gratz, October 12, 1832,” NAWLD (S92-D063).

<sup>85</sup> “Letter from Lydia Maria Child to Convers Francis, December 19, 1835,” NAWLD (S109-D019).

<sup>86</sup> “Letter from Sarah Moore Grimkè to Mary S. Parker, August 15, 1837,” NAWLD (S233-D006).

<sup>87</sup> “Letter from Sarah Moore Grimkè to Mary S. Parker, September 06, 1837,” NAWLD (S233-D012).

Sigourney wrote in 1838 that women's patriotic duty was to raise virtuous children, not to share in the reins of government – strong evidence for the existence of the philosophy of Republican Motherhood.<sup>88</sup> Sigourney appears to have been experiencing cognitive dissonance or had had a change of heart, however, as an earlier work of fiction she authored imagined another kind of society.

With increased availability and literacy, women in the nineteenth century took strongly to reading popular literature, and Sigourney's 1824 *Sketch of Connecticut*, as described by historian Sharon M. Harris in *Redefining the Political Novel* demonstrates that such literature could also be a vehicle of political socialization.<sup>89</sup> Sigourney creates a fictionalized "Country N—," (actually a city) led by a "Madam L—," as there are no male public figures. Madam L—'s "policies embody values of antebellum women's culture within a hierarchically organized community to make the town a potential" template for the country at large.<sup>90</sup> The poor are cared for, the children are all educated, and empathy and compassion dictate the public relations of the community in Country N—. Women reading Sigourney's work would have been able to see a – albeit fictionalized – version of what the country could be like if women had political power.

Clearly, throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, through at least the first half of the nineteenth century, the most impactful source of political socialization of girls and women was the family, and mainly the father, as we would expect in a society dominated by familial patriarchy. Simply put, as Americans assumed government for themselves and institutionalized the federal republic and party system, politics became ever more ubiquitous in

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<sup>88</sup> "Letter from Lydia Huntley Sigourney, 1838," NAWLD (S7468-D002).

<sup>89</sup> Sharon M. Harris, ed., *Redefining the Political Novel: American Women Writers, 1797-1901* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1995).

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

the society. Many more people were participating in, thinking about, writing about, and talking about politics and political issues. In a society without radio or television, public debates and pub discussions were high entertainment, and often the subject of those debates and discussions were politics. Women existed in those social spaces as well, and were therefore exposed to these discussions. A natural curiosity must have been piqued. The evidence shows that to satisfy that curiosity, young girls and women looked to their fathers and brothers – and sometimes mothers and friends – for political guidance and encouragement to foster their interest in and knowledge of politics.

Since political socialization is herein defined as *the transmission of political interest, learning, or culture*, this stimulation of interest in political issues and development of political attitudes demonstrates political socialization of girls and women by the family. As politics became ever more ubiquitous and public throughout the nineteenth century new opportunities for socialization opened up for women, yet it is doubtful that political socialization in the home simply ceased. It is more likely that evidence of socialization after the 1830s is simply not extant in the sources used for this study. Women also obtained socialization via written materials such as newspaper and pamphlets and public political events, and the latter method would become ever more important during the periods in which political debates and electoral events were designed for public participation and consumption.

## CHAPTER III

### POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION IN PUBLIC

*“I am not addicted to political reading but the atmosphere of Washington was still about me . . .”*

Catharine Maria Sedgwick, March 1, 1832

In antebellum America, as the Constitution and state and federal governance systems normalized, politics became popular American sport. The two-party system formed (and reformed) and partisan attachments were made and solidified. As each party vied for votes, women were drawn into electoral campaign events and politics. Although fathers, husbands and other family members and epistolary contacts surely continued to be important political socialization forces in women’s lives, women were also able to join in the public political events and gained exposure and socialization to the political world in this way as well. As women’s participation in political events and dialogue increased, inhibitors to their participation increased as well.

There has been a debate among historians as to the degree to which young girls were politically socialized at school, but recent evidence shows that political socialization did occur for some girls at school. Jean Baker stated in *Affairs of Party* that the political socialization of children occurred at home and through party events, but stresses that children did not learn partisanship at school as “it has always been an unwritten canon that the schoolmaster’s desk must never be a party stump.”<sup>91</sup> The Zborays, however, found in unpublished letters and diaries that even at school some young girls were socialized toward political partisanship by those around them through school clubs and activities. At school, young girls “rehearsed for adult

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<sup>91</sup> Baker, *Affairs of Party*, 27.

civic participation in campaigns by joining clubs at their school,” and girls with already-decided partisanship pressured others to follow their lead.<sup>92</sup> Girls and women would have much more opportunity to be politically socialized as politics and electoral events moved out into the general society and public spaces as well.

As male politicians arrived *en masse* to the seat of the federal government in Philadelphia, and later, Washington City, women residing in or near these chambers of political activity and the boardinghouses in which the politicians stayed were socialized just by being in an atmosphere charged with political debate. The new Washington City was carved from swampland expressly to house the burgeoning federal government and unlike the former capitol cities of Philadelphia and New York, the city had no existing social structure and hierarchy in which the federal government operated. Washington society had to be “created from the ground up,” Catherine Allgor explains.<sup>93</sup> This blank slate allowed more room and opportunities for women to attend political events and rub elbows with politicians; in other words, more opportunities for political socialization.

Women were utilized in Washington to temper partisan hostility and while serving in this role, women gained exposure to political issues, ideas, and politicians and were socialized in the process. While Jefferson was President and Madison was his Secretary of State, Jefferson, the widower, sometimes used Dolley Madison as his hostess at carefully-planned dinner parties at which he attempted to sway both the conversations and the impressions made during the evening toward his way of thinking. Once she became First Lady, Madison used social calls, dinners, and her epistolary networks to make intentional introductions and opportunities for dialogue

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<sup>92</sup> Zboray and Zboray, *Voices with Votes*, 195.

<sup>93</sup> Allgor, *A Perfect Union*, 45.

among male politicians, sometimes working through the politicians' wives. Madison, therefore, was uniquely positioned in the new federal city to exercise power by creating the social bonds and lubricants through which high politics would occur.<sup>94</sup> "We had all the heads of departments here yesterday to dinner, with their wives," she told her sister in 1812.<sup>95</sup> Another time she had ninety guests for dinner, of whom only three were women. In March of 1812, Madison wrote of some Federalist Party members who initially refused to accept her invitations for sociability but suddenly reconsidered when the political tide turned toward her Little Madison, and the opposition showed up in droves to dine with the captivating First Lady.<sup>96</sup> Madison was surely both a transmitter and a receiver of political socialization at these gatherings and through her discussions with male politicians and other women.

The Washington scene provided political socialization for women more on the periphery of high politics as well. Margaret Bayard Smith became a close friend of Madison's and operated in the upper echelons of Washington society. Bayard Smith's politically well-connected husband fostered her own political attitudes. In letters to her sister, Bayard Smith described how legislative sessions at Congress served as *the* spectator sport for women in Washington. Through this proximity to high politics, women's interest in and connection to politics was fostered; they were socialized to an even greater extent. "The debates in congress have this winter been very attractive to the ladies," the Washingtonian told her sister in March, 1814.<sup>97</sup> Women had swarmed the gallery of the House of Representatives to the point of capacity at which point legislators escorted the other interested women to the floor of the

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<sup>94</sup> Allgor, *A Perfect Union*.

<sup>95</sup> "Letter from Dolley Madison to Anna Payne Cutts, July 05, 1820," NAWLD (S83-D075).

<sup>96</sup> "Letter from Dolley Madison, March 27, 1812," NAWLD (S84-D026).

<sup>97</sup> Smith, *The First Forty Years*, 96.

assembly at a recent session of the House. Women were welcomed not only into the halls of Congress but at social functions for legislators as well. Washington was unique, explained Bayard Smith to her sister in 1814, as women had become celebrated, visible spectators to the arena of high politics, catered to by male politicians. “On every public occasion, a launch, an oration, an inauguration, in the court, in the representative hall, as well as the drawing room, [women] are treated with mark’d distinction,” she explained.<sup>98</sup> The ladies mingled with the gentlemen in ease and conversation, which would have been deemed unacceptable in other parts of the country, according to Bayard Smith.

The proximity to political debates and politicians themselves provided a measure of political socialization to women in Washington. The creation of the Republic, and the creation of this seat of government, provided a geographical center to high politics that was not available in colonial times. This proximity opened up an avenue rife with opportunities for political socialization that did not exist before, and women took advantage of those opportunities. Obviously one of these celebrated female spectators, Catharine Maria Sedgwick, was deeply affected by the Washington scene after her visit to the city ended. While later reading John Calhoun’s pamphlet regarding the Seminole affair, Sedgwick wrote, “I am not addicted to political reading but the atmosphere of Washington was still about me, for to tell the honest truth I believe it was the light of Mr. Calhoun’s splendid eye still lingering in my imagination.”<sup>99</sup> The lasting impression made by the atmosphere in the new federal city apparently permeated women’s consciousness for some time to come.

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 97.

<sup>99</sup> “Letter from Catherine Maria Sedgwick to Margaret Bayard Smith, March 01, 1832,” NAWLD (S74-D086).

Outside Washington, however, the public – women and men alike, of all social classes – had been courted to participate in patriotic and political events in other, more public ways for decades. Politics out-of-doors provided first-hand exposure to politicians and issues to the masses. Many newspaper accounts document the large presence of women at these events. In the early republic, the Democratic Republican party popularized the festivals and parades that celebrated patriotic anniversaries and celebrations. Ordinary Americans became swept up in this exercise of politics out-of-doors.<sup>100</sup> By the 1830s, the Second Party System of the Whigs and Democrats was gelling and the American people were making partisan choices as President Andrew Jackson proved to be a polarizing figure and the patriotic celebrations became increasingly divisive. Political affiliation merged with popular culture and partisanship became “a marker of identity” and political socialization occurred in both men and women due to the “environment saturated with open and unambiguous expressions of partisanship,” the Zborays explain.<sup>101</sup> Women purchased and made, wore and displayed party paraphernalia to demonstrate their partisan loyalties.<sup>102</sup>

As electoral campaigns became more ingrained in American culture, women’s inclusion in political events evolved from first tentative participation, to participation by default as politics and electoral campaigns swept up the whole society, to a later call for the gentility of campaign rhetoric to be suitable for a mixed audience. Women were socialized by their inclusion and proximity to these events. By the 1840s, Whigs were actively courting women to their electoral and campaign events. The Whig party was especially inclusive for women, sometimes organizing female-planned and led events which followed the male-organized events, where the

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<sup>100</sup> Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street*, 190.

<sup>101</sup> Zboray and Zboray, *Voices Without Votes*, 6.

<sup>102</sup> Varon, *We Mean to be Counted*, 77-78.

speakers reiterated their speeches to the women present. Elizabeth Varon found that “Historians agree that the Whigs' 1840 campaign marks the first time a political party systematically included women in its public rituals.”<sup>103</sup> The diffusion of access to politicians and political issues was spread through events such as these Whig gatherings, and through other forms of public discourse as well.

Interestingly, Marion Harland recalls that it was her father who initially encouraged Whig organizers in her county to specifically invite women to a rally for their Party's candidate Henry Clay in 1844. Her father met secretly with men organizing an upcoming Clay rally and insisted that muslin (which he paid for) be placed on the benches so as not to soil women's clothing, and that women be individually invited. This was in special compliment to the "ladies who, it was hoped, would compose a great part of the audience." Marion recalled,

This was the chiefest [*sic*] innovation of all that set tongues to wagging in three counties. The wives and mothers and daughters of voters were cordially invited by placards strewed broadcast through the length and breadth of Powhatan. The like had never been heard of within of memory of the oldest inhabitant. It was universally felt that the step practically guaranteed the county for Clay and Frelinghuysen.<sup>104</sup>

If Marion's recollections are correct, then her father deserves credit for not only thoroughly politically socializing his own daughter, but for supporting the Whig Party's trajectory which pulled ever more women into the political realm.

Some women were introduced to politics through other forms of public political events such as the political rallies and parades that Harriet and Maria Trumbull, and Marion Harland attended. In 1772, Anna Green Winslow described in her diary how John Hancock “invited the whole company into his house in the afternoon & treated them very genteelly & generously, with

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 71.

<sup>104</sup> Harland, *Marion Harland's Autobiography*, 127-128.

cake, wine, &c.”<sup>105</sup> Though women could not vote in the colonial period, they could influence the men in their household to vote as they thought best. Some male acquaintances introduced female family friends to politics, such as a “Mr. Taylor” who took Susan B. Anthony to her first political meeting, a Whig convention meeting in 1844, and she “enjoyed every moment of it.”<sup>106</sup> Of course, Susan B. Anthony’s first measure of political socialization at this Whig convention would lead to a lifetime of important political action by this famous American.

Besides such public events, some women gained political socialization at private social gatherings as well. While a teenager, Sarah Newman Connell Ayer of Philadelphia and her friend Harriot Osgood attended a party hosted by another friend in March, 1808 and there became offended by some of the political discussion. She wrote in her diary later that she enjoyed herself very much, “til John Wheelwright introduced politics, and said some very impertinent things. I felt very angry with him, and I think that some of his observations discovered a weak mind.”<sup>107</sup> That Ayer could judge Wheelwright’s remarks as “impertinent” and of a “weak mind” demonstrates that she already had strong opinions on the political topics he discussed, and thus that she had already been politically socialized. Three months later, while visiting friends, a gentleman named Mr. Solmes struck up a conversation about politics and Ayer reported to her diary that “I listened with attention. Mr. S. was a Republican, and spoke with much reason and mildness. On the federal side passion seemed to predominate over reason.”<sup>108</sup> It is unknown whether her partisanship favored the Republicans prior to meeting Mr. Solmes, or

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<sup>105</sup> “Diary of Anna Green Winslow, June, 1772,” NAWLD (S31-D008).

<sup>106</sup> “Letter from Susan Brownell Anthony, July 11, 1844,” NAWLD (S2010-D021).

<sup>107</sup> “Diary of Sarah Ayer, March, 1808,” NAWLD (S86-D018).

<sup>108</sup> “Diary of Sarah Ayer, June, 1808,” NAWLD (86-D021).

if he swayed her with his opinions, but for her to recognize that reason, not passion, was more proper in political matters illustrates a degree of political sophistication.

Popular print media – especially newspapers, but also political pamphlets – helped to spread political socialization to women as well. Richard Brown proposed that “a shift from a world where information was scarce to one where it was so abundant and swiftly delivered . . . exerted profound consequences on overall patterns of information diffusion.”<sup>109</sup> Newspaper accounts from this period provide evidence of this diffusion and help to reinforce why historians believe 1840 was the beginning of widespread electoral campaign activity by women.

Women were in high attendance and exuberance at a Whig electoral rally in the fall of 1840, according to a reprint of an article from the *Cincinnati Gazette* in September of that year. “Our wives and daughters, we are proud to say, have the blood of their Revolutionary mothers and grandmothers coursing through their veins . . . There is no man among us whose heart is more filled and animated than theirs by the spirit of Seventy-Six,” said the editorialist, tugging at the patriotic heartstrings by recalling the Revolutionary generation. The “350 [women] at Nashville”, the “400 at St. Louis,” and the “5,000 at Dayton” who invited Henry Clay to speak to them were exalted as models of democratic expression. The women’s exuberance would be wasted, the article concluded, if men did not get out and vote for William Henry Harrison, the Whig candidate for President.<sup>110</sup> Beloved by many as the Whig Party leader, Clay’s female supporters later worked to raise a statue in his honor.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Brown, *Knowledge is Power*, 279.

<sup>110</sup> “Something More About the Grand Convention of One Hundred Thousand,” *Daily National Intelligencer*, September 21, 1840, 19cNews (GT3017650612)

<sup>111</sup> “Meeting of the Whig Ladies of Richmond,” *Daily National Intelligencer*, December 13, 1844, 19cNews (GT3017677230).

The exuberance of women was not limited to the urban areas and women in more rural settings were politically socialized at public events as well. The *Boston Courier* reported in September, 1840, that while political excitement ran high in the cities, those who traveled to the more rural areas “will find that there the theme is even more universal” where “the women are as busy upon the theme as the men.” Women wrote, discussed, and debated politics, and then families went home to “talk over the party speech,” the article described. In these ways, families were socialized together. The editorial cynically added that not all women were there just for the politics. Some “are looking further than next November – mothers looking for [a husband for] their daughters, and daughters looking for themselves.”<sup>112</sup> Women who were politically socialized at home were likely looking for a mate whose partisan attitudes matched their own.

Some politicians alternated between gatherings for males and females, speaking to one group one day and the other the next day, explained the *Daily National Intelligencer* in October, 1840, describing how in one event “upwards of a thousand” women attended.<sup>113</sup> It is reasonable to assume that these events may have been the first exposure to politics for many of these women, and therefore provided a degree of political socialization. The frenetic energy and close confines that such large gatherings produced was surely conducive for the networking and socialization of woman-to-woman.

That ever more women were becoming ever more politically socialized began to change the character of political campaigns. By the 1844 election, the rhetoric of electoral events was expected to be suitable for an audience that included the fairer sex. “If the discussions of a political meeting are unfit for a lady to hear,” warned *The Cleveland Herald* in August, 1844,

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> “The Virginia Whig Convention,” *Daily National Intelligencer*, October 10, 1840. 19cNews (GT3017649738).

“they are a disgrace to the gentlemen engaged in them. Great questions of a public policy and national import ought to be deliberated and acted upon in such a way, that even the sensibilities of woman should not be shocked.”<sup>114</sup> Just as Dolley Madison enforced a civility among male politicians gathering for formal presidential dinners, so the presence of women enforced a gentility at out-of-doors campaign and electoral rallies.

Women did not always behave with gentility, however, and many mobbed and rioted alongside men when political issues touched their lives, and their political socialization was demonstrated by their participation in acting to correct perceived injustices by authority figures. Women rioted to protest the termination of employment of a woman in a Lowell textile mill.<sup>115</sup> In 1833, a Militia Fine Collector was prevented from completing his duties when “men, women, cats and dogs” attacked him, pelting him with rotten eggs and chasing him through the town.<sup>116</sup> When the government failed to enforce the community’s moral standards, women were not afraid to do so. An 1860 account in a Milwaukee paper describes how a group of women, including “some of the most respectable women” in town, destroyed a “house of ill-fame” then went quietly home.<sup>117</sup> Newspaper accounts of women’s activity spread word of their participation to other communities, providing discursive reinforcement for further female participation.

Just as Lydia Huntley Sigourney expressed that women’s duty was to raise virtuous children, not to share in the reins of government, women’s political socialization and participation was not seen as a positive development by all. Inhibitors to women’s political

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<sup>114</sup> “Politics and Ladies,” *The Cleveland Herald*, August 21, 1844. 19cNews (GT3009193556).

<sup>115</sup> “Turn-Out at Lowell,” *The Floridian*, March 15, 1834. 19cNews (GT3011485090).

<sup>116</sup> “An Adventure,” *The Arkansas Gazette*, October 16, 1833. 19cNews (GT3008196597).

<sup>117</sup> “A Mob of Women Break Up a Bagnio,” *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*, May 21, 1860. 19cNews (GT3009104705).

socialization existed in the society. Newspaper editorials and religious sermons discouraged women's interest in politics and often tried to reinforce the idea of Republican Motherhood/Wifehood: women should stay home and raise virtuous, patriotic children. As evidence to this strain of thought in the society, the Zborays documented the "gender slurs" in the Boston partisan press during the 1840s. Whigs welcomed women into their electoral events during the 1840 campaign, but Democratic newspapers criticized their participation, describing them as "[g]arrulous female gossips [rambling] on confusedly about politics and economics."<sup>118</sup> Women were only participating to find a husband, and the Whig men who participated were acting as women, the Democratic partisan press accused. However, the Whig strategy of including women paid great dividends, and the Democrats sought in the next election cycle to bring women into their own folds as well.

While the inclusion of women at electoral events increased in the North, the political culture in the South did not open up in substantial ways for women. Even though some Southern women like Eliza Yonge Wilkinson were enthusiastically discussing political issues in their epistolary networks, Southern women in general were cautioned against following the lead of Northern women by involving themselves in political discussions, as demonstrated by an 1830 newspaper editorial from the *Augusta [Georgia] Chronicle*. Ridiculing an article written by a "Mrs. Barney of Boston," the editors expressed hope that women would not follow her encouragement and "engage [in] interest party contentions," but will instead leave party politics to "the rougher sex."<sup>119</sup> This admonition clearly demonstrates the backlash against women's

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<sup>118</sup> Zboray and Zboray, "Gender Slurs in Boston's Partisan, 429-430.

<sup>119</sup> "It Is Very Rarely Than an American Female Enters the Political Arena in the United States," *Augusta Chronicle*, May 29, 1830. 19cNews (GT3008226499).

political participation which several historians propose occurred during the Jackson administration, which was likely even more pronounced in the South.

Women's strong role in the church developed a political overtone as well, according to some. That women held great sway with the clergy and were therefore in a position to influence clerical political attitudes concerned an editorialist in the *Boston Investigator* in 1842. Women's influence on the clergy was problematic, the editorial claimed, as "by this instrumentality they control the votes of all those men who are under the influence of the clergy."<sup>120</sup> Women's participation in the electoral events of the 1840s deeply concerned some, as expressed in editorials such as the one on "Domestic Education of Females" by Reverend D.B. Winslow, writing just months before the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848. The "neglect of domestic education" is the greatest danger and prevents women from fulfilling their natural role as wife and mother, according to Winslow. Women waste time with "idleness, sauntering gossip, frivolous reading and the various modern female dissipations" when they should instead spend their time in homemaking and child raising, not reading about and discussing politics.<sup>121</sup> That women continued to discuss politics in their letters and diaries shows the extent to which they were interested enough in the topic to buck the remonstrations of their clergy.

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<sup>120</sup> "Women: Their Religious and Political Influence," *Boston Investigator*, April 27, 1842. 19cNews (GT3014102210).

<sup>121</sup> "Domestic Education of Female," *The Ohio Observer*, January 05, 1848. 19cNews (GT3004761634).

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

As the evidence demonstrates, family, friends, and public political and electoral events stimulated in young girls and women an interest in politics, political issues, and partisan attitudes. This transmission of political interest, education, and attitudes is the definition of political socialization and the letters, diaries and newspaper accounts presented herein confirm that this transmission did occur. It is well accepted among women's historians that women did conduct political activity, such as petition drives and action through reform associations, but by understanding how women developed their interest in and knowledge of the political realm, political activity is now more comprehensible as a predictable outcrop of personal expression. Therefore, the findings do provide explanatory power regarding political socialization of early American women. These women were usually first socialized at home, and their political education was stoked or furthered through print media, their peers, and public political events.

However great the pressure to inhibit women's political socialization and expression, many women were politically socialized. While historians have accepted and debated the role of Republican Motherhood, perhaps this role of Republican Fatherhood that fathers and other male patriarchal figures assumed in politically socializing their daughters and wives is one of the most untold stories of the revolutionary and antebellum period. Fathers and other male figures – even those such as the Whig Party organizers who sought to include women in their events – provided the greatest spark of interest and education in politics throughout the century from 1760 to at least 1860. Other family and friends sometimes also provided women early opportunities to hear of and become interested in politics. As the political party system became more firmly rooted,

political dialogue became more ubiquitous in homes and throughout society. Women obtained their socialization by kith and kin, as in Margaret Bayard Smith's case at home, or as with Susan B. Anthony, whose earliest interest was sparked by a male escort to a political rally. Husbands provided great measure of political socialization as well, as demonstrated by Eliza Bancroft Davis, and sometimes further socialization from father to husband caused a partisan shift, such as Margaret Bayard Smith's change of heart toward Thomas Jefferson. Women like Abigail Adams, Mercy Otis Warren, and Sarah Grimkè were so well versed in political theory and philosophy, as well as current events, that they became forceful and powerful political socializers themselves. These women proved exemplary female role models for other women to encourage their interests in the political realm as well.

As politics spread to the public, in out-of-doors rallies and electoral events, women were socialized through osmosis, and proximity. Women who attended political rallies, waived their handkerchief at a candidate or wore campaign paraphernalia, then traveled home with their families and discussed the day's events were not only experiencing political socialization, but were providing it to their children as well by making it a family affair. The method and process of political socialization of men and boys during this time period in America has yet to be explored, but it is very likely that males were experiencing the same socialization as were their sisters. The Zborays find that girls at school were socialized by their peers, although the primary evidence for this is sparse and leaves much room for more investigation. That women mobbed and rioted to achieve a political end is clear, however why they did so and their level of political understanding of their actions and rights remains unclear.

The new federal city of Washington provided fertile, unstructured ground for women's political socialization as it allowed them direct access to high politics and male politicians, such as congressmen and other important figures like Margaret Bayard Smith's husband, the powerful newspaper editor. The civil society in Washington – created in large part by Dolley Madison – provided a role for women through their salons and social events as that of social lubricant to factious politicians. For other women, the boardinghouses of Washington City provided political socialization as they rubbed elbows with political men and were present to hear and discuss political issues.

Inclusion of women at Whig Party events provided several benefits both to the Party and to the women present, including electoral successes for the Party and socialization for the women. Women learned to organize events, and how to think and write and speak about political issues at these Whig events as their inclusion was encouraged. Just a campaign cycle late to the game, the Democrats also saw the benefits to include women in their electoral events, socializing women as well.

Political socialization also occurred through women's epistolary networks with female family and friends. Women extended their own political knowledge and interest through their letters to each other. That women mixed family and personal news with political news in their letters and diaries demonstrates that to discuss politics was a comfortable exercise and that socialization to politics had occurred.

Inhibitors to socialization did exist, but they apparently did not discourage all women from discussing and participating in politics. The gender slurs in the partisan press during the 1840s and didactical writings admonishing women to domesticity were not always effective.

While some women heeded the admonitions and agreed that women's place was in the home, other women attended the Seneca Falls Convention in search of legal and political rights.

Whether through familial or spousal connections, in school or through politics out-of-doors in country villages and Washington City alike, or through rioting and mobbing to achieve a political end, in all these ways, women were politically socialized.

That these activities constitute political socialization and not political activity is an important distinction. The political socialization experienced by girls and women in this century was much more than Republican Motherhood. It is clear from the words and experiences of girls and women that they were not solely interested in politics as a means to better prepare their children to be civic-minded and virtuous. There was a *personal* desire present to learn about political issues and actors. The women who swelled the rallies for Whig candidates do not appear to have been acting out of maternal concern, but were instead fulfilling their personal desire to learn about and participate in the great political events of their time. Republican Motherhood is certainly one means of political socialization and of socializing children, as to teach children requires imparting knowledge already obtained. But girls and women were interested in politics and political issues for much more than just their children's utility. Republican Fathers and other male patriarchal figures were instilling in their daughters, wives, and friends an interest in the political affairs of the country for personal reasons, an interest which women then spread to other women.

Political socialization is a prerequisite to political activity, though they may occur nearly simultaneously. By keeping these concepts separate, it is evident that many early American women had ample opportunity to experience socialization, although few women had opportunity

to conduct true political activity – activity which is defined herein as an action that has the ability to impact political decisions. To clearly keep these concepts separate allows historians to see the strong foundation and long history of women’s political education and interests which developed throughout the nineteenth century, in preparation for true political power in the early twentieth century, when suffrage for women arrived. Early American men had a very different experience, of very suddenly achieving political power in the form of suffrage and opportunity to serve in elected office, without the generations-long political socialization of their gender. That women were pressured to remain in the home as Republican Mothers in the early republic period, and in domesticity through the period of women’s sphere, provided fertile ground for early socialization from fathers and mothers, and others, even without the ability to act on their socialization. That fathers, brothers, and husbands socialized their daughters, sisters, and wives demonstrates the reverence men held for the responsibility for maintaining the republic through knowledge and a genuine concern for the greater good. While women held no political power, men saw it as a republican virtue to make sure that the females in their lives understood and shared that reverence, even given the societal pressures on female behavior and the inability for women to act politically.

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