

**Title:** "Becoming the Mommy Politic: A staircase theory of the motherhood shift in voting behavior"

**Abstract:**

Academic work on motherhood often divides women into "mothers" and "non-mothers," frequently lumping pregnant mothers with no born children in with "non-mothers." This paper argues that such dichotomous classifications of motherhood are too limiting. The paper uses research on motherhood and voting behavior in conjunction with four waves of the National Longitudinal Study of Youth (1997) survey to argue against that motherhood scholars ought to employ a more expansive understanding of when the motherhood shift begins and how long it takes.

Jorgensen argues that motherhood, instead of being a single step taken when a child is placed in a mother's arms, is best represented by a staircase between non-motherhood and having a born child. Voting behavior serves as an ideal testing ground for this theory, as previous literature has used voting behavior to indicate that the motherhood shift exists outside the intimate or private realm. Jorgensen uses the question, "Do pregnant women vote more like mothers or like non-mothers?," to shed light on questions regarding how academic research should categorize motherhood statuses; how the motherhood shift differs across racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and age lines; and which theories of change explain changes associated with motherhood.

**Bio:**

Abby Jorgensen is a first-year PhD student in Sociology, a Gender Studies minor, and a Notebaert Fellow at the University of Notre Dame. Her interest areas are gender, culture, political life, and the intersections within those three fields. Some of her current research topics include motherhood, legislative representation, weddings, child mortality, feminism in academia, and *Star Trek: The Original Series*.