CHAPTER 6

POLITICAL SOCIALISATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL WOMEN IN BANGLADESH: IMPACT OF FAMILIAL VARIABLES AND OTHER FACTORS

The main objectives of this chapter are to investigate the processes through which political women of Bangladesh acquire predisposition to political participation and become active in politics. To be more specific, this chapter intends to explore how a woman of Bangladesh derives a positive attitude and disposition to politics and finds her way into the political realm. For this purpose it will focus on two stages of the development of a political woman. The first stage involved with stimulating a woman's interest in politics. The second stage concerned with her becoming active in politics. At this stage a woman may get certain experiences and stimuli that prompt her personal impetus towards becoming active in politics.

It is discussed earlier in Chapter 4 that the political sphere in Bangladesh is male dominated and all types of political activities are largely a male preserve. So, entering into this uncommon sphere is a big step for a woman to take in a less developed and tradition bound society like Bangladesh. Thus the manner in which some women are able to enter the "male bastion" deserves special interest.

It has been discussed while reviewing the literature how the socialisation process constrains womens' participation in politics. Through this process women are typically inculcated very early in life with values that suggest politics is a man's game and not appropriate for women. This factor is considered largely responsible for women's general lack of interest in politics.

In Bangladesh, the notion of women's stereotyped role and role appropriate behaviour is firmly embedded in the ethos of the society. Through socialisation

women are generally instilled with this notion and learn socially and culturally defined feminine behaviour and attributes.[1] They are taught or encouraged from early childhood to be modest, docile, obedient and unassertive - which are considered essential attributes of "womanhood". In view of the aggressiveness and dominance associated with politics, political activity is generally regarded as less compatible with these feminine attributes and behaviour. Thus, it is perceived as a less acceptable pursuit for women in Bangladesh.

It is therefore, interesting to know how some women in Bangladesh perceive politics as feasible for themselves? The possible answer can be derived from knowing how political women come to see politics as salient in their lives. An attempt to make such an investigation can be effective if one looks at their political socialisation experiences prior to becoming active in politics. It will enable us to discover the manner in which they were socialised and what effect it had on their adult behaviour. It can generally be assumed that political women would have undergone an unusual socialisation process. Through this process they would have acquired orientations towards politics. From this assumption an examination of their political socialisation process is particularly warranted.

6.1   Political Socialisation: Familial and Other Variables

Political socialisation is given various definitions by scholars. Although it has been worded in various ways, the essence of most of the definitions of political socialisation is, it is the process of acquiring information and attitudes about politics. Easton defines, "political socialization as those developmental processes through

---

[1] See. Mahmuda Islam, "Social Norms, Institutions and Status of Women" in Situation of Women in Bangladesh (Dhaka: Women for Women, 1979), Rounaq Jahan, "Women in Bangladesh" in Women for Women (Dhaka, 1975).

which persons acquire political orientations and patterns of behaviour."[2] Political socialisation is viewed by Langton as the process, mediated through various agencies of society, by which an individual learns politically relevant attitudinal dispositions and behaviour patterns.[3] A useful definition of political socialisation is, however, provided by Dawson and Prewitt:

> "Political socialization is the developmental process through which the citizen matures politically. The citizen acquires a complex of beliefs, feelings and information which help him comprehend, evaluate and relate to the political world around him.[4]

In order to carry out a study of the political socialisation process, it is necessary to investigate the early precursors to adult political activity. It is noted by the scholars that some early life experiences are better breeding grounds than others for the inclinations, opportunities, and skills needed for adult participation in politics.[5] Reasonably, then, present investigation leads us to find out the early political socialisation experiences of political women as part of our efforts to understand their development as political activists. They might have grown up in families where they were able to conceive of the possibility for themselves in public roles. In this respect an attempt to examine the family status of parents while political women were growing up would seem to be effective. This is particularly so the chances of a woman's personal development and the perception of a nontraditional role for herself are largely determined by her parents' socio-economic status. Moreover, whether or not a woman will internalise political proclivity is again thought to be largely

2   David Easton, "The Theoretical Relevance of Political Socialization", Canadian Journal of Political Science, : (1968) 125.

3   Kenneth P. Langton, Political Socialization, (Oxford University Press, London, 1969), p.5.

4   Richard E. Dawson and Kenneth Prewitt, Political Socialization (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), p.17.

5   See, Jean J. Kirkpatrick, Political Women, (New York, Basic Books, Inc., 1974), P.39.

determined and influenced by the social position of family and its political background.[6]

Therefore, this chapter first aims at investigating what kinds of family had produced political women. For this purpose it explores the social position of the parents of political women. Then it attempts to explore the political backgrounds of the parental families of political women. We would expect that the families from which they emerge are likely to be more politically interested and active. Although as one of the enforcers of gender-role typing families are also responsible for presenting gender-differences in political socialisation, a family's political concern and attitudes in this respect presumably have an important bearing on a woman's political perceptions.

Since a woman's life is more family oriented and thus she has fewer chances of being stimulated by outside stimuli, political proclivity conveyed by the persons of the immediate family would be stronger in awakening her political interest. On the basis of this reasoning, it would seem reasonable to expect a higher incidence of political role models in the backgrounds of political women than male respondents. Moreover, considering the overall situation of women's position in Bangladesh the assumption is that the male relatives rather than females would have played a vital part in making politics salient to political women.

Efforts to substantiate these assumptions, led us to examine the role of the family in political socialisation. Thus a major objective of this chapter is to ascertain the role of the family in the political socialisation of a woman political elite in

6   See, Linda Watts Powell, C.W. Brown and Roman B. Hedges, "Male and Female Differences in Elite Political Participation: An Examination of the Effects of Socioeconomic and Familial Variables", Western Political Quarterly, 34 (March 1981): 31-45.

Bangladesh. This attempt will shed light on the first stage of her development during which she acquires positive attitudes and proclivity towards political participation.

However, it can be assumed that there should be some differences among respondents in their political socialisation experiences because the extent of the influence of a particular agent or force may vary at individual levels. Moreover, such differences may emerge from the time when one first acquired political predisposition in his/her life. Social scientists have observed that the time of political socialisation is not confined to the early period of the life cycle, but rather that it could "occur at almost any phase of a person's development.[7] The present chapter, therefore, aims at investigating the time of the earliest political interests of political women. On the one hand, it will ascertain at which stage of their lives political women first became interested in politics. On the other hand, it will facilitate our understanding about the specific agent which was associated with the initial political socialisation of political women.

However, the investigations mentioned above only explore the process through which political women acquire orientation to politics. It is suggested by the political scientists that other factors intervene between the early orientation and subsequent political behaviour.[8] Keeping this in mind the present chapter attempts to find out the stimuli that provided political women with the effective motivation to become active in politics. The findings derived from this investigation will explain the second stage in which political women translate their political proclivity into active participation.

---

[7] Heinz Eulau, William Buchanan, L.C. Ferguson, John C. Wahlke, "The Political Socialization of American State Legislators" in Legislative Behaviour, eds. John C. Wahlke and Heinz Eulau (Illinois: The Free Press, 1959), p.316.

[8] Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, The Civic Culture (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1965), pp.373-374.

The chapter is organised into three sections. The first section deals with the social position of parents of political women. The second section discusses the role of family in the political socialisation of political women. And finally, the third section is concerned with identifying the specific factors related to their becoming active in politics. The discussion on each of the above aspects will explore whether there exists gender-differences in the political socialisation experiences of respondents.

6.2   Social Position of Parents

An examination of the social position of parents is important particularly in a study of women political elites because the availability of resources for personal development of female children depends to a great extent on the social position of the parents. Secondly, it largely determines the nature of gender-role socialisation within the family.

Although the impact of social status on an individual may vary according to parental aspiration and opportunity, it has been repeatedly argued by the researchers that family socialisation practices are affected by its social class position which in turn may influence the personality, behaviour and political attitudes of children.[9]

It is noted by the researchers that persons in the higher social classes tend to be less rigid about gender distinctions.[10] In particular, professional and urban middle-class families make fewer and less rigid role distinctions between boys and girls in early childhood.[11] Differentiation between boys and girls appears to be sharpest in

---

[9] Richard G. Braungart, "Family Status, Socialization, and Student Politics", American Journal of Sociology, 77 (July 1971-May 1972): 109; Dawson and Prewitt, op.cit., pp.109-10. Lane summarizes his brief examination of the political significance of class differences in socialisation, see Robert E. Lane, Political Life, (Glencoe Ill: Free Press, 1959), p.234.

[10] For an extensive review of the literature, see William J. Goode, Elizabeth Hopkins, and Helen M. McClure, Social Systems and Family Structures (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merril, 1971), pp.177-178.

[11] Lenore J. Weitzman, "Sex-role Socialization: A Focus on Women" in Women - A Feminist Perspective, ed. Jo Freeman, (Mayfield Publishing Co., 1984), p.178.

lower-class families.[12] Parental pressure to follow a traditional female role is probably greater on the lower-class than on the middle-class girls.[13] Thus middle-class girls not only show later awareness of sex typing than working-class girls but are also less traditional in their role concepts.[14]

It has been noted earlier in Chapter 3 that in Bangladesh, class and urban-rural differences result in a wide disparity in life-style and opportunity structures for different groups of women. Available studies indicate that traditional attitudes toward women are less common among the upper-and middle-class families in Bangladesh.[15] Urban women of these classes enjoy more opportunities for personal development and achieving their aspirations. Therefore, it can be assumed that women political elites in Bangladesh are likely to originate from urban families of higher social position.

The most commonly used indicators of social position in social science research are education, occupation and income. The data were collected about the educational qualifications of the parents and their occupations while the respondents were growing up. Information with these regards were collected separately for the fathers and mothers of respondents.

To avoid exaggeration or inaccuracy of data, the 'income' variable was exempted from the investigation. The education and occupation of the parents are more objective and easier to use than monetary figures of family income in understanding the social position of parents. Moreover, these two variables have been

---

[12] Letha Scanzoni and John Scanzoni, Men, Women and Change: A Sociology of Marriage and Family, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), p.30.

[13] William H. Sewell and Vimal P. Shah, "Social Class, Parental Encouragement, and Educational Aspirations", American Journal of Sociology, 73 (March 1968): 570.

[14] Weitzman, op.cit., p.178.

[15] Jahan, 1975, op.cit., pp.1-21.

taken by the researchers as strong indicators of a person's position in the social structure.[16]

In addition, an attempt was made to identify the social class of parents. A "subjective" measure of social class was used to accomplish this task. The respondents were asked to classify the social position of their parents. It is noteworthy that in social science research using a subjective measure of the social class of parents is quite common, and a considerable number of researchers have used it.[17] However, the results from the investigations on the above mentioned variables are discussed below.

6.2.1 *Educational Levels of Parents*

The data on the educational achievements of the respondents' parents are presented in Table 6.1. They show that the highest percentage (32.5 percent) of political women had fathers who had bachelor's degrees and 21 percent had gone beyond that degree. Among the rest, 25.5 percent had education up to the primary level or below matriculation (high school final) and 21 percent held matriculation and higher secondary (two years college degree) degrees. In sum, 53.5 percent of the fathers of political women had a bachelor's degree or above. Therefore, it can be deduced that the majority of the fathers of political women were highly educated. This implies that women political elites in Bangladesh tend to come from educated families.

---

[16] See Lester W. Milbrath, Political Participation, (Chicago: Rand Mc. Nally and Co., 1965): 115; Paul Allen Beck and M. Kent Jennings, "Pathways to Participation" American Political Science Review, 76 (March 1982): 97.

[17] See for example, Jim Barry, The Women's Movement and Local Politics, (Aldershot: Avebury, 1991); Norman Nie, G. Bingham Powell and Kenneth Prewitt, "Social Structure and Political Participation", Parts 1 and 2, American Political Science Review, 63 (June 1969): 361-378 and 808-832; Annapurna Devi, "Women in Orissa Politics - A Study in Political Socialization" in Women and Society: The Development Perspective, ed. Amit Kumar Gupta, (New Delhi: Criterion Publications, 1986).

TABLE 6.1
EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS OF RESPONDENTS' FATHERS

Level of Education	Male (N=40)		Female (N=43)		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Up to primary/ below Matriculation	16	40.0	11	25.5	27	32.5
Matriculation[a] and Higher Secondary[b]	8	20.0	9	21.0	17	20.5
Bachelor's degree	9	22.5	14	32.5	23	27.8
Master's degree	7	17.5	9	21.0	16	19.2
Total	40	100.0	43	100.0	83	100.0

$x^2=10.71$, d.f.=3, p<0.02

Note: a. High school graduate (after ten years of school education)
b. Two years college degree (after twelve years of school education)

Gender-differences are evident in the educational level of the fathers of respondents. Contrary to political women, the highest percentage (40 percent) of the male respondents had less educated fathers, as their educational level was up to primary to below matriculation. Only 25.5 percent of the fathers of political women had that much of education. Although almost the same proportion of the fathers of male respondents (20 percent) and political women (21 percent) had matriculation to higher secondary degrees, the data show a smaller percentage of highly educated fathers for male respondents than for political women. It can be observed that, 22.5 percent of the fathers of male respondents held bachelor's degrees while 17.5 percent held master's degrees. The corresponding proportions for political women are 32.5 and 21 percent respectively. It appears that compared to 40 percent of the male respondents, 53.5 percent of the political women had highly educated fathers. Based on the above, we may say that political women tend to have more highly educated fathers than male respondents. The x^2 value 10.71, p<0.02 also confirms significant gender-difference in the educational qualifications of respondents' fathers as there exists a significant association between the sex of respondents and this variable.

The fathers of political women received higher education fifty or more years

ago when education was a more scarce commodity than it is today. It was beyond the means of most people. The educational achievements of fathers indicate that they belonged to the higher socio-economic group. It is significant to note that in the early twentieth century, there was a remarkable growth of English secondary education in East Bengal (present Bangladesh).[18] Those could go for such an education belonged to families with a sound economic condition. The reason was, most of the high schools and colleges were located in urban areas, so that students from villages had to live or board in district towns or city areas. Therefore only well off families could bear such expenses for higher education. Since the Jotedars or rich rural peasantry could afford the cost of higher education for their sons in neighbouring towns, a sizable section of the educated peoples emerged from this most resourceful landowning stratum of Bengali Muslim society.[19] Thus by the 1940s, the Muslim middle class in the urban areas of East Bengal became quite substantial, who first received modern education by virtue of their privileged economic position in the existing social stratum.

TABLE 6.2
EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS OF RESPONDENTS' MOTHERS

Level of Education	Male (N=40)		Female (N=43)		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Illiterate/Up to primary	34	85.0	37	86.0	71	85.6
Matriculation[a] to Higher Secondary[b]	6	15.0	6	14.0	12	14.4
Total	40	100.0	43	100.0	83	100.0

$$x^2=0.01, \text{ d.f.}=1, p<0.50$$

Note: a. High school graduate (after ten years of school education).
b. Two years college degree (after twelve years of school education).

[18] Rangalal Sen, Political Elites in Bangladesh, (Dhaka: University Press Ltd., 1986), P.15.

[19] Ibid. pp.19-20.

155

Table 6.2 shows the educational levels of the respondents' mothers, which were strikingly low compared to their fathers' education. It is reflective of the low levels of educational development among the women in the country at large. We find that 86 percent of the mothers of political women were illiterate or had primary schooling while only 14 percent had matriculation to higher secondary degrees.

The data, however, show almost no gender-difference in mothers' education, as 85 percent of the mothers of male respondents were illiterate or educated up to primary level while 15 percent had matriculation or higher secondary degrees. The corresponding percentages for mothers of the political women were nearly similar. The x^2 value being 0.01, $p<0.50$ suggests no significant difference in education of the mothers of both groups of respondents.

6.2.2 Occupations of Fathers

The educational qualifications of the fathers of political women properly coincide with their occupational status, as shown in Table 6.3. All respondents reported that their mothers were housewives. Therefore, we shall deal with only the fathers' occupations. However, the data below shows, a great majority (83.7 percent) of the fathers of political women were engaged in different categories of urban professions such as law, business, teaching, professionals and government service. In terms of occupation, a large proportion of them (28 percent) were in professional jobs (lawyers, doctors and engineers), followed closely by government officers (21 percent) while 18.6 percent were businessmen and 16.3 percent were farmers. Among the rest, 11.6 percent were school and college teachers and 4.5 percent were government employees.

TABLE 6.3
OCCUPATIONS OF RESPONDENTS' FATHERS

Occupation	Male (N=40)		Female (N=43)		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Agriculture	13	32.5	7	16.3	20	24.1
Businessman	3	7.5	8	18.6	11	13.2
Professional	10	25.0	12	28.0	22	26.6
(Legal profession, Doctor & Engineer)						
Government officer	2	5.0	9	21.0	11	13.2
School/College teacher	7	17.5	5	11.6	12	14.5
Government employee	5	12.5	2	4.5	7	8.4
Total	40	100.0	43	100.0	83	100.0

$$x^2 = 12.89, \text{ d.f.} = 5, \text{ } p < 0.05$$

On the other hand, the largest proportion (32.5 percent) of the fathers of male respondents were farmers, next to professionals (25 percent) and then followed by school and college teachers (17.5 percent). Compared to the fathers of political women, government officers ranked low among the fathers of men (5 percent for men and 21 percent for political women). Further, their fathers were more likely to be low paid government employees than the fathers of political women (12.5 percent in contrast of 4.5 percent), and were less likely to engage in business (7.5 percent) than the fathers of their female counterparts (18.6 percent). Among respondents who had cultivator fathers, four men and one political women mentioned their fathers were Jotedar or Zamindar (large land owners) and the rest were rich or medium farmers.

The data of fathers' occupations show significant difference in this respect between political women and male respondents. The x^2 value being 12.89 shows that the association between the sex of respondents and the occupation of their fathers is statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance which confirms a significant gender-difference. It is evident that more political women (83.7 percent) than men (67.5 percent) had fathers who were engaged in different urban professions. From the

angle of agriculture and nonagricultural occupations, it can be seen that compared to political women (16.3 percent) a relatively larger proportion of men (32.5 percent) cited their fathers as farmers. This may reflect the values prevailing in Bangladesh. A male child is given the educational opportunity and other facilities for his development among the rural rich and middle peasantry, so that he in turn can enhance the family prestige. However, few rural families are willing to give such opportunities to their daughters. This could be the reason why political women are less likely to have come from agricultural backgrounds.

The findings of fathers' occupations evidently suggest that substantially more political women (79.2 percent) than their male counterparts (55 percent) originated from those families marked by their fathers' prestigious occupations, such as professional, government services, business, and teaching in the schools and colleges. These occupations are socially considered prestigious and hold higher social esteem in Bangladesh society.

6.2.3 Social Class Position of Parents

To get a view on the profile of the social position of parents, it is necessary to look at the respondents' perceptions of their parents' social class. This is facilitated by Table 6.4. It shows that, out of 43 political women, all except three described their parents' social class as upper middle-and middle-class. Among them 48.8 percent identified middle-class, closely followed by 44.2 percent who rated upper-middle class with only 7 percent reporting their parents' belonged to the lower middle-class. Thus the overwhelming majority of the political women (93 percent) claimed a higher social position of their parents. Based on this, we may say that women political elites in Bangladesh tend to come from upper middle-and middle-class family backgrounds.

TABLE 6.4
SOCIAL CLASS OF RESPONDENTS' PARENTS

Social Class	Male (N=40)		Female (N=43)		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Upper middle-class	8	20.0	19	44.2	27	32.5
Middle-class	22	55.0	21	48.8	43	51.8
Lower middle-class	10	25.0	3	7.0	13	15.7
Total	40	100.0	43	100.0	83	100.0

x^2=8.18, d.f.=2, p<0.02

Among the 40 male respondents, 20 percent perceived their parents' social class as upper middle-class, 55 percent reported middle-class and 25 percent mentioned lower middle-class. Thus the data suggest that the majority of the male political elites of this study originated from middle-class families.

The data, however, show gender-difference in the respondents' perceptions of parents' social class. The result of chi-square test (x^2=8.18, p<0.02) suggests an association between the sex of respondents and the social class of their parents. This implies that the difference in perceptions between the two groups is statistically significant. Of 43 political women, 93 percent identified their parents' social position as upper middle-and middle-class, while 75 percent of the male respondents did so. The latter evaluated their parents' social position as lower middle-class more frequently than the political women (25 percent as against 7 percent). Based on the above findings we may say that political women originated more often from higher social classes than their male counterparts.

This kind of family background mentioned above might have served to attenuate the influence of traditional norms on political woman. Moreover, their upper- and middle-class family origins provided them greater opportunities to attain higher education. The findings on educational attainment of political women already have

suggested that the great majority (72.1 percent) of them are highly educated and most of them are university graduates. They have largely attained higher education in the 1960s, when traditional norms against women's development were still strongly prevalent. Thus it can be said that in the more conservative society of those days, the fathers of political women showed less traditional attitudes by sending their daughters to university for higher education. During the course of interview, these highly educated female respondents reported the supportive role of their fathers in getting a higher education.

TABLE 6.5

COMPARISON BETWEEN THE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENTS
OF POLITICAL WOMEN AND THEIR FATHERS

Educational Attainment (Father)	Educational Attainment (Political Women)				Total	
	High[a]	%	Medium[b]	%	No.	%
High[a]	19	61.3	4	33.3	23	53.4
Medium[b]	7	22.6	2	16.7	9	21.0
Low[c]	5	16.1	6	50.0	11	25.6
Total	31	100.0	12	100.0	43	100.0

$$x^2 = 14.78, \text{ d.f.} = 2, P<0.001$$

Note: a. Bachelor's degree and above
       b. Matriculation to Higher Secondary
       c. Primary schooling to below Matriculation
       d. None of the political women educated below Matriculation

A comparison between the educational attainments of political women and their fathers will facilitate an understanding of their socialisations. Table 6.5 presents the chi-square value being 14.78 showing an association which is statistically significant between the educational attainments of political women and their fathers. The data show that, among political women who are found to be highly educated, the majority (61.3 percent) had highly educated fathers, 22.6 percent had medium educated fathers and only 16.1 percent had less educated fathers. On the other hand,

of the political women with medium educational qualification, 50 percent had low educated fathers, 33.3 percent had highly educated fathers and 16.7 percent had medium educated fathers. Based on this, we may say that there is a relationship between the higher education of political women and their fathers' higher educational qualifications, as these fathers more frequently had highly educated daughters than less educated fathers.

The finding above can be explained by the historical facts. In the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, the social structure of Bangladesh underwent rapid changes, marked by the rapid urbanisation, emergence of a new western educated Bengali Muslim middle class, the fading out of the traditional norms and the establishment of a new social order.[20] This educated middle class were the representatives of new ideas and values. Social change and western education made educated Bengalis conscious of the need to educate their daughters. Fathers of political women presumably belonged to the urbanised and educated segment of society. Political women from these families might be socialised in an environment sensitive to social change and thus, were relatively free from conservatism and could adopt new life-style, which were conducive for educational pursuit and personal advancement.

Moreover, the family origin of political women might have facilitated their orientation toward politics. Since their fathers were predominantly employed in different urban professions, they grew up in district towns or in large cities. As has been found earlier in Chapter 5, only a small proportion of the political women (16.3 percent) grew up in their village homes whose fathers' occupation was farming. They were also sent to town for better schooling, indicating that they belonged to the progressive minded segment of village life. However, it can also be argued that urban origin exposed the majority of the political women to factors believed to be

---

[20] Sen, op.cit., pp.21-22.

significantly related to political participation, such as mass media, education, civic organisations,[21] non-familial contact, etc. Thus they have experienced greater ease in taking up political stimuli.

6.3 The Political Socialisation of Political Women - The Role of Family

Political socialisation experiences occur as the result of interactions between individuals and certain social institutions or structures, which are termed the agencies of political socialisation. They transmit political information or values to individuals. It has been discussed earlier in Chapter 2 that family, educational institutions and peer groups are the agencies of political socialisation treated by most political scientists, but the family has had most intensive scrutiny.

Most previous research on family influence on political socialisation supports Milbrath's generalisation that family experience has a profound impact on a person's exposure to political stimuli and on his activity level in politics.[22] A family environment in which politics is quite salient is related to the motivation of political participation.[23] If parents are involved in political matters, "children are introduced to politics as a matter of course" and "the drama and excitement of politics capture their imagination in their early age."[24] Thus scholars assert that attitudes toward future political participation are related to the nature of the exposure to politics in the family.[25] Beck and Jennings, however, describe the mechanism through which children acquire proclivity for participation from parents in these words:

[21] Madanlal Goel, Political Participation in a Developing Nation: India, (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1974), P.32.

[22] Milbrath, op.cit., p.43.

[23] Kendall L. Baker, "Political Participation, Political Efficacy, and Socialization in Germany," Comparative Politics, 6 (October 1973): 94.

[24] Kenneth Prewitt, "Political Socialization and Leadership Selection," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 361 (1965): 106-107.

[25] Baker, op.cit., P.91.

"The seeds for later participation may be sown directly through the process of political socialization with parents playing the leading role. Parental political interest and political involvement may be transmitted to offspring through traditional socializational mechanisms. In particular, highly politicized parents may foster family atmosphere charged with positive political orientations, thus endowing their children with the motivational prerequisites for later participation. In sum, one pathway to participation may be through the intergenerational transfer of political attitudes."[26]

From the discussion above, we may expect that political women of Bangladesh come from those families where politics is salient. A theoretical rationale for the importance of family in promoting political participation is found in the idea of the politicised family, in which "political matters receive substantial and sustained attention."[27] Based on this view, in order to assess the effects of the family on the political socialisation of women political elites, we will focus on the extent of politicisation of the family environment.

From the theoretical point of view, the assumption is that the influence of a politicised family may create women's attitudinal dispositions to politics. They would seem to be more responsive to political cues transmitted by the family. Studies of children's identifications report that girls were more likely than boys to be associated with "acquaintance ideals" - especially family ideals, and that girls are more closely attached to their parents than are boys.[28] Moreover, since through socialisations, women generally receive a negative attitude to politics, for intensive participation a woman needs a more effective and strong stimulant, that may provide a politicised family environment. Therefore, the expectation is political women will have this kind of special experience to maintain intimate contact with political stimuli within a home environment.

---

26 Beck and Jennings, 1982, op.cit., p.98.

27 Dwaine Marvick and Charles Nixon, <u>Political Decision-Makers</u> (Glencoe: Free Press, 1961), P.209.

28 See, Mirra Komarovsky, "Functional Analysis of Sex Roles", <u>American Sociological Review</u>, 15 (1950): 508-516.

A politicised family environment is operationalised by parental attention to political matters, manifested in ways that a child growing up in that environment can perceive.[29] In this consideration we will focus on four factors which presumably determine the extent of the politicised nature of the family environment, such as:

(a)   Political interest of parents,

(b)   Political discussion by the parents in the home,

(c)   Political involvement of parents,

(d)   Political involvement of other family members, such as siblings.

These variables have been commonly used by students of political science in determining the extent of family politicisation.[30] An index of politicised family environment was constructed on the basis of these variables. Close ended questions were used to obtain information about the level of political interest of parents and the amount of political discussion by them. Political interest item was calculated by assigning a value of '0' to "not interested" response, 1 to "little interested" response, 2 to "somewhat interested" response and 3 to "very interested" response. Similarly, for political discussion item, four scores - 0 to 3 were given to "never", "seldom", "sometimes" and "very often", respectively.

Open-ended questions were used to obtain data about political involvement of parents. These responses were coded into levels derived from the responses. For political involvement, "holding party offices" received 3 points, "party membership" assigned 2 points, 1 point for "active party supporter or voluntary work" and "0" for no involvement. Scores for both father and mother per variable were given and counted separately. For other family members, 1 point was given for having political involvement and "0" for none.

29   Paul Allen Beck and M. Kent Jennings, "Family Traditions, Political Periods, and the Development of Partisan Orientations", Journal of Politics, 53 (August 1991): 746.

30   Marvin E. Olsen, "Three Routes to Political Participation" Western Political Quarterly, 29 (December 1976): 553; Beck and Jennings, 1991, op.cit., p.746.

Adding the score of each respondent for both parents per variable and the score of the last item resulted in a 17 point scale, with scores varying from 0 to 16. The total score on the four items were then categorised into three levels of politicised family - high, medium and low. The respondents' scoring lower points, 0 to 4, were defined as having low politicised families; 10 to 16 points were judged to have highly politicised families and finally, those scoring the average points, 5 to 9, were defined as having medium politicised families.

In addition to combining all items into a single politicised family index, each of the items were also analysed separately for more detailed interpretation. For analytical purposes, the responses of political interest item for each parent were collapsed into three levels - high, medium and low. The last two responses of political interest item, 'little interested' and 'not interested' refer to low level of interest, the first response 'very interested' refers to high and 'somewhat interested' response refers to medium political interest of parents.

Two more investigations were done to ascertain the particular time when the process of political socialisation had started among political women and to specify the particular agent associated with the initial political socialisation experience. For the first purpose the time of the earliest political interest of political women was investigated. To secure the latter purpose, the person or individual who was instrumental in their earliest political interest was noted. In order to find out the specific agent associated with the time of political socialisation, two variables such as the time of the earliest political interest and the person who was instrumental in that interest are cross-tabulated and presented in this section. The findings of these investigations will indicate whether there exists any differences in the political socialisation experiences among political women in Bangladesh.

6.3.1   The Salience of Politics in the Home

In order to find the salience of politics in the home, three variables related to parents' political inclination - political interest, political discussion and political involvement will be discussed first. Then the variables politicised family environment and the political involvement of other family members and relatives will be analysed.

6.3.1.1 Political Interest of Parents

The respondents were asked to recall their perception how far their parents were politically interested. According to the data presented in Table 6.6, the highest percentage of political women (55.8 percent) recalled that their fathers were highly interested in politics, 25.6 percent reported their fathers' medium interest and 18.6 percent of the fathers of political women had low interest in politics. Thus the majority of the political women identified their fathers as having had high interest in politics. It suggests that political women tend to have had fathers for whom political affairs was a matter of interest.

TABLE 6.6
POLITICAL INTEREST OF RESPONDENTS' FATHERS

Political Interest	Male (N=40)		Female (N=43)	
	Father.	%	Father	%
High	18	45.0	24	55.8
Medium	9	22.5	11	25.6
Low	13	32.5	8	18.6
Total	40	100.0	43	100.0

x^2=3.14, d.f.=2, p>0.20

It can be observed in Table 6.6 that political women are more likely than men to perceive their fathers were highly interested in politics as they constitute 55.8 percent in contrast to 45 percent of the men. A smaller percentage (18.6 percent) of the political women than men (32.5 percent) had fathers who had low interest in

politics. Less difference is evident between those political women (25.6 percent) and male respondents (22.5 percent) whose fathers had medium interest in political affairs. Despite some apparent differences in levels of political interest of the fathers of male and female respondents, there is no association between the sex of respondents and this variable as shown by the chi-square value being 3.14 with p>0.20. Thus, the difference shown by data between the two groups of respondents in fathers' political interest is not statistically significant.

The data on the levels of mothers' political interest are presented in Table 6.7. It is evident that the majority of the mothers of political women (60.5 percent) had low interest in politics, as 32.5 percent had medium political interest and only 7 percent were highly interested in politics. Thus for majority of the political women, mothers appear less politically interested.

TABLE 6.7
POLITICAL INTEREST OF RESPONDENTS' MOTHERS

Political Interest	Male (N=40)		Female (N=43)	
	Mother.	%	Mother	%
High	3	7.5	3	7.0
Medium	6	15.0	14	32.5
Low	31	77.5	26	60.5
Total	40	100.0	43	100.0

x^2=27.63, d.f.=2, p<0.001

Similarly, the great majority of the mothers of male respondents (77.5 percent) had low interest in politics. Thus mothers are seen as the less interested parent for both groups of respondents. Despite that statistically significant gender-difference is evident in levels of political interest of the mothers of male and female respondents, as the x^2 value being 27.63 is significant at 0.001 level of significance and confirming association between the sex of respondents and the political interest of their mothers.

Political women are more likely (32.5 percent) than men (15 percent) to believe their mothers had at least moderate interest in politics.

Based on the data on parents' interest in politics, it can be deduced that women political elites in Bangladesh tend to come from those families where fathers had shown a high interest in politics. Although statistically insignificant gender difference was found between the two groups of respondents when comparing levels of fathers' political interest, it was shown by the data that compared to male respondents (67.5 percent) political women constitute a substantially larger percentage (81.4 percent) whose fathers were highly or moderately interested in politics. Further, they were more likely than their male counterparts to have mothers who were highly or moderately interested in politics (39.5 percent and 22.5 percent, respectively).

6.3.1.2 Political Discussion by the Parents

One of the manifestation of parents' political interest is political discussion by them within the home. It is documented in the literature of political socialisation that political participation at mass or elite level is strongly related to having been raised in a home where political interest was manifestly expressed, such as political discussion.[31]

During the course of interviews the respondents were asked how often their parents had discussed politics. We would expect that political women come from homes in which political discussions were more frequent. The data gathered in Table 6.8 serve to support this assumption. Among political women, those reporting that political discussion by their fathers were more frequent constitute the highest percentage (51.1 percent), as 23.3 percent reported "sometimes" and 25.6 percent responded seldom or never. Thus the data suggest that the majority of the political

---

[31] See Milbrath, op.cit., P.43.

women grew up in a home in which there was a great deal of political discussion by fathers.

TABLE 6.8
THE AMOUNT OF POLITICAL DISCUSSION BY RESPONDENTS'
FATHERS IN THE HOME

Political Discussion	Male (N=40)		Female (N=43)	
	Father	%	Father	%
Very often	12	30.0	22	51.1
Sometimes	11	27.5	10	23.3
Seldom/Never	17	42.5	11	25.6
Total	40	100.0	43	100.0

x^2=4.18, d.f.=2, p<0.20

Conversely, the highest percentage of male respondents (42.5 percent) recalled that their fathers had seldom or never discussed political affairs with them. Only 30 percent reported having very frequent occurrence of political discussion by fathers while 27.5 percent recalled having had moderate (sometimes) occurrence. Based on this, it can be argued that the largest percentage of male respondents came from those families where fathers' role as political cue givers was less or not present.

Gender-differences are obvious in the data on frequency of fathers' political discussion within the home. It can be observed that compared to male respondents (30 percent), more political women (51.1 percent) grew up in families where the occurrence of father's political discussion was very often. Moreover, compared to men political women are less likely to be seen to come from homes where the frequency of father's political discussion was low, constituting 25.6 percent against 42.5 percent of the male. Although gender-difference is evident in frequency distributions, the result of chi-square (x^2=4.18, p<0.20) does not show significant difference between male and female respondents in the amount of political discussion by the fathers.

169

Now the analysis will turn to the mothers' role as political cue givers. Table 6.9 shows, among the political women, 65.1 percent reported that their mothers had seldom or never discussed politics, 28 percent recalled sometimes, and only 6.9 percent reported very frequent occurrence of mothers' discussion. Thus for the majority of the political women, mothers' role as political socialiser was not prominent.

TABLE 6.9
THE AMOUNT OF POLITICAL DISCUSSION BY RESPONDENTS'
MOTHERS IN THE HOME

Political Discussion	Male (N=40)		Female (N=43)	
	Mother.	%	Mother	%
Very often	3	7.5	3	6.9
Sometimes	6	15.0	12	28.0
Seldom/Never	31	77.5	28	65.1
Total	40	100.0	43	100.0

x^2=10.11, d.f.=2, p<0.02

The large majority of the male respondents (77.5 percent) also perceived a low occurrence of political discussion by their mothers, as only 7.5 percent and 15 percent recalled respectively very frequent and moderately frequent incidence of their mothers' political discussion. When we compare the data of male and female respondents, the low incidence of mother as political cue giver becomes evident for both groups of respondents. Despite that compared to male respondents (22.5 percent) more political women (34.9 percent) recalled their mothers' frequent or moderate participation in political discussion in the home. Overall, they were less likely than the men to come from homes where the incidence of mothers' political concern was low (65.1 percent for political women and 77.5 percent for men). The x^2 value (10.11, p<0.02) also confirms significant difference in this variable between political women and male respondents.

The findings on political interest of parents and the occurrence of political discussion by them in the home suggest gender-differences in the parental role as

political cue-givers within the family of political women and male respondents. Statistically insignificant differences between the fathers of males and females in these variables indicate that for both groups of respondents fathers were more politically aware and dominant in passing on political orientations. The findings on mothers' low interest in politics and low incidence of political discussion by them are consistent with the past findings on women's more apathetic attitude toward politics in general in Bangladesh.[32]

6.3.1.3 Political Involvement of Parents

Political involvement of parents has been identified by scholars as an important source of their children's political learning. Beck and Jennings have provided a theoretical rationale for the importance of parental political involvement in promoting offsprings' political participation. It can be useful to understand the impact of parental political activity on the political socialisation of women on whom the study is based.

According to Beck and Jennings' view, parents' political participation is a powerful socialisation force because, (1) it does exert impact on young adult activity by stimulating the development of political orientations; (2) it may create attitudinal dispositions towards politics, which may transfer in attitude to participation later on; (3) politically active parents may influence directly offsprings' participation without mediation. Children may copy or imitate political parents.[33]

Based on the theoretical points of view above and evidence provided by prior studies, we assume that political women in Bangladesh would come from politically active families. To test this assumption, information concerning parents' political involvement had been collected from the respondents. They were asked to provide

---

[32] Rounaq Jahan, 'Women in Politics: A Case Study of Bangladesh', in Sylvia A. Chipp and Justin J. Green (eds.), Asian Women in Transition (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980), pp.236-240.

[33] Beck and Jennings, 1982, op.cit., PP.98, 101-5.

information in which way they were active in politics. Fathers' political activities as depicted by the respondents, are further divided into three categories to indicate the intensity of their political involvements, as shown in Table 6.10. The categories are:

(1) Leaders of political parties, who were the members of Central or District Committees of the party organisation, who held important positions or offices in the party organisations at central or district level;

(2) Active party members;

(3) Active supporters and voluntary party workers who were involved in contributing money, participating in campaign activities and other voluntary work.

Information on mother's political activity was also solicited. Only three women and two male respondents in our sample mentioned that their mothers were active as voluntary party workers. None of them belonged to the political party as members or held political office of any kind themselves. Due to the traditionally poor involvement in politics of women in Bangladesh, it was not really expected to find a high incidence of political activity among mothers of political women.

The data on fathers' political involvement presented in Table 6.10 shows that the majority of the political women in Bangladesh came from families where the example of adult participation was present, as 51.2 percent of the political women reported that their fathers were active in politics. The rest of the fathers of political women (48.8 percent) were not active in politics in any way. Amongst the active fathers, 21 percent were very active as party leaders and held important party positions, 14 percent were active as party members and the other 16.2 percent were active as supporters or voluntary party workers. Based on the findings of fathers' political involvement, we may say again that political women tend to come from politically active families in Bangladesh.

TABLE 6.10
POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT OF RESPONDENTS' FATHERS

Political Involvement	Male (N=40)		Female (N=43)		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Leader of political party	8	20.0	9	21.0	17	20.5
Active party member	4	10.0	6	14.0	10	12.0
Active supporter/ voluntary party workers	5	12.5	7	16.2	12	14.5
Not active	23	57.5	21	48.8	44	53.0
Total	40	100.0	43	100.0	83	100.0

x^2=9.53, d.f.=3, p<0.05

However, among those who had active fathers, there exists a significant difference between male and female respondents. The x^2 value is 9.53, significant at 0.05 level of significance and confirms significant association between the sex of respondents and the political involvement of their fathers. Table 6.10 indicates that more political women (51.2 percent) than their male counterparts (42.5 percent) had fathers who were active in politics. Amongst the active fathers of male respondents 20 percent were party leaders, 10 percent were party members and 12.5 percent were active supporters or voluntary party workers. The corresponding proportions for political women were 21.0, 14.0 and 16.2 percent respectively. Thus in each level of the political involvement of fathers, political women were found to be ahead of their male counterparts.

6.3.1.4 Politicised Family Environment

The data, as shown in Table 6.11 reinforces our assumption about the family's influence in the political socialisation of women political elites in Bangladesh. The overall factor scores measuring the level of politicisation of their early life family environment suggest that they grew up in a politicised milieux. Of the 43 political women of this study, the greater proportion (41.9 percent) grew up in a highly politicised family environment while 25.6 percent came from moderately politicised

173

families and 32.5 percent were reared in a low politicised family environment.

TABLE 6.11
DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS IN POLITICISED FAMILY

Politicised Family	Male (N=40)		Female (N=43)		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
High	10	25.0	18	41.9	28	33.7
Medium	10	25.0	11	25.6	21	25.3
Low	20	50.0	14	32.5	34	41.0
Total	40	100.0	43	100.0	83	100.0

x^2=15.03, d.f.=2, p<0.001

The x^2 test evidently points to statistically significant difference between political women and men in having a politicised family environment in their early life. The value of chi-square is 15.03, significant at 0.001 level of significance showing an association between the gender and the variable politicised family. It can be observed in Table 6.11 that, although almost the same proportion of the political women and male respondents (25 percent) grew up in a moderately politicised family environment, glaring differences exist between the percentages of the political women and male respondents indicating those who came from highly and low politicised families. The highest percentage of political women (41.9 percent) grew up in the highly politicised family environment, while conversely, the majority of the male respondents (50 percent) came from families marked by low politicised environment. Only 25 percent of the latter came from highly politicised families. Compared to the male respondents, a relatively smaller proportion of political women (32.5 percent) were categorised as having been reared in the low politicised family environment. Based on this, it can be concluded that more political women than their male counterparts grew up in a highly politicised family and received political stimuli from home environments during their early lives.

An upbringing in a politicised family might have given chances to political women to take an interest in politics and to find it an appropriate pursuit for them. The following comments of some political women illustrate such assumption and uphold the family as a source of political awareness for women:

"My parents were very interested in politics and often discussed political matters with the family members. They used to participate in demonstrations and public meetings during the Pakistan period. Sometimes they also took me to political meetings in my earliest years. My parents actively worked for the local candidate in the 1954 Provincial Assembly Elections. Our house was one of the centres for organising election campaigns. In 1966, my parents and other relatives were also very active in election campaigning for Fhatema Jinnah against Ayub Khan. All these evoked my interest in politics and I became active in student politics in my college life."

"When I was only 4 years old, my father took me to a public meeting of a prominent leader. I was really thrilled and impressed to watch a vast concourse of people and the leader's popularity. My father always worked for party candidates. I used to help him to pass out literature and in other work. Thus I felt interest in politics in my young age."

"My uncle ran for public office. My father actively worked for him. I can remember going to my uncle's public meetings with my father. Moreover, my brother was a student leader, so there was much discussion about politics at home. I therefore felt a close identification with the political party supported by my father."

Political interest is seen as a matter of family tradition or inheritance by those whose fathers were highly active in politics. It is illustrated in the following comments:

"My father was a prominent politician in undivided Bengal before 1947. He had held many important public offices. I used to watch my father campaigning for public office. I was my father's favourite child. Even as a little girl I was all the time with him. He would buy me books about the lives of great men and political leaders. I was very impressed by my father's political career. In my adolescence, I helped my father in paper work. I met many famous politicians of undivided Bengal and

Pakistan through my father. So, I can say I was born into a political family, I grew up in politics. I think I have had politics in my blood."

"My father was a politician. I was very close to him. He always discussed political affairs with me. When I was a high school girl, I started to work for my father's party. My father was a member of the National Legislative Assembly during the Pakistan time. I experienced electoral campaign when he was a candidate. The whole thing left a deep impression on me. My mother was apolitical, but could not oppose my political work as my father indulged me."

"I was brought up in a family with political atmosphere. My father was one of the founder leaders of the Awami League and a well known politician of his time. Therefore, our house was one of the meeting and discussion places of political leaders. Moreover, the town hall ground was in front of our house. All public meetings had been held in this field during the Pakistan time. Thus from my childhood I was surrounded by a political atmosphere. So politics have always fascinated me.

Several points stood out in these comments of political women, which will be more relevant in the following analysis. First, political women who were socialised by the family became interested in politics in their early age. Second, the findings and comments reveal a conscious effort on the part of the family members to indoctrinate them. In the perspective of social reality of Bangladesh it seems an unusual experience for political women. They acquired such predispositions at a time when overwhelming majority of their women contemporaries were concerned with only feminine roles. Thus, the impact of the family environment in their development as a public figure appears very important, since they have received activist impulses instead of only traditional goals from their home environment. Third, there is also an indication that the politically active fathers of political women may have served them as positive role models. The findings presented so far on three variables regarding political concern of parents, i.e., political interest, political discussion and political involvement, uphold their fathers' primacy and indicate the likelihood of their effective influence on the political learning of political women.

6.3.1.5 Political Involvement of Other Family Members and Relatives

Political involvement of family members other than parents and relatives, may also politicise the home environment which in turn affects the political socialisation of the family members. In this context Eulau et al., noted that:

> "The opportunity to become acquainted with political life is given when significant persons in an individual's most immediate social environment are themselves in close and continuing contact with politics."[34]

It may especially be applicable on the part of women of Bangladesh who are mostly confined at home. Therefore, the implication of having active family members and close relatives seems to be important for their political development. It would seem reasonable then to expect a high incidence of political role models in the early family environment of political women.

The data in Table 6.12 appear to offer support for this assumption, showing recurrence of political involvement of the immediate family members of the political women. For the sibling category, 44.1 percent of the political women had brothers and 23.2 percent had sisters who were active in politics (particularly in student politics). These respondents recalled that their siblings had been actively engaged in political movements during the Pakistan period. For them their siblings' political involvements had a marked impact. However, additionally, 34.8 percent of the political women reported that their close relatives (i.e., grandfather, uncles, cousins, etc.) were active in politics. It is of interest to see that the husbands constitute the greatest figure, as 26 out of 43 political women (60.4 percent) have politically active husbands. Thus it appears that women political elites in Bangladesh tend to have a politically active spouse.

---

[34] Eulau, et al., op.cit., p.306.

177

TABLE 6.12
POLITICALLY ACTIVE SPOUSES AND RELATIVES OF RESPONDENTS

Active Relatives	Male		Female	
	No	%	No	%
Husband/Wife	5	12.5	26	60.4
Brother	12	30.0	19	44.1
Sister	1	2.5	10	23.2
Close Relatives	12	30.0	15	34.8

$x^2=8.93$, d.f.=3, $p<0.05$

Note: 40 male and 43 female respondents for each category of relatives.

In each category of relatives sex-differences do emerge. The difference between males and females is glaring in light of the percentages of active siblings and spouses. In comparison with political women, men are less likely to have active siblings, as 30 percent of them had active brothers while only 2.5 percent had active sisters. The corresponding figures for political women are 44.1 percent and 23.2 percent respectively. In addition, compared to 34.8 percent of the political women, 30 percent of the men had politically active relatives. In respect of active relatives however, male female difference is not too substantial.

A striking difference, however, exists in the figures of politically active spouses. The incidence of political women whose husbands are politically active is about five times as great as the proportion of men whose wives are. Among political women 60.4 percent claimed to have a spouse who is active in politics, whereas only 12.5 percent of the male politicians have wives in politics.

The above data suggest that political women more frequently than their male counterparts, had politically active siblings, spouse and relatives. The chi-square test ($x^2=8.93$, significant at 0.05 level of significance) also confirms statistically significant difference between political women and male respondents in having politically active

178

relatives and spouses. In the light of the above data and based on the result of chi-square test it can be anticipated that women political elites in Bangladesh tend to come from the family backgrounds of political activism.

However, what is striking in regard to the socialisation of political women is that most of them had a political role model to emulate in an immediate family member either in the parental home in early life, or a family member i.e., husband, in adult life. Moreover, it is evident by the data that male relatives were predominant in setting examples of adult political roles in the life of political women. The reason for the low incidence of female role model can be attributed to the backward position of women in Bangladesh even a few decades ago and their lower involvement in public life. For many political women, however, it was an older brother who provided the exposure to politics. It is illustrated in these comments:

> "I grew up in my elder brother's house. He was extremely involved in left politics. I was very attached to my brother. He implanted a deep root of revolutionary ideas and spirit in my mind. He always talked about the great deals and deeds of Marx, Engels and Lenin. It was because of him that I began viewing society from a different perspective. Moreover, many contemporary political leaders often came to our house. Thus I came into closer contact with my brother's associates and when I was only 15 years old, I became a member of the student organisation."

> "My older brother was a student leader. He had great influence over the whole family. He talked a great deal about his activities to the family members. His work has always fascinated me and inspired me to participate in the movement of the early 1960s, when I was only 19 years old."

Many others reported that politics was an ever present element in the parental home, even though in many cases parents were not active:

> "My grandfather and uncle were the chairmen of the Union Parishad. They and my father always discussed political affairs, which exposed me to politics."

"For me it was my grandmothers influence. My grandfather was a member of the Congress and one of the leaders of the Swadeshi movement. My grandmother often talked to me about his political life and Swadeshi movement."

"One of my relatives was a prominent politician. Whenever he was imprisoned during the Pakistan time, my father used to look after his family. Thus I grew up with closer contact with this family and it evoked my interest in politics."

"My parents were not interested in politics, but I had an uncle, who influenced me a lot. He was involved with the language movement of 1952. I tried to help him to make posters and pass out leaflets even when I was a little girl."

Thus it appears from the above comments, many of those political women whose fathers were not active in politics, might have been influenced by their other relatives. In addition, based on the evidence of politically active members of parental family and active spouses, it can be argued that most of the political women might have acquired political orientation in their parental homes, which further received reinforcement from husbands in their adult life.

Moreover, from data presented in Tables 6.10 and 6.12 it is perhaps more interesting that the percentage of politically active husbands is greater than the corresponding percentage for active fathers. The reason for the high incidence of politically active spouses for political women can be that a society and culture like ours is less likely to encourage political participation of women. In these circumstances, it may be more important for a woman to be married to a politically active man in order to continue her political career or expand her opportunities to become legitimately involved in the male domain of politics.

6.3.2   Time of Earliest Political Interest

The following investigation has been done to ascertain both the time and the manner in which political women were socialised. To elicit the time of socialisation,

respondents were asked by means of close-ended question to provide information concerning his/her earliest time when they got interested in politics. Four categories of the time of earliest political interest were provided as the answer to the question[35] in the questionnaire. The respondents were asked to tick one answer. The structured answers were provided to show whether political interest occurred during childhood, during adolescence, during college/university or equivalent period, or during adulthood, or at time of entry into politics, as shown in Table 6.13. For analytical purposes, the above times of initial introduction to politics are categorised into two broad and specific time periods, pre-adult and adult. The respondents are divided into these two categories according to their response:

(1) Pre-adult - those dated their initial interest in politics during childhood, and adolescence.

(2) Adult - those cited the post-adolescence or adult period of the life (i.e., college/university or equivalent period, after college or university and at the time of entry into political life) as the time of their first interest in politics.[36]

Table 6.13 demonstrates the distribution of respondents according to their recollection about the time of their earliest interest in politics. The data reveal that the highest percentage of political women (37.2 percent) identified their primary school period or their childhood as the time they first developed an interest in politics. The second largest percentage (32.5 percent) of the political women felt first their real attraction to politics at the time of their entry into active politics, while 18.6 percent

---

[35] Respondents were asked: "What is your earliest recollection of being interested in politics? How did you become interested in politics?" Both questions have been taken from Prewitt et al. Same questions have been used by Eulau et al., and a slight modified version used by Kornberg and Thomas. See, Kenneth Prewitt, Heinz Eulau, and Betty H. Zisk, "Political Socialization and Political Roles", Public Opinion Quaterly, 30 (Winter 1966): 570; Eulau et al., op.cit., p.305; Allen Kornberg and Norman Thomas, "The Political Socialization of National Legislative Elites in the United States and Canada", in Learning About Politics, ed. Roberta Sigel (New York: Random House, 1970).

[36] Following Kornberg and Thomas the 'adult' category has been constructed, see op.cit., P.456.

felt that during their high school period or in their adolescence. Only 11.7 percent recalled their first political interest during college, university or equivalent period. Roughly 55.8 percent of the political women first became interested in politics in their childhood and adolescence while 44.2 percent recalled their first political interest during adulthood. The data thus suggest that the majority of the political women became politically conscious earlier in their lives.

TABLE 6.13
TIME OF EARLIEST POLITICAL INTEREST OF RESPONDENTS

Time Recalled	Male (N=40)		Female (N=43)		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Childhood or primary school	11	27.5	16	37.2	27	32.5
Adolescence or high school	10	25.0	8	18.6	18	21.6
College and university or equivalent period	12	30.0	5	11.7	17	20.5
At time of entry into political life	7	17.5	14	32.5	21	25.3
Total	40	100.0	43	100.0	83	100.0

x^2=6.26, d.f.=3, p<0.10

There is no significant association (x^2=6.26, p<0.10) between the sex of respondents and their recollection of the time when they became interested in politics. As shown in Table 6.13, 27.5 percent of the male respondents identified their primary school-age period or childhood as the time they first developed an interest in politics, and 25 percent recalled their high-school period or adolescence. Roughly 52.5 percent of the male respondents recalled their first political interest during childhood and adolescence, while 55.8 percent of the political women did so. The difference between these aggregate percentages of political women and male respondents is, therefore, not glaring.

It can also be observed in the same Table that 30 percent of the male respondents recalled their college and university years when they first felt interest in

182

politics. Only 17.5 percent felt that interest at the time of their entry into politics. Thus in aggregate, 47.5 percent of the male respondents located the time of their earliest political interest in adult life. The corresponding percentage for political women is 44.2.

From the data gathered in Table 6.13 some noticeable aspects which may indicate important differences between political women and their male counterparts in their time of initial political socialisation experiences can be observed. It is evident by the data that the childhood and the late political interest category - at the time of entry into active politics -are more frequently perceived as salient by the political women than men for their first introduction to politics. The reason may be more political women than male respondents received political stimuli from politicised parental homes to become aware of politics in childhood and also a greater proportion of them had politically active spouses to be familiar with political life as adults. We can assume that women who became interested in politics in adulthood were more likely to be influenced by their husbands.

Moreover, it was found that compared to political women, a larger percentage of male respondents have recollections locating their earliest political interest in adolescence and post-adolescene period (in college or university life). It indicates that adolescence and post-adolescene experiences tended to be perceptually salient for the male respondents. The reason for the difference between males and females in the proportions of adolescence and post-adolescence socialisation may be attributed to the social reality of Bangladesh. Lipset and his associates noted that adolescence is the period in the life cycle when the individual first encounters strong influences outside of his family and most proceed to define his adult role.[37] We have mentioned earlier that the lives of women in Bangladesh are largely confined to the family circle.

---

37 Seymour M. Lipset, P.F. Lazarsfeld, Allen H. Barton, Juan Linz, "The Psychology of Voting: An Analysis of Political Behaviour" in The Handbook of Social Psychology, ed., Gardner Lindzey, Handbook of Social Psychology, (Cambridge: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Inc., 1954), p.1145.

Especially, from adolescence their lives become more restricted and they have less chances to be exposed to public life. Thus, there is less possibility for women to be exposed to outside stimuli in their adolescence or post-adolescent time. On the other hand, boys in Bangladesh society are more outgoing, have more freedom to mix with other people and have more access to outside life. Therefore, they can be more exposed to politics outside the home in their early age. This may be the reason why male respondents in larger numbers than females became politically aware when they were high school boys or when entering college or university in their post-adolescence period.

6.3.3 Sources of Earliest Political Interest

The following test was to specify the person or groups instrumental in the earliest political interest of respondents. For this purpose respondents were asked to identify the person who was their earliest source of political interest. The findings obtained from the respondents' own identification of political socialisation agents will enable us to have a more specific view about it. Moreover, it may substantiate earlier said assumptions of family influence in the political socialisation of women. Further it may indicate whether the agents of political socialisation varies according to the time of socialisation.

TABLE 6.14
PERSONS INVOLVED IN THE EARLIEST POLITICAL INTEREST

Person	Male (N=40)		Female (N=43)		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Father	6	15.0	12	28.0	18	21.7
Brother	3	7.5	6	14.0	9	10.8
Husband	-	-	10	23.2	10	12.1
Relatives	2	5.0	4	9.3	6	7.2
Friends	29	72.5	11	25.5	40	48.2
Total	40	100.0	43	100.0	83	100.0

184

Table 6.14 reveals the persons who were instrumental in the earliest political interest of respondents. The data again serve to confirm the role of family in stimulating women's political interest. In recalling their earliest interest in politics, the great majority of the political women spontaneously mentioned family members and relatives in their immediate circle as agents of their initial political socialisation. As shown in Table 6.14, the largest percentage (28 percent) of 43 political women identified their fathers, 23.2 percent identified husbands, 14 percent recalled brothers and 9.3 percent reported relatives who were instrumental in their earliest political interest. Roughly 74.5 percent identified family members and relatives. Only 25.5 percent of the political women were first exposed to politics by peer groups.

On the other hand, approximately three-fourths(72.5 percent) of the men referred their friends for awakening their political interest. Only 27.5 percent of the male respondents attributed their political awareness to the immediate family members and relatives.

The data shows substantial differences between political women and male respondents in their recollections of the earliest source of political interest. Computed x^2 value 18.31, p<0.001, as shown in Table 6.15, confirms significant association between the gender and this variable, and suggests different agents for political women and male respondents associated with the process of initial political socialisation.

TABLE 6.15
SOURCES OF EARLIEST POLITICAL INTEREST

Source	Male (N=40)		Female (N=43)		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Family	11	27.5	32	74.4	43	51.8
Peer group	29	72.5	11	25.6	40	48.2
Total	40	100.0	43	100.0	83	100.0

x^2=18.31, d.f.=1, p<0.001

TABLE 6.16
ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE TIME OF EARLIEST
POLITICAL INTEREST AND THE AGENT

Agent	Male (N=40)					
	Time of Earliest Political Interest					
	Adult	%	Pre-adult	%	Total	%
Members of parental family and relatives	1	5.3	10	47.6	11	27.5
Peer group	18	94.7	11	52.4	29	72.5
Total	19	100.0	21	100.0	40	100.0

x^2=12.70, d.f.=1, p<0.001

Agent	Female (N=43)					
	Time of Earliest Political Interest					
	Adult	%	Pre-adult	%	Total	%
Members of parental family and relatives	3	15.8	19	79.2	22	51.2
Husband	10	52.6	-	-	10	23.3
Peer group	6	31.6	5	20.8	11	25.6
Total	19	100.0	24	100.0	43	100.0

x^2=25.20, d.f.=2, p<0.001

Cross-tabulation of the time of earliest political interest and the agent of political socialisation, as shown in Table 6.16, makes the finding of the influence of family on political orientation of women more revealing. The value being 25.20 (significant at 0.001 level of significance) shows a significant relationship between the time and the agent of political socialisation for political women. It is evident from the data that family was the salient agent responsible for political women's early exposure to politics. We find that, out of 24 political women who report pre-adult political learning, 79.2 percent attributed their earliest political interest to the effects of having politically active members in the parental family, such as father and brother. However, the remaining 20.8 percent of the pre-adult group reported friends as the source of their earliest political awakening. They reported that in high school, senior friends introduced them into student politics and motivated them to participate in the student movement in the early sixties.

Amongst the 19 political women who became politically conscious in their adulthood, the influence of husband was reported by 52.6 percent, and 15.8 percent mentioned relatives' influence. Peer group's influence was dominant in the case of 31.6 percent, who largely derived political interest from the activities of politically involved friends during the college and university life. However, a greater indication of husbands as instrumental in political awakening gives support to our earlier prediction that women with adult political interest will more likely to have husbands' influence in their initial introduction to politics. During the interviews they reported that their initial source of interest in politics was their husbands' political career.

What is evident from the above analysis is that, in the case of political women, there exists a slight variation in political socialisation agents according to time of socialisation. Not only is a significant relationship evident between the family and the pre-adult political socialisation of political women, it can also be observed between the family and political women's adult orientation to politics.

In the case of male respondents, a significant relationship (x^2=12.70, p<0.001) was found between the time and the agents of their political socialisation. But for both groups of male respondents the family variable appears less salient in their earliest political socialisation experience. It is evident from the data presented in Table 6.16 that even male respondents who became politically conscious in the earlier part of their lives were less frequently influenced by their families than peer groups as family influence was reported by 47.6 percent while friends were identified by 52.4 percent. It was reported earlier that many of the male respondents received initial introduction to politics in adolescence and they added the male figure of pre-adult socialised group. These male respondents might have grown up in low politicised families. But they became aware of politics at an early age because outside stimuli might have functioned to stimulate their early interest in politics. This may explain the fact why the majority of the male respondents of pre-adult oriented groups attributed their political awakening to agents other than family.

Again family had almost no impact on those male respondents who perceived adult political orientation. Among them substantial pluralities of those who mentioned peer group's influence as the source of their political consciousness constituting 94.7 percent, only 5.3 percent attributed their early political orientation to family members. It further indicates that male respondents were more inclined to outside stimuli for their political learning.

The data and findings so far presented in this section consistently suggest a profound family impact on the political socialisation of political women in Bangladesh. In light of the findings, it can be concluded that women political elites in Bangladesh do, indeed, have a higher likelihood of having family influence in their political orientation, since they tend to come from the family backgrounds of greater political activism than their male counterparts.

6.4   Political Socialisation - Becoming Active in Politics

As stated earlier, our main objective was to find out "how" political women developed themselves. As part of this inquiry we have analysed above how political women of Bangladesh acquired predisposition towards political participation. This section looks into the factors associated with their initiation into active participation in politics. It will show whether any situation or event and images had a decisive influence on their decision to become active in politics.

Respondents were asked by means of an open-ended question to provide information about what had particularly inspired them to participate in politics. In response to this question, the major factors such as political events, influence of a family member, influence of a leader and influence of ideology were enumerated in the questionnaire. Cross-tabulation of the motivating factors and the time of earliest political interest of the respondents will indicate the relationship between these two variables. It will show whether the time of political socialisation had any bearing on the factors that had decisive influence on the decision of political women to become active in politics. It will further indicate whether there exists any differences among political women in the manner in which they derived personal impetus for participation in politics.

Table 6.17 shows the highest percentage of the political women (37.2 percent) were stimulated by a specific political event to become active in politics, followed by 30.3 percent who were motivated by a family member, 23.2 percent were influenced by certain political leaders and finally 9.3 percent were inspired by certain ideologies. Although a specific political event appears as a salient factor which propelled the highest proportion of the political women towards political participation, family influence was also another important motivating factor for political women.

TABLE 6.17
FACTORS RELATED TO RESPONDENTS' BECOMING ACTIVE IN POLITICS

Factors	Male (N=40)		Female (N=43)		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Influence of ideology	10	25.0	4	9.3	17	20.5
Specific political event	21	52.5	16	37.2	34	40.9
Influence of a leader	9	22.5	10	23.2	18	21.7
Influence of a family member	-	-	13	30.3	14	16.9
Total	40	100.0	43	100.0	83	100.0

$$x^2=15.31, \text{ d.f.}=3, p<0.01$$

The majority of the male respondents (52.5 percent) mentioned a specific event as a motivating factor on their part to be active in politics. The following larger proportion (25 percent) reported the influence of a particular ideology and 22.5 percent mentioned the influence of a leader prompted them to be active in politics. None of the male respondents reported the influence of a family member in this respect.

The x^2 value being 15.31 is significant at 0.01 level of significance and confirms an association between the gender and motivating factors. This implies that there exists a significant difference between male respondents and political women in their recollections of the factors that propelled them toward political participation. As the data show, the proportion of male respondents (52.5 percent) who were inspired by political events is strikingly higher than that of their female counterparts (37.2 percent). A glaring difference can also be observed between the percentages of those male respondents and political women (25 percent and 9.3 percent respectively) who mentioned the influence of an ideology. While the second largest proportion of the political women (30.3 percent) were motivated by a family member to take up politics as an outlet, none of the male respondents did so. It again shows women's greater family oriented propensity and dependency on a family member to gain entry into a less familiar zone like politics.

Despite the above gender-difference in the perception of motivating factors, what is perhaps more significant from the data is that certain political events propelled the highest proportion of the male and female respondents to political participation. It has been shown by the political socialisation research how particular events or a given political situation may arouse people's political interest.[38] A particular political situation or events with historical significance may have a mobilising impact on a person's concern with political affairs. It may be noted here that even those respondents in the present study who were disposed by a certain ideology or persuaded by the appeal of a political leader, were mostly influenced by these factors in a particular time period, specifically when the country was passing through the struggles to achieve its ultimate goal of independence. All reported events that induced the above respondents happened during the period of being part of Pakistan.

It is mentioned earlier in a brief description of the political history of East Pakistan from 1947 to 1971 that, from early fifties to 1970 the then East Pakistan went through a number of political movements towards independence. These movements, particularly the movements of the 1960s were instrumental in motivating the youths to become more politicised. The political events of the mid to late sixties favoured the politicisation of many young women and propelled them to participate in these movements. Those political women and male respondents of this study who reported political events as the stimulating factor were politicised by these events.

It is noteworthy that, in the mid to late sixties, all of the above said political women were the students of Dhaka University and Eden College where the environment was charged with political electricity during the whole Pakistan period. Like many of their generation, they had acquired their first political experiences as a

---

[38] See Prewitt et al.; 1966, op.cit., P.577; Eulau et al., op.cit., P.309.

young adult through participation in the political movements. The excitement and turbulence of the 1960s whetted their enthusiasm for participation. The student organisations were the primary force responsible for mobilising them into political activities. Some were inspired by the situations to be involved in voluntary party work. Even respondents who reported having motivation as a result of the influence of a leader before independence, recalled the enthusiasm which they felt through the nationalist leaders and the opportunity of listening to them. Moreover, the ideological appeal was also more effective on those respondents to become active who had also more exposure to these political events.

TABLE 6.18
TIME OF EARLIEST POLITICAL INTEREST AND FACTORS
RELATED TO RESPONDENTS' POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Factors	Male (N=40)					Female (N=43)				
	Time of Socialization					Time of Socialization				
	Adult	%	Pre-adult	%	Total	%	Adult	%	Pre-adult	%	Total	%
Influence of ideology	4	21.1	9	42.8	13	32.5	-	-	4	16.7	4	9.3
Specific political event	8	42.1	10	47.6	18	45.0	4	21.0	12	50.0	16	37.2
Influence of a leader	7	36.8	2	9.6	9	22.5	5	26.3	5	20.8	10	23.2
Influence of family member	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	52.7	3	12.5	13	30.3
Total	19	100.0	21	100.0	40	100.0	19	100.0	24	100.0	43	100.0

$x^2=4.89$, d.f.=2, p<0.05 $x^2 13.89$, d.f.=3, p<0.001

Table 6.18 presents a cross-tabulation of the time of the earliest political interest and factors relating to the political participation of respondents. The result of chi-square test, x^2 13.89, p<0.001 indicates a significant relationship between the two variables for political women. It suggests that, the time of political socialisation has a significant bearing on the kind of factors crucial in awakening one's desire for political participation.

Table 6.18 points out a noticeable difference in motivating factors between those political women who had pre-adult orientation and those who had adult political learning. The majority of the political women (50 percent) who had pre-adult political

orientation were stimulated by political events and 20.8 percent were motivated by a particular political leader, while 16.7 percent were influenced by certain ideologies and 12.5 percent were motivated by a family member.

What is important here is that, although for the greatest proportion of political women of pre-adult oriented group, the earliest source of political interest was found to be their parental family and relatives (see Table 6.16), only the smallest proportion of them identified family stimulants as immediate impetus for their political participation. The possible reason for this fact could probably be their being more responsive to outside political stimuli because of their early predisposition to politics. As a consequence, the overwhelming majority of these political women were stimulated by the extra-familial factors to be involved in political activities. A greater proportion of them was inspired by the political events themselves. It may be a natural outcome of their early orientation to politics when it is stated by the political scientists that political events were more important for the political participation of those who already have an interest in politics.[39]

Conversely, on the greater part of political women (52.7 percent) having had adult political socialisation, a particular family member has been playing a decisive role in inducing them to become active. Among the rest, 26.3 percent were inspired by a political leader and the smallest percentage (21 percent) were stimulated by political events. It is noted by the scholars that political events are less likely to influence people who are isolated from the political mainstream and those who have only minimal perceptions of the political world.[40] It explains why these political women who had no early exposure to politics were less responsive to the political events Compared to the former political women they were more frequently motivated

---

39   Dawson and Prewitt, op.cit., p.139.
40   Ibid.

by the family members. In most cases, a politically active husband was instrumental in pushing them into the political sphere.

In the case of male respondents the relationship between the above two variables is not statistically significant as the x^2 value for men 4.89 is not significant at 0.05 level. It is shown by the data that unlike political women, male respondents were more frequently responsive to the political events regardless of their time of earliest political socialisation. The highest percentage of male respondents of both groups - 42.1 percent of the adult socialised group and 47.6 percent of the pre-adult socialised group - derived their participatory zeal from the historical events. Among the remainder of the pre-adult group, 42.8 percent were induced by particular ideologies and the remaining 9.6 percent responded to the appeal of a political leader. The corresponding percentages for the male respondents who were instilled with political interest as adults were 21.1 and 36.8 percent respectively.

It is evident from the above analysis that in the case of male respondents, time of initial political orientation has no bearing on the factors related to their initiation into political involvement, whereas for political women, the findings suggest that the time of initial exposure to politics is related to different factors and events yielding a desire for participation. As a result a sharp variation was found among political women themselves in the way they derived personal impetus for participation in politics. Political women who politically socialised as youths are more likely to receive participatory zeal from the political sphere. Thus they have a higher likelihood of having an independent start in politics, whereas the greater part of those political women who socialised as adults, a family member, particularly husbands have given them a head start in politics. It indicates that their participation might have been mediated by their spouses.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this chapter is to find how a woman political elite in Bangladesh develops herself as a political activist and appears in the political arena, which is conventionally known as a more appropriate pursuit for men rather than women. It attempts to investigate the processes responsible for producing women political activists and tries to identify the roles and factors operating in their political socialisation experiences. It is discovered that an individual woman's political learning can be affected by a variety of influences and can share some experiences with men. But through comparison between male and female political elites by generated data, several characteristics emerge that differentiate females from their male counterparts in many respects of their political socialisation experiences. Particularly in the respect of the role of family in stimulating political interest and promoting it to the ultimate goal of participation, a substantial male-female difference has been found. In addition, significant differences have also been found among political women in the way they received participatory impulses.

However, this chapter suggests the most striking finding regarding the role of family in a woman's life in Bangladesh, particularly when she wants to deviate from the stereotyped pattern. The findings also confirm that women of the higher social status and politically concerned families tend to dominate the women political elites in Bangladesh.

One of the important inferences to be drawn from the data on the early family backgrounds and political socialisation experiences of political women is their higher social origin. They are disproportionately originated from upper middle-and middle-class families. Majority of their fathers were highly educated and were in prestigious urban occupations. In Bangladesh, women from urban middle-and upper-classes enjoy more opportunities to expand the horizons of their lives. Thus the findings reasonably

confirm that political women are more likely than their male counterparts to originate from higher status families.

In addition to that, the parental families of political women were presumably from the part of the urban segment which was representative of new values, ideas and social change. Thus political women in a greater number were socialised in families and environments sensitive to social change. Moreover, their urban upbringing might have kept them in constant contact with political stimuli while they passed through the historical moments of the 1960s as cities and towns were the centres of historical events.

Moreover, the findings suggest that political women were more likely to have grown up in settings that provided substantial political stimuli and opened up the door of politics. They grew up more frequently in more politicised milieux than their male counterparts. Their home environment was charged with political electricity as the majority of their fathers were politically active. For them the added advantage was, more often they had models of active family members and relatives in addition to fathers. From politicised homes they acquired political orientations and attitudinal dispositions toward politics, which might have transferred an attitude to participation in adult life. Although a considerable proportion of political women were raised in homes where parents' example of political participation did not exist, they were probably compensated by politically interested fathers and by politically active relatives and spouses. Thus political women had enjoyed distinct opportunities to become acquainted with political life by a high incidence of political stimulants in their immediate family environment.

The study points to a particularly important role that fathers had played in the political socialisation of activist daughters to make politics salient to them. Additionally, a politically active spouse has been evidenced more frequently in the

case of political women than their male counterparts. Their spouses have typically been cast in many cases as initiators of their political careers. In conclusion, the findings suggest that, male figures were more politically relevant to the political socialisation practices within the home of political women. Three-quarters of the political women identified male members of the parental family and spouses as instrumental in creating their political interest. The time of socialisation such as adult or pre-adult orientation does not make marked difference in their identification of family whereas male respondents predominantly identified peer groups which were involved with their earliest political interest. Thus the data on respondents' identification of socialising agents serve to substantiate the assumption of the role of family in the political socialisation of women.

One of the objectives of this chapter was to identify the factors that had a decisive influence on political women becoming active in politics. It was found that although the family holds a distinct and important position in generating political interest of women, in inculcating participatory inclinations, the family is not the sole agent. The great majority (70 percent) of the political women's entry into politics had been supported by historical events, influence of ideology and admired leaders. Particularly pre-independence political events have provided the ground that had swept up the largest number of political women into politics. Family influence was effective in the case of thirty percent of the political women in this respect.

Moreover, it was found that the time of initial exposure to politics is related to different factors and events yielding women's personal impetus for participation. Political women who date their interest early in life were more likely to have had acquired participatory aptitudes directly from the political sphere before the independence of Bangladesh. Political enthusiasm and motivation produced by the political events of this period were associated mainly with early oriented groups. It

is far less likely to be found in the socialisation experiences of the adult socialised women.

The adult group of women more frequently reported a family member or relatives as instrumental in their political participation. Thus mainly family connections to politics pushed them into the political sphere. However, family influence in political participation is far less likely to be true for male respondents. It had almost no impact on those men who received adult political orientation. Regardless of their time of political socialisation all men were exposed to strong situational cues, specific ideology and appeal of a political leader in support of their activism.

Overall, the findings so far presented strongly support the assertion of previous researchers that women are involved in politics because of their family connections to politics. Political women in the present study largely showed such connections in their background. Thus there is much to suggest that women political elites in Bangladesh are more prone to come from a family, which serves to create a woman's attitudinal disposition to politics and facilitate her access into the political arena.