



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Women's Values and a New America

The rising feminized majority has a different vision of America, but what is this vision and how widespread is it? In this chapter, we examine polling data about public opinion to answer these questions. In the first part, we present gender gap research concerning women's values and vision for America. It's a story about a desire for a new America, far more progressive than that currently embraced by the Democratic Party. In the second part, we prove that a robust majority of Americans already share a feminized vision for major social change. That will happen only if the Democratic Party seizes the opportunity.

Gender gap research documents our argument that: (1) men and women have different values, (2) these differing values spill over into the political arena, and (3) women's values lead to a progressive vision for economic and social transformation in America. Gender gap research also highlights how millions of men share feminized values and a progressive vision for the country. Then, we show that extensive polling research documents that the feminized majority's views resonate with a majority of American voters. In the next chapter, we spell out more clearly why these progressive values are feminized and how "feminized" politics differ from both feminism and traditional liberalism or progressivism.

## The Gender Gap

Substantial research suggests that gendered values affect the private and public decisions of men and women. This research focuses on the political “gender gap” that emerged in the mid-1980s, a phenomenon proving that men and women do not see eye to eye on many issues. The term *gender gap* initially measured the difference in the number of men and women who vote for a specific political candidate. In the 1996 presidential election, for example, a 12 percentage-point gap separated the number of women who supported Bill Clinton and the number of men who supported Bill Clinton.

The gender gap also refers to the difference in the number of men and women who support a certain position on a political issue. For example, a 2007 Harris poll found a large gender gap between the number of women and men who oppose “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” military policy. Sixty-one percent of women want the policy overturned, compared to 47 percent of men—a 14 percentage-point gender gap.<sup>1</sup>

Today, few people doubt either the existence or the political importance of a large gender gap. In the last three elections, a majority of female voters *and* male voters supported different presidential candidates. In 2004, 51 percent of women voted for John Kerry, compared to just 44 percent of men.<sup>2</sup> In 2000, 54 percent of women voted for Al Gore, compared to 42 percent of men.<sup>3</sup> In 1996, as we noted, Bill Clinton was reelected with a large gender gap.

The 1990s is significant not only for the increasing size of the gender gap, but also because, for the first time, men and women actually voted in opposite directions.<sup>4</sup> In the 1980s, by contrast, a majority of both men and women voted for Reagan. In 1980, men voted for Reagan by an 18 percent margin while women voted for him by a 2 percent margin.<sup>5</sup>

A September 2007 poll suggested that the gender gap is growing dramatically. It showed that 53 percent of women planned to vote Democratic for president in 2008 compared to 27 percent who planned to vote Republican. Only 41 percent of men in the same poll said they would vote Democratic for president, while 37 percent said they would vote for the Republican presidential candidate.<sup>6</sup>

Gender gap data show that women of all demographic groups are trending more Democratic. Even among traditionally more conservative women—those married and living in suburbs—a plurality of 46 percent said they planned to vote Democratic for president in 2008 compared to only 29 percent who said they would vote Republican. In contrast, in 2004, while 51 percent of women voted for Kerry, married women voted 55 percent for Bush and 44 percent for Kerry, compared to single women who voted 62 percent for Kerry and only 37 percent for Bush.<sup>7</sup>

Because of their underlying values, women not only *vote* more liberally but also hold more *progressive views* than men on most political issues. Women are more likely than men to support civil unions for same-sex couples, and less likely to say that homosexuality is a choice.<sup>8</sup> They are more opposed to the death penalty, especially for minors.<sup>9</sup> They are more likely to support a pullout date for the troops in Iraq.<sup>10</sup> These opinions put women further to the left on the ideological spectrum than most men, and much further to the left than most evangelicals.

At the same time, women, perhaps unexpectedly, are *more* religious than men. Eighty-three percent of women over fifty, and 65 percent of women under fifty, rate religion as “extremely important,” compared to 59 percent of men over fifty and 56 percent of men under fifty.<sup>11</sup> Women also are more likely than men (by a 37 percent to 29 percent margin) to believe that the Bible should have greater influence over American law than the will of the people.<sup>12</sup> How is it possible that women are both more religious than men and more progressive?

Women are still socialized to move through life with the goal of *Together We Can*. Women's gendered values encourage them to view issues differently than men, even if they share the same level of religiosity as men. Researcher Karen Kaufmann observes, "Men who believe that new lifestyles are bad and that new moral values should not be tolerated are more likely to be conservative on social welfare issues than women who hold similar beliefs."<sup>13</sup> Women with traditional moral values are more progressive than men with traditional moral values because they look at the same issues in different ways. In the case of social welfare, religious women share with other women the feminized values of community and equality and are more supportive of social programs, while traditionally religious men disapprove of welfare because they hold the masculinized values of individualism and competition. When traditional moral values intersect with feminized or masculinized values, it does not lead to the same conclusion. And, more generally, *when feminized values are applied to politics, they translate into a more progressive politics.*

Values emerge again and again as the reason women and men hold different political opinions. One study attributed political gender gaps to women's "egalitarian values" and their desire to "help others."<sup>14</sup> These traits make women more likely than men to support racial and gender equality. Women are also more likely to agree with the idea that the government should have more responsibility in helping its citizens and that government is better able to handle problems than is the free market. Not surprisingly, these values make women more likely to consider themselves liberal. Egalitarian values remain statistically significant even when controlling for income, education, occupational status, and religiosity.<sup>15</sup>

Men's views about the role of government in citizens' lives differ from women's views. Men are more likely to prefer a free market approach to social problems. In this

sense, men's values closely align with capitalist values. Traditional capitalism was built on the values of competition, winner-take-all individualism, and inequality. The masculinized value system also includes individualism and competition—men are socialized to believe that *Alone I Will*. As government programs and a strong social welfare state restrain capitalism, they also end up at odds with masculinized values. More men than women, for example, feel that the government is “wasteful and inefficient,” and would prefer a smaller government with fewer services to a larger government with more services.<sup>16</sup>

It seems historically appropriate that masculinized values are closely intertwined with capitalist values. Men were traditionally socialized to believe that, with hard work, they could move up the socioeconomic ladder. They were encouraged to use capitalism to pursue their dreams. Women, on the other hand, were traditionally socialized to take care of the home, providing unpaid domestic labor that has little value in a capitalist economy. Historically, women have not had the same relationship with capitalism as men, so their values intersect with capitalism in different ways than men's values. In fact, feminized values often counter capitalist values—cooperation versus competitiveness, for example. Social programs and other liberal approaches fit into the feminized value system, whereas they encroach on the masculinized value system.

Women and men also have strikingly different opinions regarding security and force. These differences were highlighted on 12 September 2001—the day after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon—when a *CBS News* poll asked if respondents felt that the “U.S. should take military action against whoever is responsible for the attacks, even if it means that innocent people are killed.” A full 75 percent of men agreed that the United States should take action, compared to 57 percent of women—an 18 percentage-point gender gap.<sup>17</sup>

This and other polls suggest that women think about war in a very distinct way. Because women value negotiation and cooperation over force—partly reflecting the historical reality that women have been victims of so much violence and women's caretaking roles in the family—they are more likely than men to renounce violence in all spheres of life. In politics, they are much more hesitant to support violent intervention to solve international conflicts. The gender gap in the 1980 election between Carter and Reagan highlights women's reluctance to support hawkish candidates. By controlling for concerns about armed conflict, researchers found that the gender gap disappeared.<sup>18</sup>

Not only are women less likely to support war as a tool to attain peace, they also have different feelings from men about acceptable codes of conduct during war. An *ABC News* poll found that 44 percent of men think that torture is acceptable in some circumstances, compared to only 27 percent of women. Fifty-four percent of men, compared with 39 percent of women, believe that physical abuse that stops short of torture is sometimes acceptable.<sup>19</sup> The issue of holding prisoners at Guantanamo Bay without filing formal charges against them divides men and women. Men support the government's policies at Guantanamo Bay by a 52 percent to 40 percent margin, while women oppose it 46 percent to 37 percent.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps women's feelings about Guantanamo come from their attitudes about equality under the law, the inherent humanity of all people, or sympathy for the families of those being detained. Any of these explanations are part of a feminized value system.

### Toward a Feminized Majority

Gender gap data show that women are leading the way toward a more progressive politics. But they are doing

more than that. They are actually creating a nation that is in line with their values: a feminized America. However, we should not assume that these trends point to a forthcoming battle-of-the-sexes ideological showdown. As more women vote in line with a feminized worldview, more men are actually *joining* them.

Feminized values are becoming majoritarian values. Bill Clinton, for example, was reelected with 43 percent of the male vote.<sup>21</sup> Because a large enough majority of women supported Clinton, the progressive choice for president became the majoritarian choice. The same can be true for political issues. Men are more likely to have conservative positions on political issues, but the majoritarian view can still be progressive, as more women vote and more men hold feminized values.

As we mentioned in the Introduction, our portrayal of Americans as feminized may seem counterintuitive in a time of terrorist threats, bans on same-sex marriage, and attacks on a woman's right to choose. The global community certainly doesn't see America as having become more progressive in the past decade. If anything, the reelection of George W. Bush in 2004 showed the world that the United States is on a fast track to right-wing territory uncharted in our nation's history. Moreover, many Americans find it hard to believe that there is a progressive majority in their own country. However, countless polls from the most reputable surveying agencies prove that, despite an influential conservative minority, the majority is, in fact, more progressive than ever before. And, as we discuss more fully in Chapter 5, this majority is feminized not because women are disproportionately represented but because women's values give rise to their progressive vision. This is not an interest-driven majority—seeking to advance the narrower interests of racial minorities, the working class, or even women themselves—but a morally driven community seeking

to nurture the entire society in the spirit of the feminized values we have already identified.

Many advocacy organizations are catching onto the idea that Americans are far more progressive than conventional political wisdom would have us think. We draw on scores of national polls in this section. We also rely on several reports that synthesize data from multiple polls over time, including one from the Pew Research Center called "Trends in Political Values and Core Attitudes: 1987–2007."<sup>22</sup> In another 2007 report, the nonprofit organization Campaign for America's Future compiled more recent polls administered by survey research organizations such as Gallup and Pew, as well as news organizations such as the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Los Angeles Times*, to examine comprehensively Americans' views on a wide range of economic, social, and military issues.<sup>23</sup> The polls synthesized in these reports—and in hundreds of other individual polling studies—overwhelmingly contradict widespread assumptions about a conservative, masculinized American majority. We report on these polls in such detail because the results are counterintuitive for many people, who see a conservative country. A close look at the polls reveals that, while the government pursues masculinized policies, ordinary Americans want a feminized progressivism.

Data on support for government social programs are a good beginning point, because they are a sensitive indicator of the feminized values of empathy, equality, and community. The Pew 2007 study of core values shows that 69 percent of voters agree that "government should care for those who cannot care for themselves." Likewise 54 percent agree that "government should help the needy even if it means greater debt."<sup>24</sup> In a period of high personal and public deficits, this shows a feminized majority committed to a generous safety net, but polls show a broader feminized commitment to help all citizens. For example, while men are more likely than women to prefer a smaller

government with fewer services, 58 percent of Americans, reflecting millions of men as well as a majority of women, think the government should overall be doing more for citizens, not less.<sup>25</sup> A 2004 National Elections Studies poll showed that twice as many Americans support more government services and more spending compared to those who support fewer services and less spending, even if it means an increase in taxes. The same poll showed that the percentage of Americans who support the feminized position of more services and spending increased from 23 percent in 1982 to 43 percent in 2004, not yet quite a majority, while the percent opposing it dropped from 32 percent in 1982 to 20 percent in 2004.<sup>26</sup>

The issue of health care provides a striking example of the feminized majority's commitment to provide help for all citizens. While politicians worry that promoting a system of nationalized health care is career suicide, multiple polls show that a majority of Americans want the government to guarantee health care for all citizens—and are willing to make sacrifices to see it happen. A *New York Times/CBS News* poll taken in March 2007 found that 60 percent of Americans would pay higher taxes to ensure that all citizens had coverage.<sup>27</sup> A CNN/Opinion Research Corporation poll from May 2007 asking the same question found an even higher majority—64 percent.<sup>28</sup> A Gallup poll from late 2006 showed that 69 percent of Americans feel it is the “responsibility” of the federal government to provide health care coverage to all its citizens.<sup>29</sup> This data suggests that a majority of Americans have adopted the feminized ideals of community and empathy and believe that the government has a responsibility to help their fellow citizens preserve their health.

A majority of Americans believe that government should do more to protect workers' wages. Increasing the minimum wage is supported by a huge majority of Americans. A December 2006 AP/AOL News poll showed that 80 percent of Americans support a government-mandated

increase in the minimum wage, with only 18 percent opposed.<sup>30</sup> A *Los Angeles Times*/Bloomberg poll, also from late 2006, found 77 percent of Americans want Congress to pass legislation to raise the minimum wage.<sup>31</sup> A CNN poll in August 2006 found 86 percent in support and only 13 percent in opposition.<sup>32</sup> These statistics reflect the feminized values of community and empathy: People should lift up their friends and neighbors and give a hand to those in need.

Americans are also uneasy about corporate power and the increasing divide between rich and poor, as reflected in their views about taxes. A Gallup poll from April 2007 showed that 71 percent of Americans feel that taxes on corporations are too low, and 66 percent feel that taxes on upper-income people are too low.<sup>33</sup> A 2005 *NBC News* poll showed that 54 percent believe that corporations pay “lower than their fair share of taxes” while only 4 percent believe they pay “more.”<sup>34</sup> An *NBC News/Wall Street Journal* poll from 2005 found that a majority of Americans feel that Bush’s tax cuts, largely serving the rich, were “not worth it.”<sup>35</sup> Americans are turning away from the masculinized perspective that individualism is virtuous and that the rich deserve their wealth.

Americans also support unions. A 2007 Pew poll showed that 56 percent are favorable to unions, while only 33 percent are unfavorable.<sup>36</sup> A 2006 Gallup poll finds similar results: 59 percent favorable to unions compared to 29 percent unfavorable.<sup>37</sup> In the same poll, 52 percent of people say they generally side with unions in labor disputes compared to 34 percent who take the side of the company.<sup>38</sup> Unions embody the feminized values of cooperation, equality, and *Together We Can*.

Perhaps American workers know they are living in frightening times. The 1980s and 1990s represented an era of corporations consolidating power: Multiple corporate mergers resulted in monopolies or oligarchies; free trade legislation led to endemic outsourcing and layoffs;

and stagnant wages caused more Americans to sink into poverty as CEOs reaped unprecedented bonus-laden salaries—sometimes reaching hundreds of millions of dollars even as their companies sank, as in the cases of Enron and Tyco. In the face of such greed and corruption, the feminized values of equality, community, and cooperation resonate more than ever to men as well as women.

Americans also share an increasingly feminized outlook on social issues. Comparing current polls to those from decades past shows how the country is changing on charged social issues such as gay and lesbian rights, women's rights, and affirmative action. In 1987, for example, 51 percent of Americans felt that school boards "ought to have the right to fire teachers who are known homosexuals," and a 1977 Gallup poll showed that only 56 percent believed that homosexuals should have equal job rights.<sup>39</sup> In contrast, a 2006 Gallup poll finds a robust 89 percent of Americans believe that homosexuals should have equal job rights.<sup>40</sup> As noted earlier, more women than men support overturning "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" military policy, but a Pew poll shows that 60 percent of *all* Americans support gay and lesbian soldiers openly serving in the military.<sup>41</sup>

Support of equality for gays and lesbians, women, and racial minorities is a core marker of the feminized sensibility. On the highly charged issue of same-sex marriage, a feminized majority does not yet support same-sex marriage itself. Gallup polling in 2007 shows 46 percent in favor and 53 percent opposed.<sup>42</sup> Other polls, including a 2007 Pew poll, show a smaller percentage, 37 percent, supporting same-sex marriage with 55 percent opposed.<sup>43</sup> But if we look at the percentage supporting either same-sex marriage or civil unions codifying legal rights for gay and lesbian couples, a 2007 CNN poll shows that 50 percent support either same-sex marriage or civil unions.<sup>44</sup> A generation ago, hardly any Americans supported same-sex marriage, because being homosexual

was seen as shameful and therefore mostly hidden. For example, a 1982 Gallup poll showed that only 32 percent of Americans viewed "homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle."<sup>45</sup> Today, the feminized majority increasingly embraces gay and lesbian Americans and gay rights as an expression of its core value of equality.

A majority of feminized Americans now embrace women's rights. In 1987, only 28 percent of Americans "completely disagreed" that "women should return to their traditional roles in society."<sup>46</sup> By 2007, 51 percent "completely disagreed" and 75 percent disagreed, either completely or mostly.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, in 1972, a National Election Studies poll showed that only 47 percent of Americans believed that "women should have an equal role with men in running business, industry and government."<sup>48</sup> By 2004, that number soared to 78 percent.<sup>49</sup> A solid majority of women and a majority of men now support women's new roles and rights.

The most charged issue about women's rights is abortion. Despite continuing controversy, and the intense views of those who equate abortion with murder, a majority of Americans—57 percent, according to a 2007 *ABC News/Washington Post* poll—want to keep abortion legal "in all or most cases."<sup>50</sup> An August 2007 Quinnipiac poll found 62 percent of Americans agreeing and 32 percent disagreeing with the *Roe v. Wade* decision that "establishes a woman's right" to abortion.<sup>51</sup> A May 2007 Gallup poll showed that only 35 percent of Americans support overturning a woman's constitutional right to abortion.<sup>52</sup> The feminized majority specifically affirms abortion as a "right" that protects not just the woman but constitutional ideals of privacy and social well-being. But the majority is sensitive to concerns about the adverse social impact of abortion on demand. A 2007 *CBS News/New York Times* poll showed that a plurality of 41 percent seek "stricter limits" on the availability of abortion even though 75 percent, a clear majority,

want to retain the right to abortion guaranteed by *Roe v. Wade*.<sup>53</sup>

A growing feminized majority also supports civil rights for racial and ethnic minorities. In 1987, when Pew polls asked whether “it’s all right for blacks and whites to date each other,” 48 percent agreed; by 2007, 83 percent agreed, with the trend unwaveringly upward and a visceral indicator of a new tolerance and feminized social egalitarianism.<sup>54</sup> Affirmative action, another key expression of a feminized commitment to support and nurture the underdog, is also widely supported as in the interest of the whole society. A 2003 Pew poll regarding affirmative action—taken in the midst of a Supreme Court battle over the subject—showed that 57 percent of Americans support programs “which give special preferences to qualified blacks, women and other minorities in hiring and education.”<sup>55</sup>

A Zogby poll taken right after the 2004 elections asked Americans what is the most “urgent moral question” in the nation.<sup>56</sup> While abortion and same-sex marriage had gathered all the headlines, and reflected the conservative religious moral agenda, only 16 percent of voters answered “abortion” and 12 percent “same-sex marriage.” The majority said the “most urgent moral question” was either “greed and materialism” (33 percent) or “poverty and economic justice” (31 percent). Together, 64 percent of Americans expressed the feminized majority’s real moral concerns: a focus on injustice and inequality that harms the entire society.

The most dramatic examples of feminized values becoming majoritarian emerge with issues of militarism and foreign policy. As we’ve noted, women are more likely to support diplomacy over force as a way to solve problems. However, a 2005 poll showed that 64 percent of Americans—again, reflecting millions of men as well as women—feel the United States “should emphasize diplomatic and economic efforts over military efforts in fighting

the War on Terror.”<sup>57</sup> In 2007, the percentage rose to 67 percent.<sup>58</sup> More broadly, a 2005 Pew poll showed that 55 percent of Americans agree that “the best way to ensure peace is through diplomacy,” while only 30 percent said the best way to secure peace is “military strength.”<sup>59</sup> Poll numbers over time suggest that Americans are increasingly adopting the feminized position that violence is not a viable way to secure peace.<sup>60</sup>

It makes sense for the feminized values of diplomacy and international cooperation to become the norm. Thousands and thousands of Americans have lost family members in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, yet the regions are no closer to being stabilized. Reports from Iraq suggest that the war has actually created *more* terrorists. And in the midst of this desperate situation, some fear that the Bush administration is setting up Iran as America’s next military target. After the carnage in Iraq, it is not surprising that Americans are leery of using firepower to tamp down Iran’s alleged terrorist support network. The masculinized view that aggression secures victory doesn’t seem to fit reality.

A February 2007 Gallup poll showed that the majority of Americans not only prefer diplomacy to violence *but also are beginning to challenge American hegemony itself*. This challenge is not firmly established—the same poll finds 60 percent of Americans saying that the United States should continue to be the country with the most powerful military. But when Gallup asked a differently worded question, about what role America should play in the world, only 15 percent said “the leading role.” A remarkable 58 percent majority said “a major role but not the leading role.”<sup>61</sup> This is an explicit rejection of American hegemony and of elite concepts of American empire.

As the situation in Iraq becomes more desperate, Americans increasingly want our soldiers out. A *CBS News* poll from 9 September 2007 showed 62 percent of Americans feel the U.S. invasion of Iraq was a “mistake.”<sup>62</sup> A full 53

percent say that Iraq will “never” become a stable democracy. And poll after poll—including those from the *Washington Post/ABC News*, *USA Today/Gallup*, and *CBS News/New York Times*—show that a majority of Americans want a firm deadline for withdrawing American forces from the region.<sup>63</sup>

Polls also show that it will take a lot more than manipulated reports about yellowcake from Niger—one of the ways the Bush administration misled Congress to authorize the Iraq War—to gain public approval for the next war; despite a calculated fear campaign from the Bush administration, in April 2006, CNN/Opinion Research Corporation found that a full 63 percent of Americans oppose war with Iran.<sup>64</sup> This is not to say that Americans support Iran creating a nuclear weapons program. Polls show that Americans, in fact, desire an end to *all* nuclear weapons programs—including that of the United States. A Pew report released in November 2005 shows that 70 percent of Americans support a “multilateral disarmament treaty.”<sup>65</sup> Americans want changes in international relations that will usher in a new era of nonviolence. The nuclear arms race of the cold war was a masculinized competition to see which boys had the most toys, and most Americans don’t want to play that game again. An increasing number of women and men are adopting feminized ideals and goals, and are demanding a peaceful future for their children.

We argue that these changes in values show a new American majority that rejects the masculinized values from American history and supports new feminized values. This shift of major dimensions represents a threat to the historic masculinized systems of American capitalism and empire, secured by rampant individualism, and to the traditional American Dream. Our nation, constructed as an individualistic capitalist hierarchy, rewards (in theory) those who work the hardest with the biggest rewards.

By pursuing feminized ideals, such as egalitarianism and nonviolence, Americans are softening the founding principles of our country.

When a country becomes inhospitable to its citizens and unwilling to help its people in need, and when an aggressive foreign policy fails and threatens citizens rather than protects them, many citizens will reexamine the values and dreams handed down to them. Feminized values lead to economic policy that gives underprivileged and middle-class Americans a chance to succeed. The *Together We Can* philosophy becomes more appealing to both women and men. Feminized values create foreign policy that values human rights and makes America a partner in the global community, again enhancing the appeal of *Together We Can* for all Americans.

Americans still pursue self-interest and profit. But as the feminized majority grows, more ordinary citizens—both women and men—believe this pursuit needs to be carried out under different rules. A feminized vision requires a fairer, more egalitarian, and less violent social order. The new feminized majority sees the need for changes in the underlying social and moral fabric, helping explain why a huge majority of Americans today say America is moving in the wrong direction under President Bush and the Republicans. As America's economic and military crises lead more men to join women in embracing feminized values, a rising feminized majority can transform not only the Democratic Party but also America itself.