

The Contemporary Presidency

Gender Desegregation and Gender Integration in the President's Cabinet, 1933-2010

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This article studies the political credentials of the women and men nominated to serve as departmental executives, assessing the extent to which women have been marginalized in the president's cabinet. Although gender differences within cabinets of the modern presidency vary widely, they range along a continuum from gender resegregation to gender desegregation to gender integration. The cabinet is shown to have undergone gender desegregation, and sometimes gender resegregation, prior to the Bill Clinton administration, when there was a slight but significant shift toward gender integration. This increased during the George W. Bush years. Initial cabinet appointments by Barack Obama suggest that gender integration will continue, and even accelerate, in this administration.

To study women and men in the U.S. cabinet is to study the intersection of descriptive and substantive representation. Consider, for example, the significance of gender to the political credibility of two well-known cabinet secretaries, Frances Perkins and Colin Powell. As the labor secretary in the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration, Frances Perkins advanced reforms that women activists had sought for decades. Countless policy battles in municipal and state government had strengthened the ties between her gender identity and her political priorities. Gender and politics were also tightly intertwined for Colin Powell, secretary of state in the George W. Bush administration. As a career military officer with extensive experience in military-civilian dialogues, Powell brought a distinctive credibility to his diplomatic engagements. For Powell and for

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Perkins, gender provided access to career opportunities and organizational networks, shaping their advocacy and leadership. These examples begin to reveal the importance of gender for both women and men secretaries, demonstrating the need to consider its impact on careers and decisions. Are there systematic differences among the women and men appointed to the cabinet in the modern presidency? What is the significance of these differences for the modern presidency?

Answering these questions requires comparing the women and the men secretaries, drawing on past classification schemas developed and tested by political scientists. As individuals, cabinet members can be categorized as initial or midterm appointees, as Washington insiders or outsiders, and as specialists in their departments' policies, liaisons to their departments' constituents, or generalists chosen for their loyalty to the president (see Best 1981; Borrelli 2002; King and Riddlesperger 1984; Polsby 1978). To see the aggregate effect of the individual similarities and differences, we consider the extent to which a president's cabinet has undergone either gender desegregation or gender integration. In simple terms, when women enter a formerly all-male cabinet, but then are marginalized within it, the cabinet is gender desegregated. As women and men secretaries acquire similar political resources and opportunities to exercise power, the cabinet undergoes gender integration. It is the task of this article to define these terms precisely, applying them to the cabinets of the modern presidency.

Particular attention is given to the Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama cabinets. By the time of the Clinton presidency, there was a widespread expectation that women would be named to the cabinet—an expectation encouraged by Clinton's campaign promises of "an administration that looks like America," by the lobbying efforts of the Coalition for Women's Appointments, and by extensive media coverage. How did this affect the cabinet? Did it evidence gender integration? George W. Bush made no promises similar to Clinton's, and he encountered far less pressure to diversify his cabinet appointments. Did the cabinet changes begun in the Clinton administration continue in the Bush administration? Barack Obama was the first civil rights attorney to be president. How did his initial cabinet secretaries compare to those of Clinton and Bush? Did Obama provide a gender-desegregated or a gender-integrated cabinet? These questions are the focus of this study of gender and change in the president's cabinet.

Women, Men, and the President's Cabinet

Cabinet secretaries advance the president's agenda through their advocacy in Congress, through leadership in their departments, and through their relationships with departmental issue networks. Yet this outreach also strains the secretaries' allegiance to the president, as members of Congress advance their own priorities through authorizations and appropriations, departmental careerists mobilize to protect their programs, and constituencies seek policies in their self-interest. Acknowledging these pressures, among others, presidents have centralized decision making in the White House and chosen secretaries who share their ideologies and priorities (Hult 2003; Hult and Walcott 2004; Lewis 2008; Pfiffner 2009, 2010; Warshaw 1996; Weko 1995; see also Auer 2008).

From a presidential perspective, women and men secretaries have much in common. Both provide representation to presidential constituents, and both are expected to contribute to the electoral and governing success of the administration. The importance of women voters to the president's election or reelection has repeatedly been cited as a reason for appointing women to the cabinet. Roosevelt labor secretary Perkins, and Reagan transportation secretary Elizabeth Dole, and Reagan health and human services secretary Margaret Heckler were named to the cabinet, in significant part, for their value to the presidential campaigns (Melich 1996; Ware 1981). Other women secretaries, like their male colleagues, have successfully mobilized voters across gender boundaries. Eisenhower health, education, and welfare secretary Oveta Culp Hobby mobilized Southern Democrats for Eisenhower, and George H. W. Bush commerce secretary Barbara Franklin set new records in campaign fund-raising. In the cabinet, campaigning and governing, constituent power and personal ambitions, have always been interwoven for the women and for the men secretaries.

Yet there is a difference in the midst of these similarities. Women are a segment of the population that has been legally and politically marginalized throughout history. Western political thought has reserved the public sphere to men, the private sphere to women. Moreover, it has maintained that the traits and abilities ascribed to men are requisite for success in the public sphere. The exercise of political power and leadership is defined as men's gender role. Femaleness, femininity, and homemaking are similarly conflated, with nurturing and caregiving identified as women's gender roles. As long as this close association of sex and gender is upheld, and gender roles are tied to distinct spheres, women are excluded from governing (Brown 1988; Di Stefano 1991; Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995; Elshrain 1993; see also Duerst-Lahti 1997; Kann 1998; Kimmel 2006).

In cabinet appointments, this gendered disadvantage for women compounds the challenges they confront in organizing as a presidential constituency. As the wide divergence of thinking among liberals and conservatives suggests—and as the 2008 campaigns revealed—disagreements about women, gender, politics, and policy are deep-seated and visceral (Lawrence and Rose 2010). Given the polarizing potential of a woman political leader, the importance of the cabinet to the presidential agenda, and the varying degrees of responsiveness that presidents have exhibited toward women, it is not surprising that the gender profile of departmental executives has changed only incrementally. How to assess the extent of this change is addressed in the next section.

Gender Desegregation and Gender Integration

The concepts of gender desegregation and gender integration structure this analysis of women's exercise of power in the formerly all-male cabinet. Here, they are discussed first as ideal types, then applied to the cabinet (see Table 1).

Gender desegregation occurs when women are admitted to, but then marginalized within, a formerly all-male organization. Few in number and easily identifiable, the women typically encounter close scrutiny. Men are presumed to be the effective leaders,

TABLE 1
Gender Desegregation versus Gender Integration in the U.S. Cabinet

<i>Gender Desegregation</i>	<i>Gender Integration</i>
	<i>Appointments:</i>
* Few women secretaries	* More women secretaries
	<i>Departments:</i>
* Women are appointed only to the outer cabinet	* Women are appointed to the inner and the outer cabinet
* Women are repeatedly appointed to the same departments ("the woman's seat")	* Women are appointed to diverse departments
* Women are appointed to "women's issues" departments	* Women are appointed to "men's" and "women's issue" departments
* Women are appointed to departments distant from the president's agenda	* Women are appointed to departments relevant to presidential initiatives
	<i>Secretaries:</i>
* Women secretaries are Washington outsiders	* Women secretaries are Washington insiders
* Women secretaries have few political credentials	* Women secretaries have extensive political credentials
* Women secretaries are generalists, dependent on the White House	* Women secretaries are liaisons, comparatively independent of the White House
* Women secretaries have few ties to women's organizations and networks	* Women secretaries have strong ties to women's organizations and networks

and masculinity is still valued; women are heavily dependent on their male sponsors and mentors. Women also contend with practices that reinscribe femininity. Though women are present in a gender-desegregated organization, men still wield its power and authority (see Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995; Kanter 1977).

A gender-desegregated cabinet has few women secretaries, but the president advertises their appointments as fulfilling a commitment to responsive and representative government. Men are appointed to lead the inner cabinet departments, as well as the outer cabinet departments that are most important to the president's agenda. Femininity is reinscribed through the appointment of women to departments with jurisdiction over "women's issues," such as health or education, even when the woman appointees lack related policy or political expertise. In a gender-desegregated cabinet, there will be women and men secretaries who are Washington outsiders, political amateurs, and generalists, but a disproportionate number of women secretaries will have these profiles. Having so few political resources leaves the women secretaries relatively more dependent on the White House, limiting their power and sending a reassuring message to those who resist women's leadership in the public sphere.

Gender integration, in contrast, occurs when women are full members of a formerly all-male organization.¹ More numerous and therefore less remarkable, women are less scrutinized. Masculinity is valued, in keeping with its historical appeal, but its consti-

1. Cindy Sondik Aron (1987) also uses the term "integration" to refer to the incorporation of women into the public sphere. However, she focuses on middle-class factory workers in the late nineteenth century, delineating the conflicts that emerge as women and men held comparable salaried positions.

tutive traits are no longer equated with maleness—women may be perceived as “tough enough” to succeed as leaders. Femininity may be revalued, its traits reassessed and adopted in the public sphere, though the weight of history makes this less likely. (For a critique of these outcomes, see Eisenstein 2007). In a gender-integrated organization, sex and gender are no longer conflated, and the mutual exclusivity of masculinity and femininity is relaxed.

A gender-integrated cabinet will have more women secretaries, who will receive less media coverage because their appointments will be normative. Women and men will lead inner cabinet departments, as well as outer cabinet departments that are important to the president’s agenda. Women will be appointed to a wide range of departments, including those with jurisdiction over “men’s issues,” such as national security and business. Similar proportions of women and men will be Washington insiders and outsiders, and will have (or lack) policy or political expertise relevant to the departments they lead. Their pre-cabinet careers will be similar, and women and men will evidence a similar range of dependence on the White House. Women and men will be among the most and the least influential cabinet members, in relative proportion to their numbers.

The contrasts notwithstanding, gender desegregation and gender integration should not be viewed as opposites. Because organizational innovation often proceeds unevenly and inconsistently, gender desegregation and gender integration are more accurately understood as existing along a continuum with many fine shadings. A cabinet could be gender desegregated with elements of gender integration, for instance, if there are few women secretaries, but at least some lead departments important to the president’s agenda. A close study of the appointments, departments, and appointees is therefore critical to assessing the cabinet’s gender desegregation or gender integration.

Sixty Years of Cabinet Gender Desegregation and Gender Resegregation

Cabinet representation for women was extremely inconsistent from 1933 through 1993, from the appointment of the first woman to the cabinet to the “Year of the Woman.” Four administrations—those of Harry S. Truman, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Richard M. Nixon—had all-male cabinets. Two administrations—those of Dwight D. Eisenhower and Ronald Reagan—had years in which the cabinet was all male. The remaining four administrations—Franklin D. Roosevelt, Gerald R. Ford, Jimmy Carter, and George H. W. Bush—had at least one woman in the cabinet for all (or, in the Ford presidency, virtually all) of the president’s term(s) in office. These 10 administrations, then, had gender-resegregated and gender-desegregated cabinets.

In the gender-desegregated cabinets, men were appointed to all of the inner cabinet posts and all of the outer cabinet posts that were politically important to the presidents. The departmental distribution of the women secretaries was narrow, with the 13 women appointed to six departments, namely, Labor (4), Health, Education, and Welfare or Health and Human Services (3), Housing and Urban Development (2), Commerce (2), Education (1), and Transportation (1). Though women did not hold influential posts

within these cabinets, this disadvantage was not magnified through a reinscription of femininity: labor, housing and urban development, commerce, and transportation were all “men’s issues.”

The women’s dependence on the president and the White House in these administrations was clear but not unequivocal (see Tables 2 and 3). With the exception of Frances Perkins, who had been the chief executive of the largest labor department at the state level, every woman secretary had had some national government experience. More generally, every woman qualified as a Washington insider, had held appointive or elective office, or had ties to women’s organizations and networks. Hobby, co-editor and publisher of the *Houston Post*, had been the director of the Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps with the rank of colonel in World War II. Immediately prior to serving in the cabinet, Carla Anderson Hills had been an assistant attorney general, Shirley Hufstедler a federal appellate court judge, Ann Dore McLaughlin an assistant treasury secretary and an interior undersecretary, and Heckler and Lynn M. Martin U.S. representatives. Juanita Kreps, Patricia Roberts Harris, and Dole had served in multiple administrations: Kreps and Harris had been appointed to presidential (and congressional) commissions—Harris was also the first African American woman ambassador, to Luxembourg—while Dole had been appointed to executive offices by Johnson, Nixon, Ford, and Reagan. (Dole’s term on the Federal Trade Commission extended through the Carter administration; she served in six consecutive administrations.) Perkins, Hobby, Kreps, Harris, Hufstедler, and Heckler all had strong ties with women’s organizations, which they mobilized in presidential campaigns. The women secretaries did have significant political resources.

Still, disproportionate numbers of the women secretaries were appointed to departments in which they had no policy or political expertise. The Roosevelt administration was the singular exception, with Frances Perkins qualifying as a policy specialist. In every other cabinet, a much higher percentage of women than of men were generalists; in four administrations, all of the women secretaries were generalists, while less than half of the men had this profile. Only in the George H. W. Bush administration were a majority of women (66.7%) and of men (52.6%) generalists. Though women had political resources and credentials, they were less well positioned than men to make use of them. As a group, the women secretaries were more dependent on the president and the White House than were the men secretaries.

Even in the Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Ford, Carter, Reagan, and George H. W. Bush administrations, the gender desegregation of the cabinet was not linear. At times, desegregation was abandoned for resegregation: there were no women cabinet secretaries for more than five years in the Eisenhower administration, and for more than two years in the Reagan administration. At other times, desegregation seemed poised to become integration, as when several women served simultaneously in the cabinet (in the Carter administration), or in a department related to their policy or political expertise (in the Roosevelt and George H. W. Bush administrations). But men were consistently appointed to the most influential posts, and women were disproportionately numbered among the secretaries who were most dependent on the White House. Gender desegregation remained an uncertain norm in the president’s cabinet.

TABLE 2
The Women Secretaries, 1933-2010

<i>President</i>	<i>Secretary</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>Years in Office</i>	<i>Washington Insider / Outsider</i>	<i>National / State Gov't Experience</i>	<i>Generalist / Liaison / Specialist</i>
Roosevelt	Frances Perkins	Labor	1933-1945	Outsider	State	Specialist
	Oveta Culp Hobby	HEW	1953-1955	Outsider	State, National	Generalist
	Carla Anderson Hills	HUD	1975-1977	Insider	National	Generalist
	Patricia Roberts Harris	HUD	1977-1979	Outsider	National	Generalist
Carter		HEW/HHS	1979-1981	Insider	National	Generalist
	Juanita Kreps	Commerce	1977-1981	Outsider	National	Generalist
	Shirley Mount Hufstедler	Education	1979-1981	Outsider	National	Generalist
	Elizabeth H. Dole	Transportation	1983-1987	Insider	National	Generalist
Reagan	Margaret M. Heckler	HHS	1983-1985	Insider	State, National	Generalist
	Ann Dore McLaughlin	Labor	1987-1989	Insider	National	Generalist
	Elizabeth H. Dole	Labor	1989-1990	Insider	National	Generalist
	Lynn M. Martin	Labor	1991-1993	Insider	State, National	Generalist
G. H. W. Bush	Barbara H. Franklin	Commerce	1992-1993	Outsider	National	Liaison
	Donna E. Shalala	HHS	1993-2001	Outsider	National	Generalist
	Hazel Rollins O'Leary	Energy	1993-1997	Outsider	State, National	Generalist
	Janet Reno	Justice	1993-2001	Outsider	State, National	Generalist
Clinton	Madeleine K. Albright	State	1997-2001	Insider	National	Liaison
	Alexis M. Herman	Labor	1997-2001	Outsider	National	Generalist
	Ann M. Veneman	Agriculture	2001-2005	Outsider	National, State	Generalist
	Gale A. Norton	Interior	2001-2006	Outsider	National, State	Liaison
G. W. Bush	Elaune Lan Chao	Labor	2001-2009	Outsider	National	Generalist
	Condoleezza Rice	State	2005-2009	Insider	National	Specialist
	Margaret Spellings	Education	2005-2009	Outsider	State, National	Generalist
	Mary E. Peters	Transportation	2006-2009	Outsider	State, National	Liaison
Obama*	Hillary Rodham Clinton	State	2009-present	Insider	State, National	Liaison
	Janet Napolitano	Homeland Security	2009-present	Outsider	National, State	Generalist
	Hilda Solis	Labor	2009-present	Insider	State, National	Liaison
	Kathleen Sebelius	HHS	2009-present	Outsider	State	Generalist

* Initial cabinet secretaries-designate only.

Note: The nominations of Clinton attorney general Zoë Baird and George W. Bush labor secretary Linda Chavez were withdrawn; they are not included in this listing.

TABLE 3
The Cabinet Secretaries: Washington Experience and Departmental Affiliations, 1933-2010

	Women		Men		Women			Men		
	Washington Insiders	Washington Outsiders	Washington Insiders	Washington Outsiders	Specialists	Liaisons	Generalists	Specialists	Liaisons	Generalists
<i>Roosevelt</i>	0 (0)	100.0 (1)	48.0 (12)	52.0 (13)	100.0 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.0 (1)	48.0 (12)	48.0 (12)
<i>Eisenhower</i>	0 (0)	100.0 (1)	40.0 (8)	60.0 (12)	0 (0)	0 (0)	100.0 (1)	5.0 (1)	60.0 (12)	35.0 (7)
<i>Ford</i>	100.0 (1)	0 (0)	50.0 (6)	50.0 (6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	100.0 (1)	16.7 (2)	50.0 (6)	33.3 (4)
<i>Carter</i>	50.0 (2)	50.0 (2)	41.2 (7)	58.8 (10)	0 (0)	0 (0)	100.0 (4)	5.9 (1)	58.9 (10)	35.3 (6)
<i>Reagan</i>	100.0 (3)	0 (0)	40.0 (12)	60.0 (18)	0 (0)	0 (0)	100.0 (3)	0 (0)	53.3 (16)	46.7 (14)
<i>G. H. W. Bush</i>	66.7 (2)	33.3 (1)	68.4 (13)	31.6 (6)	0 (0)	33.3 (1)	66.7 (2)	0 (0)	47.4 (9)	52.6 (10)
<i>Clinton</i>	20.0 (1)	80.0 (4)	41.7 (10)	58.3 (14)	0 (0)	20.0 (1)	80.0 (4)	8.3 (2)	45.8 (11)	45.8 (11)
<i>G. W. Bush</i>	16.7 (1)	83.3 (5)	10.7 (3)	89.3 (25)	16.7 (1)	33.3 (2)	50.0 (3)	0 (0)	57.1 (16)	42.9 (12)

Note: Numbers may not add to 100 because of rounding.

From Gender Desegregation to Gender Integration: Cabinet Appointments in the Clinton, Bush, and Obama Administrations

Given the incremental pace of gender change within the cabinet in the earlier administrations, and strong contrasts among recent presidential candidates in regard to their campaign promises, a cautious oracle would have predicted a continuation of gender desegregation in the Clinton, Bush, and Obama cabinets. Gender integration would have seemed a possibility in the Clinton and Obama cabinets, gender resegregation in the Bush cabinet. Yet Clinton and Bush both named gender-integrated cabinets, and Obama's initial appointments suggest that this trend will be sustained.

The Emergence of Gender Integration

Most obviously, Clinton and Bush increased the number of women secretaries serving simultaneously in the cabinet. Both had three women among their initial cabinet appointees, and both, for most of their second terms, had four women in the cabinet (see Table 4). Though men were still greatly in the majority, the women were no longer solitary figures. A majority of women and men secretaries were also Washington outsiders, especially in the Bush cabinet.²

Women were named to more diverse departments, including inner cabinet departments. In Clinton's second term, women held two of the four inner cabinet posts; they were overrepresented relative to their numbers in the cabinet, though not relative to the wider electorate. Women were also named to outer cabinet departments relevant to the president's agenda. In the Clinton administration, a woman led the Health and Human Services Department during the effort to reform health care; in the Bush administration, women led the Interior and Education departments, and were charged with recalibrating the balance of power among the departments' constituents and implementing major changes in natural resources management and public education.

These steps toward gender integration thoroughly immersed the women secretaries in power negotiations with the White House. Clinton's health and human services secretary, Donna E. Shalala, was one of several cabinet officers and numerous senior White House officials to participate in the health care task force, which was led by another woman—First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton. Like many men secretaries, Shalala had to contend with the centralization of decision and policy making in the White House. For

2. A rigorous definition of "Washington insiders"—a direct transfer to a cabinet post from the subcabinet or from another cabinet office, or a career focused on national government—ensured an accurate assessment of the cabinet members' status. (The only exceptions to this definition were Madeleine Albright, ambassador to the United Nations when she was nominated to be secretary of state, and Condoleezza Rice, national security advisor at the time of her nomination to be secretary of state. Both of these women held cabinet rank and had participated so extensively in cabinet meetings that they were classified as insiders.) While a number of midterm appointees—women as well as men—had served as agency or bureau chiefs (including former Environmental Protection Agency administrator Mike Leavitt, named health and human services secretary), or had served in White House posts (among them the director of the White House Office of Public Liaison, Alexis M. Herman, named labor secretary), transfers within the subcabinet or cabinet were uncommon, as was recruitment from the Congress, particularly in the Bush administration.

TABLE 4
The Initial Cabinet Secretaries: Washington Experience and Departmental Affiliations, 1993-2010

	Women			Men			Women			Men		
	Washington Insiders	Washington Outsiders	Washington Outsiders	Washington Insiders	Washington Outsiders	Washington Outsiders	Specialists	Liaisons	Generalists	Specialists	Liaisons	Generalists
	<i>Clinton</i>	0 (0)	100.0 (3)	27.3 (3)	72.7 (8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	100.0 (3)	0 (0)	54.5 (6)
<i>G. W. Bush</i>	0 (0)	100.0 (3)	9.1 (1)	90.9 (10)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	33.3 (1)	66.7 (2)	0 (0)	63.6 (7)	36.4 (4)
<i>Obama</i>	50.0 (2)	50.0 (2)	9.1 (1)	90.9 (10)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	50.0 (2)	50.0 (2)	9.1 (1)	81.8 (9)	9.1 (1)

Note: Numbers may not add to 100 because of rounding.

perhaps the first time, however, the cabinet secretary and the senior White House official who were engaged in this power negotiation were both women.

Practices that facilitated women's integration into the cabinet continued. In just two administrations, women served in nine departments, five of which had not previously had a woman secretary. Reinscription of femininity through departmental assignments was still limited. Departmental jurisdictions of the women secretaries included such "men's issues" as nuclear weapons policy, foreign policy, law enforcement, natural resources management, and agribusiness policy.

The Clinton and Bush women secretaries had more extensive political credentials than their cabinet predecessors. Most had served in the subcabinet or White House; several had held executive offices in the private or public sectors. Shalala had been chancellor of the University of Wisconsin–Madison, Hazel Rollins O'Leary had been the president and chief executive officer of the Natural Gas Division at Northern States Power, Ann Veneman had led the California Food and Agriculture Department, Elaine Lan Chao was a former president and chief executive officer of the United Way, and Condoleezza Rice had been provost at Stanford University. Janet Reno had won several tough reelection battles in her lengthy tenure as the Dade County state's attorney, and Gale A. Norton had won election and reelection as Colorado attorney general. Women's credentials were becoming more similar to those of the men secretaries, which had long included private sector executives, as well as elected officials (Borrelli 2002).

In perhaps the most significant change, fewer women generalists were appointed to the cabinet. Clinton's initial appointees did continue past practices, with all of the women and less than half of the men (45.5%) lacking policy or political expertise relevant to their departments. The contrast was similar for the Bush initial appointees, with 66.7% of the women and 36.4% of the men so disadvantaged. Yet both presidents included women who were policy specialists or liaisons among their midterm appointees—Clinton secretary of state Madeleine K. Albright was only the second woman liaison to be named to the cabinet. The importance of this appointment was bolstered by Albright's inclusion in the inner cabinet at the beginning of the president's second term, when foreign policy was highly salient. Bush secretary of state Condoleezza Rice was only the second woman to be a policy specialist in her department's issue jurisdiction, and she also was appointed at the beginning of the president's second term; Transportation Secretary Mary Peters was a liaison. While Clinton's women appointees were still disproportionately generalists (80.0% of the women, 45.8% of the men), Bush's women appointees had departmental affiliations that were slightly more similar to those of the men (16.7% policy specialists, 33.3% liaisons, 50.0% generalists for the women; no policy specialists, 57.1% liaisons, 42.9% generalists for the men).

With more women secretaries, with stronger political and departmental credentials, appointed to a wider array of departments, the Clinton and Bush cabinets qualify as shifting toward gender integration. Men still held the majority of the cabinet posts, especially those of particular importance to the president, but women were positioned and had the resources to participate more fully in decision making. As they did so, women secretaries encountered the constraints that presidents imposed on all their secretaries, including the centralization of policy making in the White House. Gender

integration did not liberate the women secretaries from White House constraints or from presidential dependency. Instead, it signified that the women and men secretaries would have similar resources with which to respond to these political pressures.

Continuing Gender Integration?

Barack Obama's initial cabinet appointments continued the gender integration seen in the Clinton and the George W. Bush administrations. Because Obama had made only initial appointments at the time this article was written, and because the profile of initial and midterm secretaries have contrasted in previous administrations, it is important to compare Obama's secretaries to those in the initial cabinets of his immediate predecessors. The result is a series of snapshots—taken in 1993, 2001, and 2009—of gender politics in cabinet appointments.

More women (four of fifteen, 26.7%) were nominated, confirmed, and appointed to the Obama cabinet than ever before. While some confirmations were contentious, no woman's cabinet nomination was withdrawn. Yet these accomplishments elicited little commentary in the national press (see Shear 2008; see also King and Riddlesperger 2009). The inclusion of women in the cabinet had become the norm. When there was coverage of a woman's appointment, it focused on the individual. Articles about Hillary Clinton, for example, had gendered themes and messages, but were focused on her credentials and politics; little attention was given to the significance of naming a woman as secretary of state. Clinton was, after all, the third woman in the post and was succeeding another woman.

Women and men in the Obama cabinet were appointed to the inner cabinet and to outer cabinet departments that were important to the president's agenda. There had been explicit campaign promises to strengthen U.S. diplomatic relations and to reform health care, elevating the status of the Department of State and Department of Health and Human Services. The Department of Homeland Security—which had not previously had a woman secretary—was inextricably tied to the war on terror, another priority for the new administration. The Labor Department had constituencies critical to the president's election and reelection. While the women's departments were not equal in influence, none would be marginalized. Men were still in the majority in the cabinet and in the most powerful posts, but the women secretaries were no longer mere buffers against hostile constituencies or apologists for policy moratoria, as they had been in earlier administrations with gender-desegregated cabinets.

The reinscription of femininity through departmental assignments was limited. The Department of Health and Human Services, with a policy jurisdiction associated with "women's issues," had a fifth woman secretary, but this was an appointment of importance to the administration. Foreign relations, national security, and organized labor were all "men's issues." With Clinton as the third women secretary of state and Hilda Solis the seventh women labor secretary, these issue areas might subsequently qualify as transgendered—a point for future research.

The political credentials of the Obama woman secretaries, as a group, were arguably more extensive than those seen in any previous cabinet. For the first time, there was a

higher proportion of women than of men initial appointees who were Washington insiders. Also for the first time, women who were sitting incumbents in elected office were named to the cabinet—every woman nominee had this status. Hillary Clinton had won election and reelection to the U.S. Senate with 55% and 67% of the vote, respectively, and had been a formidable presidential candidate. Hilda Solis was the first Latina to win her district's congressional seat. She entered Congress by defeating a strong Latino incumbent and subsequently won four reelection campaigns, running unopposed in 2008. Janet Napolitano and Kathleen Sebelius were Democratic governors who had won election and reelection in states (Arizona and Kansas) generally viewed as Republican. Narrowly elected to office, their reelection margins were viewed as impressive—Napolitano first won with 46.2% of the vote and was reelected with 62.6%; Sebelius won with 52.9% and was reelected with 57.9% of the vote.

The electoral alliances of the four women augmented those of the president, connecting with women mobilized by the Clinton campaign, facilitating outreach to the Latino community, and reaching out to unaffiliated and moderate Republican voters. Even regional diversity was achieved, with Clinton from the Northeast (New York) and South (Arkansas), Solis from the West Coast (California), Napolitano from the Southwest, and Sebelius from the Midwest.

There were men in the initial Obama cabinet who were sitting incumbents—Senator Ken Salazar (Interior) and Representative Ray LaHood (Transportation), Governor Tom Vilsack (Agriculture) and Governor Gary Locke (Commerce)—and they also provided outreach to different regions of the country and to important segments of the electorate. There had been numerous men secretaries who were sitting incumbents in previous cabinets as well. What was important about the Obama women secretaries was that they were the first to meet this male norm.

Finally, two women—Clinton and Solis—were appointed to departments in which they already had strong political relationships. This was the greatest number of women liaisons to ever serve simultaneously in the cabinet. As first lady, Hillary Clinton had received domestic and international acclaim for her efforts on behalf of human rights. As a U.S. senator, she had served on the Armed Services Committee and built a reputation for thoroughness and precision. Hilda Solis, whose parents had been factory workers and union organizers, had served on the House Education and Workforce Committee, and subsequently on the Energy and Commerce Committee. She was the first woman labor secretary to have a pre-cabinet career in the national government that encompassed worker safety, environmental justice, and human rights (see Cooper and Greenhouse 2008; Kornblut 2008).

A higher percentage of the Obama initial men secretaries (81.8%) than of the initial women secretaries (50.0%) qualified as departmental liaisons. But the stark contrasts between the departmental resources of the men and the women secretaries, which lessened in the Bush cabinet, were continuing to soften. That the credentials of the women and the men secretaries were becoming more similar was not merely evidence of women's ability to match the accomplishments of their men colleagues, or of their willingness to conform to masculine standards. The similarity was also indicative of the president's endorsement of highly credentialed women as cabinet secretaries.

Yet this administration, like its predecessors, checked the power of the cabinet by centralizing decision making in the White House. Cabinet and White House appointments were announced in “teams,” to stress the extent to which the secretaries and “czars” would be collaborating (see Baker 2008; De Young and Shear 2008). In announcing his nomination of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and his appointment of Nancy-Ann DeParle as director of the White House Office of Health Reform, for example, the president stressed that both would be advancing health care reform as a “moral imperative” and a “fiscal imperative” (Phillips 2009; see also Pear and Zeleny 2009). As in the Clinton administration, women in the White House and in the cabinet were charged with advancing a major presidential initiative. And, as in the Clinton and Bush cabinets, gender integration meant that the women secretaries would confront political negotiations similar to those encountered by their male colleagues. The Obama women secretaries, however, entered the cabinet with more extensive political resources to manage the associated constraints.

Conclusion

Are there systematic differences among the women and men appointed to the cabinet throughout the modern presidency? Yes. Women secretaries were disproportionately among the least influential and the most White House–dependent secretaries in the Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Ford, Carter, Reagan, and George H. W. Bush cabinets. The political and departmental resources of the women and men secretaries—their relationships and expertise in campaigning and governing, their substantive policy expertise, and their knowledge of the Washington community and of their departmental constituents—became similar only in the Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama presidencies, as the cabinet began to undergo gender integration. In these more recent cabinets, women and men secretaries also encountered similar checks on their actions as decision makers, including the centralization of policy making in the White House.

Continuing the study of gender desegregation and gender integration requires consideration of other facets of the secretaries’ identities, which intersect in powerful ways with the secretaries’ gender. Remember the examples of Frances Perkins and Colin Powell that opened this article. What can we learn from the cabinet appointment of a white woman social reformer in 1933 and of a black man who was a military careerist in 2001? What are the consequences of the gender–race dynamics for decision and policy making in presidential administrations and executive departments? Answering these questions, with due respect given to the historical and political contexts, will contribute to intellectual dialogues between scholars of the presidency and of identity politics.

It will also be important to see whether the cabinet’s gender integration continues through the Obama midterm appointments. Past midterm appointments have often included more Washington insiders and more generalists, a combination that has allowed presidents to take advantage of the secretaries’ Washington expertise while retaining control over their departmental leadership. Yet the value that the Obama administration assigns to the secretaries’ pre-cabinet career paths, and their associated resources, will be

affected by many things, including the president's legislative agenda, surprises and scandals, the political lessons drawn from the midterm elections, and reelection campaign strategies. Gender integration of the cabinet has, however, now extended across three presidential administrations, which have manifested diverse ideological commitments and partisan affiliations. Though still something of an innovation, gender integration in the cabinet may no longer be a vulnerable norm.

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