

Margaret
Cuninggim
Women's Center

Election aftermath: How will women fare?

Jean Bethke Elshtain
Centennial Professor of Political Science

In the aftermath of election, 1988, it may be wise to ponder what counts as a "woman's issue." If one narrows the scope of such issues to a cluster of social concerns, for example, child care, abortion, parental leave, 1988 was a disappointing year. Child care was supposed to be a major issue. But it faded fast, perhaps because so-called "wedge" issues of deep symbolic significance (the pledge, furloughs) took center stage. As well, each of the candidate's specific proposals on child care involved very complicated initiatives. Let me explain.

Vice President Bush favored a \$2.2 billion refundable tax credit bill for parents with children under four to allow the parents to remain in the work force. Governor Dukakis, on the other hand, indicated he supported the "goals" of a proposal to use \$2.2 billion, in the form of block grants to state and local governments, to pay for affordable child care programs for poor and moderate income families. But this question, and other children's and family issues, soared early on, then plummeted as the campaign moved towards its denouement.

Why? The so-called "child care establishment," a network of professional child care providers, federal administrators, and feminist lobbying groups favored the Dukakis proposal, the so-called "ABC" Bill. But that bill was already in trouble even before the election began because it would deny federal funding to church-run day-care centers. Thus, the more Democrats lobbied for the bill, the more troubled many concerned with day-care became. Church-run day-care is central to day-care, and

is often the only care available to the poor and to low-income families. For this reason, among others, the child care issue stalled out with no votes to be gained by pressing any harder than either candidate pressed. Indeed, given the defensive posture under which Dukakis was put from the beginning of the campaign, any relentless pursuit of the child care question would probably have done him more harm than good in light of the controversy surrounding the bill he supported.

There is, at present, no overwhelming pro child care constituency that a presidential candidate must appeal to or appease. And this is not surprising in light of the fact that, if you look at mothers today, about 40% work full time, about 40% are not in the labor force at all, and about 20% are working part-time. Thus the family debate as a "woman's issue" remains weak and unfocused.

What other "woman's issues" might one identify? The ERA was not an issue in this election campaign. Abortion was. But here, too, things get very complicated very fast. Current polls indicate about 42% of the American public supports abortion on demand; about 38% opposes; the rest are undecided. The figures have altered over the past four years with more voters surveyed turning to the camp of opposition as abortion has become a more visible and volatile question and as more evidence has been presented concerning numbers of abortions performed, the ethics of for-profit abortion clinics, and so on.

Women themselves are pretty evenly split on the question, although fewer women than men, from the beginning of survey data on the abortion question,



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support abortion on demand. On this question one must simply note that if abortion is a "woman's issue," it is one that divides women, and the election simply made more manifest those divisions.

What about the much discussed "gender gap?" Last spring word was that women preferred Dukakis by runaway margins with one poll showing the governor with a 61-33% lead over Bush among likely female voters. Jane Danowitz of the Women's Campaign Fund proclaimed, in April, "We are going to deliver the next president!"

But as the campaign progressed the gender gap narrowed dramatically. No one has any solid explanation for this phenomenon. Campaign results indicate that women split their votes pretty evenly between the two candidates, with more women going for Bush. But the real gender gap is not among female voters but male voters where Bush scored a lopsided 57-41% advantage according to a CBS-New York Times poll. This, too, is a phenomenon that awaits explanation.

Should women be gloomy over the election? My hunch is that Bush will be a centrist President, far more pragmatic and less ideological than Reagan on a whole range of issues. He will certainly continue detente with the Soviets—and that should be a big "woman's issue."

(continued page 2)

In the news

Reproductive choice can no longer be taken for granted. With the election of George Bush secured November 8, the Justice Department on November 10 urged the Supreme Court to accept an appeal in a Missouri abortion case that it said "presents an appropriate opportunity" to overturn the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision giving women a constitutional right to abortion.

Kate Michelman of the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) stresses that the "unusual" filing by Solicitor General Fried reflects the "beginning of the Bush Years," and "not the last gasp" of President Reagan, who has engaged in a series of moves to limit access to abortion. NARAL will file a brief in the *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* case and is preparing to launch an emergency action mobilization for alerting American women that the election "created a political climate where their rights to privacy and reproductive choice can no longer be taken for granted."

Women's Times, November 15, 1988

Apparent increase in harassment and violence against college women by male peers. Some very disconcerting signs of increasing violence and harassment faced by college women and minorities have recently surfaced. An article in the *New York Times* notes that racist, sexist, and anti-Semitic incidents on college campuses are increasing.

Harassment of women on campuses is the subject of a recent report published by the Project on the Status and Education of Women of the Association of American Colleges. The report not only describes incidents of violence and harassment directed against women on campus, but discusses possible causes and lists recommendations for dealing with the problem. For copies of the report, write to PSEW, AAC, 1818 R Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009 or come by the women's center library.

Eleanor Smeal Report, November 30, 1988

Complaints increase since passage of Civil Rights Restoration Act. More than 500 complaints against institutions made since the passage of the Civil Rights Restoration Act allege violations of Title IX because institutions are "not providing pregnancy coverage and related health benefits to female students and spouses." According to a September 1988 alert from the Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, the provisions of certain student health insurance plans which do not provide coverage for pregnancy on the same basis as coverage for other temporary disabilities may place an institution in violation of Title IX. Sixteen complaints of violations of Title IX have been filed against twelve college and university athletic departments. Four of these complaints were filed individually by coaches at the University of Santa Clara against their institution.

Chronicle of Higher Education, November 2, 1988

(aftermath, continued from page one)

He will be less likely than Dukakis to rethink our Central and Latin American policy. Here, too, women have a stake, for women and children suffer daily under corrupt or dictatorial regimes, and an alteration in our policies would help to ease this abuse. There is, or should be, concern about appointment for judgeships, including the Supreme Court. It is likely that Bush will aim for more appointees along the lines of Justices Scalia and Kennedy whereas Dukakis would have sought persons of guaranteed liberal stripe. What substantive difference this will make over the long run is hard to say. It depends entirely on what issues the current court decides to "take up" or "let die."

If there are any lessons to be drawn from this picture they are these:

- Women's issues should not be defined narrowly but should be enhanced to include the entire scope of public and foreign policy.
- Women are divided on every important question confronting the country—from abortion to arms control (although women consistently indicate stronger approval for arms reduction and stronger disapproval of the use of force in foreign affairs than do men).
- It is demeaning to women to assume that somehow they will constitute themselves as a single-voiced "women's bloc." That has never happened in the past, and one should not expect it to happen in the future. Women are too diverse for that.

Page 2, *Women's VII*, January 1989

It's your health

Beth Colvin, RN, MSN
Dept. of OB/GYN

(Adapted from an article in *Newsweek* by R. L. Nail, M.D.)

'Tis the season for colds, flu, and strep throat. The symptoms are similar for all three, yet each require different treatment. Here's a quick review...

Strep throat - Sudden high fever and a painful swollen throat typically occur. There may be a yellowish coating at the back of the throat and the lymph glands under the jawbone will be tender and swollen. The diagnosis is confirmed by throat culture. Treatment with penicillin (unless you are allergic) is imperative to reduce the serious complications that can occur from strep throat. Vital organs, especially the brain, the heart and the kidneys, can be seriously and permanently damaged if the strep bacteria remains untreated. Treatment also decreases the chance of spread to others.

Influenza ("flu") - The three most common symptoms, usually seen together, are sudden fever, dry and severe cough, and muscle pain often affecting the leg and lower back muscles. Other symptoms that may occur with these three are headaches, joint pain, and eye sensitivity. Flu may be spread to others up to three days after the onset of symptoms.

Treatment consists of symptom management with aspirin (except for children under age 15 who should always be treated with acetaminophen or Tylenol), rest, gargling, etc.

Colds - Most symptoms are related to the head (eyes, ears, nose, throat) and airway passages (sinuses, larynx, trachea, bronchi). Nasal congestion, sneezing, watery eyes, and sore throat are commonly seen. The sore throat is generally not as bad as that of strep throat and the yellow coating does not appear. Coughing is minimal; fever over 100 degrees is rarely seen. Complications may include sinus, ear, or lung infections. Cold viruses are transmitted from the day prior to the onset of symptoms until five days afterward. Prevention is achieved by frequent handwashing and keeping contaminated hands away from the eyes and mouth. Warmth, rest, aspirin or Tylenol, decongestants, and gargling are recommended.

See your health care provider if there is any doubt about your symptoms, and especially if you have a sore throat plus fever. Have a happy, healthy winter!



In the library

Books by VU authors

Lauri Wright
Women's center librarian

Start the new year off by reading a book by a Vanderbilt author. We have many that are available at the women's center library.

Belle Moskowitz: Feminine Politics and the Exercise of Power in the Age of Alfred E. Smith by Elisabeth Perry, associate professor of history, is a biography of Perry's grandmother, who was Smith's closest advisor. One of the most powerful women in New York, Moskowitz was a behind-the-scenes force in United States politics during the four terms in the 1920's of Alfred E. Smith's governorship of New York.

A History of the Vanderbilt School of Nursing 1909-1984 by Mary Louise Donaldson, professor of nursing education, contains photographs from the history of the school including the former directors and deans.

Just a Sister Away by Renita J. Weems, instructor in Old Testament Studies at the Divinity School, is a study guide and commentary about Biblical women and their relationships.

Macho isn't Enough! Family Man in a Liberated World is Don Welch's advice for men who want to become equal partners and liberated fathers. Welch is Associate Dean of the Vanderbilt Law School and chair-elect of the women's center advisory board.

Working up a Storm: Anger, Anxiety, Joy, and Tears on the Job -- and How to Handle Them by Jeanne Plas and Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey describes the authors research into emotions in the workplace and how to handle them. Hoover-Dempsey and Plas are associate professors of psychology at Peabody.



"Kids vs. Careers: Is There a Winning Game Plan?" is an insightful article from *Sassy Woman*, December 1988. According to author Lorraine Dusky, when it comes to juggling jobs and babies, it's every woman for herself. The good news is that because of the dearth of workers in the 1990's, competition for women in their childbearing years is expected to result in companies offering such benefits as child care, parental leaves, job-sharing and flexible hours. For your copy of this article come by the women's center.

Mary Jane Werthan Award

During the women's center dedication last November, the Mary Jane Werthan Award was established. As stated in the resolution to establish the Award, it "honors three qualities characteristic of the first recipient for whom it is named: vision, persistence, and extraordinary skill in interpersonal and institutional relations." The Award recognizes the "debt that women at Vanderbilt University owe to those individuals who have had the vision to see how things ought to be, the courage to persist in their hopes over time, and the skills necessary to bring new attitudes and practices into being."

In 1964 Mary Jane Werthan, who holds degrees from Vanderbilt University and Peabody College, was the first woman named to the Vanderbilt Board of Trust. Her years of service, both within the University and in the community, embody her belief in the principle of equality and reflect her dedication to the realization of equal opportunity for women.

Nominations for the 1989 Mary Jane Werthan Award will be accepted from now through the summer. Any person, male or female, who has or has had a connection with Vanderbilt University, may receive the Award. A nominee may be a student, member of the faculty or staff, or an administrator. Exceptions are the women's center staff. Nominations should be typed or clearly written on no more than two pages, giving the name of the nominee and stating the activities of the nominee that qualify her or him for the Award. The nomination should be sent to the Executive Committee, Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center Advisory Board, Box 1513, Station B. The 1989 Mary Jane Werthan Award will be made next fall at the annual Margaret Cuninggim Lecture.

Women's Center programs

Call 322-4843 for further information on the programs listed below.

Dissertation Writers Group will meet Thursday, January 5, 4:15 p.m. until 6:15 p.m. at the women's center. Women of all schools and disciplines are invited.

Book Group will meet Monday, January 9, 5:15 p.m. until 6:15 p.m., at the women's center to discuss *Middlemarch* by George Eliot. Discussion about these Victorian stories originally published separately in magazine form will be led by Elaine Goleski. New members are welcome. Light refreshments.

Noontime Book Review will feature a review by Antonina Filonov Gove, Associate Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures, of *The Women's Decameron* by Julia Voznesenskaya. This look at the intimate lives of Soviet women recounts the stories of ten women quarantined in a Leningrad maternity ward after giving birth. Beneath the themes of love, jealousy, infidelity, seduction, farcical sex, money, revenge, and happiness runs the vivid everyday reality of Soviet life and politics.

Copies of *The Women's Decameron* are available in the campus book store for \$9.95.

Review and discussion will be held on Thursday, January 19, 12:15 p.m. in Sarritt 118. Come with your lunch. This program is cosponsored by Peace Links who plan to host a visit to Nashville by a group of Soviet women in the spring.

The International Services Coffee on January 27 from 11:30 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. will be co-hosted by the women's center and Opportunity Development Center. The staff of the two offices look forward to meeting international students that day for lunch.

OOPS!!

Last month *Women's VU* had some mistakes that we would like to correct. In Beth Colvin's health article on page 2 the two fibroid tumors of the uterus are called myomas and leiomyomas (not biomyomas). Also in that article, fibroids have less than a 1% chance of cancerous change (not 4% as we said).

On page 3 where we offered a free copy of an article regarding job interviews, the last line should have read, "She also includes tips on researching the company, listening for unasked questions, interviews for a promotion, and ways to sell yourself."

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Announcements et cetera

The Dayani Center, Vanderbilt's new base of operation for all health promotion, located at 22nd and Pierce, will open March 1. It will serve as the health and fitness center for hospital patients, as well as for the faculty and staff. The 26,000 foot facility will house the AP-LEWORKS staff offices, a pool, track, strength and conditioning equipment, and a large aerobics room. It will also contain the fitness testing laboratory where all new members will receive comprehensive screening and assessment before beginning the wellness program.

The goal of the center is to improve overall health through proper nutrition and exercise. Membership to the facility will be available to VU employees using a fee structure based on family income.

Come and meet your state senators and representatives. The Nashville Women's Roundtable is again sponsoring an evening on the Hill with the Davidson County Delegation of the State Legislature on Thursday, February 23, 5:30 p.m., room 16, Legislative Plaza.

All four senators and eleven representatives from the district are expected to attend. The public is invited. Those who come will have an opportunity to ask questions about state and local issues. Mark your calendar for this event and plan to attend.

Congressional Fellowships on Women and Public Policy. The Women's Fellowships are designed to train women in public policy formulation by allowing them to work 30 hours per week in a Congressional office as a legislative aide. Any graduate student is eligible for the program, and may be able to receive academic credit for the work. Applications are available from the Women's Research and Education Institute. For more information, contact Alison Dineen, Fellowship Director, Women's Research and Education Institute, 1700 18th St. NW, Suite 400, Washington, D. C. 20009, (202) 328-7070.

The Pergamon-NWSA Graduate Scholarships in Women's Studies will be awarded to the graduate student, who in the fall of 1989 will be doing research or writing a thesis of dissertation concerned with Women's Studies. Applications may be obtained by writing NWSA, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742-1325; the application deadline is March 1. Preference will be given to candidates whose research project involves women of color, class, or third world women.

NWSA Conference Scholarships. In order to make the National Women's Studies conference accessible to more women NWSA has allocated \$9,000 to be awarded as waivers for conference registration and/or room and board. The

1989 national conference "Feminist Transformations," will be held in Baltimore, June 14-18. Applications available from NWSA, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742-1325 must be received by March 15.

The Center for Advanced Feminist Studies at the University of Minnesota is offering two Rockefeller Humanist-in-Residence Fellowships for one post-doctoral and one senior scholar on the theme "Theorizing Female Diversity: The Social Construction of Difference." Applications for the Fellowships are due February 1. For more information, contact The Center for Advanced Feminist Studies, University of Minnesota, 496 Ford Hall, 224 Church Street SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455.

For the Record

In advertising, is there really any difference between men and women employees? At a panel discussion on "Women in Advertising," Jamie Seltzer, executive vice president/creative director of Della Femina, McNamee WCRS, said that someone once complimented her by saying she wrote like a man. "What does that mean?" Seltzer asked rhetorically.

"It means you can't spell," quipped Stephanie Arnold of Levine, Huntley, Schmidt & Beaver.

Media Report To Women,
November/December 1988

Edited by JUDITH T. HELFER

To receive each issue of *Women's VU* (published monthly except July and August), return the form below or call the Women's Center, 322-4843. Newsletters are sent free upon request to all students. Faculty and staff subscriptions are free to a campus address.

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