

Dædalus

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Winter 2020

Women & Equality

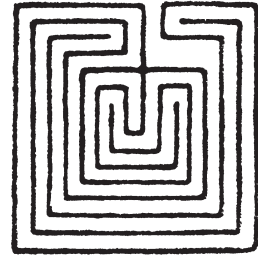


Nannerl O. Keohane & Frances McCall Rosenbluth,
guest editors

with Dawn Langan Teele · Kira Sanbonmatsu
Rafaela Dancygier · Susan Chira · Torben Iversen
Øyvind Skorge · Jamila Michener
Margaret Teresa Brower · Sara Lowes · Anita I. Jivani
Mala Htun · Francesca R. Jensenius · Anne Marie Goetz
Olle Folke · Johanna Rickne · Seiki Tanaka
Yasuka Tateishi · Nancy Folbre
Catharine A. MacKinnon · Debora L. Spar



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“Women & Equality”

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Contents

- 6 **Introduction**
Nannerl O. Keohane & Frances McCall Rosenbluth
- 25 **Women & the Vote**
Dawn Langan Teele
- 40 **Women's Underrepresentation in the U.S. Congress**
Kira Sanbonmatsu
- 56 **Another Progressive's Dilemma:
Immigration, the Radical Right & Threats to Gender Equality**
Rafaela Dancygier
- 72 **Donald Trump's Gift to Feminism: The Resistance**
Susan Chira
- 86 **The Dilemma of Gender Equality:
How Labor Market Regulation Divides Women by Class**
Torben Iversen, Frances McCall Rosenbluth & Øyvind Skorge
- 100 **What's Policy Got to Do with It?
Race, Gender & Economic Inequality in the United States**
Jamila Michener & Margaret Teresa Brower
- 119 **Kinship Structure & Women: Evidence from Economics**
Sara Lowes
- 134 **Gender Lens to the Future of Work**
Anita I. Jivani
- 144 **Fighting Violence Against Women:
Laws, Norms & Challenges Ahead**
Mala Htun & Francesca R. Jensenius

- 160 **The New Competition in Multilateral Norm-Setting:
Transnational Feminists & the Illiberal Backlash**
Anne Marie Goetz
- 180 **Sexual Harassment of Women Leaders**
Olle Folke, Johanna Rickne, Seiki Tanaka & Yasuka Tateishi
- 198 **Cooperation & Conflict in the Patriarchal Labyrinth**
Nancy Folbre
- 213 **Equality**
Catharine A. MacKinnon
- 222 **Good Fellows:
Men's Role & Reason in the Fight for Gender Equality**
Debra L. Spar
- 236 **Women, Power & Leadership**
Nannerl O. Keohane

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The labyrinth designed by Dædalus for King Minos of Crete, on a silver tetradrachma from Cnossos, Crete, c. 350–300 BC (35 mm, Cabinet des Médailles, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris). “Such was the work, so intricate the place, / That scarce the workman all its turns cou’d trace; / And Dædalus was puzzled how to find / The secret ways of what himself design’d.”
–Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book 8

Dædalus was founded in 1955 and established as a quarterly in 1958. The journal’s namesake was renowned in ancient Greece as an inventor, scientist, and unriddler of riddles. Its emblem, a maze seen from above, symbolizes the aspiration of its founders to “lift each of us above his cell in the labyrinth of learning in order that he may see the entire structure as if from above, where each separate part loses its comfortable separateness.”

The American Academy of Arts & Sciences, like its journal, brings together distinguished individuals from every field of human endeavor. It was chartered in 1780 as a forum “to cultivate every art and science which may tend to advance the interest, honour, dignity, and happiness of a free, independent, and virtuous people.” Now in its third century, the Academy, with its more than five thousand members, continues to provide intellectual leadership to meet the critical challenges facing our world.

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Introduction

Nannerl O. Keohane & Frances McCall Rosenbluth

This issue of *Dædalus* focuses on women in the world today: in politics, the economy, and society more broadly. Its publication at the centennial of the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution celebrates victory in the battle for suffrage everywhere.

Winning the right to vote was a significant step in the effort to achieve equality for women. Yet the achievement of economic self-sufficiency is equally important. And as the burgeoning #MeToo movement reminds us, freeing women from the threat of sexual harassment and abuse is another crucial goal.

Mary Wollstonecraft struck a recognizably modern tone in her 1792 work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* when she wrote that women's dependence on men for sustenance and survival degrades their character. "You can't expect virtue from women until they are to some extent independent of men; indeed, you can't expect the strength of natural affection that would make them good wives and good mothers. While they absolutely depend on their husbands, they will be cunning, mean, and selfish."¹

Virginia Woolf made a similar argument more than a century later in *A Room of One's Own*, concluding that financial dependence on men has meant that the great majority of women can be neither creative nor secure. "Women have had less intellectual freedom than the sons of Athenian slaves. . . . That is why I have laid so much stress on money and a room of one's own."² No one should be surprised when a woman who has no economic resources of her own adapts to the man's world in ways that reflect not her nature, but her need.

In some parts of the world, women still occupy profoundly subservient positions across political, economic, and social domains. Women in many countries have secured the right to vote. But suffrage alone does not bring access to political power on equal terms with men, economic equality remains elusive everywhere, and much remains to be done to protect women from sexual harassment and assault. This volume, therefore, is not only a celebration, but also an invitation to further reflection, and a call to action.

The path forward is illuminated by the many successes of the past. This collection offers assessments – some cool-headed, some passionate – of the remaining

obstacles to equality and points a way toward workable solutions. The essays tap deep stores of insight from academic researchers and from practitioners who experience every day what it is to be a woman in today's world, or understand these dilemmas as sympathetic male observers. The kaleidoscopic picture offered in these pages reflects the complexities of context, but the overall message is clear: the striking progress of our forebears offers hope for the rest of the journey.

Of the many societal changes of the second half of the twentieth century, few were as profound in their implications as the changing role of women. To understand how quickly that change occurred, we need only look through two earlier volumes of this journal. There have been only two issues of *Daedalus* in its sixty-five-year history on topics pertaining to the situation of women: one in 1964 and the second in 1987.³ The difference in the themes, tone, content, and contributors for these two issues, compiled only two decades apart, is a succinct account of the impact of second-wave feminism.

"The Woman in America," published in spring 1964, focused on the challenges and new opportunities of juggling career and marriage, the patterns of women's lives in the home and the workplace, and the distinctive psychology of women. The most prominent authors were male social scientists. The concepts of power and politics were effectively absent.

Fast forward to 1987, and we are in a completely different world. "Learning About Women: Gender, Politics, and Power" centered not on "the woman" but *women*, recognizing that not all women are alike. Most of the authors were distinguished female social scientists and historians. Several of the essays are specifically about political themes, including conversations with Elizabeth Holtzman and Shirley Williams, prominent political leaders in New York City and the United Kingdom.

Carl Degler, the only author other than Jill K. Conway to contribute to both volumes, wrote the concluding essay, entitled "On Rereading 'The Woman in America,'" for the 1987 issue. He had earlier emphasized the absence of any guiding principles that would reflect goals and commitments held by women. As he admitted in 1987, he had been completely wrong about this: what he called "ideology" – such as the beliefs and commitments of second-wave feminists – was just not yet visible in 1964.⁴

The one exception to Degler's generalization was Alice Rossi's 1964 essay entitled, with a nod to Jonathan Swift, "Equality Between the Sexes: An Immodest Proposal." This essay was widely cited and included in many syllabi for courses in women's studies in the succeeding decades. Rossi found "practically no feminist spark left among American women." There were "few Noras in contemporary society" because women seem to "have deluded themselves that the doll's house is large enough to find complete personal fulfillment within it." Rossi's argument

is more radical than Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, published a year earlier in 1963. Rossi's major thesis, so familiar now, was then rarely voiced: "that we need to reassert the claim to sex equality and to search for the means by which it can be achieved."⁵

Rossi's definition of sex equality was "a socially androgynous conception of the roles of men and women, in which they are equal and similar in such spheres as intellectual, artistic, political and occupational interests and participation, complementary only in spheres dictated by physiological differences between the sexes." She continues: "An androgynous conception of sex role means that each sex will cultivate some of the characteristics usually associated with the other in traditional sex role definitions. This means that tenderness and expressiveness should be cultivated in boys and socially approved in men," and that "achievement need, workmanship and constructive aggression should be cultivated in girls and that a female of any age would be similarly free to express these qualities." Rossi describes this goal as "the enlargement of the common ground on which men and women base their lives together by changing the social definitions of approved characteristics and behavior for both sexes."⁶

An author making the same point today might use the term "gender." In the early 1960s, however, the concept of gender was characterized by Talcott Parsons's views of the biological bases of the divisions of labor in society, not associated with cultural roles. By 1987, it was received wisdom that gender is a cultural, rather than a biological, phenomenon. Gender patterns were viewed as fluid, changing over time.

The introduction to the 1987 volume, written by Jill K. Conway, Susan C. Bourque, and Joan W. Scott, focuses specifically on this topic. The work of gender is "the production of culturally appropriate forms of male and female behavior," mediated by the various institutions of any society. The authors emphasize that "gender systems – regardless of historical time period – are binary systems that oppose male to female, masculine to feminine, usually not on an equal basis but in hierarchical order."⁷

Such a rigidly binary understanding of sex and gender stands in stark contrast to the concept of gender today. The fluidity that authors noted in 1987 has become much more pervasive, effacing the binary divisions between the sexes that have dominated human understanding for millennia. Notions of transgender identity, bisexuality, and other variations on the binary theme would have been alien to the authors (and almost all readers) of both volumes.

Several of the essays in this volume, and especially Anne Marie Goetz's, include thoughtful discussions of gender, but the prominence of gender fluidity in 2020 has led us not to use the word in the title of this volume. An issue of *Dædalus* on the theme of "gender" would be fascinating; but this is not that volume. Our interest is in the situation of *women* in the world today, and we are not concerned

with how any individual has come to the self-understanding and presentation of self as female. We are more interested in what has come to be known as “intersectionality,” the ways in which differences among human beings – including race, ethnicity, class, and sexual identification – both divide and unite women in all societies today.⁸

It is a blot on the history of women’s suffrage in the United States that the most prominent leaders of the effort failed to fight for minority women and men. Confronted with racism in the electorate and fearing that Southern states would refuse to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment, White suffragists retreated from promoting equality for Black Americans. The contributions of eloquent and dedicated Black suffragists including Frances Ellen Watkins Parker, Mary Church Terrell, and Mary Ann Shadd Cary were ignored or downplayed by White leaders such as Susan B. Anthony and Carrie Chapman Catt.⁹ This betrayal meant that Black people would have to wait until the civil rights movement of the 1960s for an explicit recognition that Jim Crow violated political equality for Black Americans as effectively as the absence of women’s voting rights had excluded women from politics.

Racism is deep in America, and it motivates public unwillingness to invest in education, health, and welfare in minority neighborhoods. But underinvestment is a vicious cycle that underpins continuing, long-term, and pernicious statistical discrimination against minorities in America. The pattern is well documented in employment: identical resumes with minority-sounding names are routinely given lower marks by potential employers.¹⁰ This parallels discrimination against prospective women applicants for many kinds of jobs.¹¹

Employers may assume that minorities are poorly educated, and many are, often because of fiscal neglect. Even individuals who transcend bad circumstances often face a wall of prejudice. Statistical discrimination, in which people judge individuals based on population averages, produces widespread implicit bias.¹² The legacies of racism as well as sexism continue to afflict minority women today, and thus they face a “double bind.” Severe statistical discrimination against Black men and mass incarceration of Black fathers has often left Black women to support their families. Black women entered the workforce earlier and in far larger numbers than their White counterparts, although typically in low-paying jobs such as housecleaning and childcare.¹³

The concept of intersectionality includes class as well as race, gender, and sexual identity. Another blot on the history of feminism, as Dara Strolovitch and others have pointed out, is the sustained blindness of privileged women in many countries to the women with fewer economic advantages who care for the children of the more privileged, cleaning their houses and doing other domestic duties so that their employers can do the professional work they have chosen.¹⁴ The “consciousness raising” that was the signature activity of second-wave feminism

did not include raising our consciousness about class cleavages. And as the split in the leadership of the Women's March organization attests, the impact of race remains a significant challenge to the women's movement in the United States today.¹⁵ Much remains to be done in both these areas before we can wholeheartedly celebrate progress in the movement for equality.

The essays in this collection address four themes: political participation, economic equality, changing social norms, and the path forward. As Dawn Teele points out in "Women & the Vote," the centrality of the act of voting in democratic governments means that women were not fully citizens in any democracy until the mid-nineteenth century. The struggle for suffrage around the world sparked what has been called the "first wave" of the modern feminist movement. The leadership of committed activists in the struggle for suffrage is a prime example of the power of women focused on the pursuit of a specific goal, although the delays in granting the vote provide evidence of the stubborn obstacles. Crucially, the suffragists built bridges to powerful men who were committed to their cause or saw ways to benefit from women allies in pursuing their own goals.

Teele reminds us of the tensions between the more radical women leaders, including Emmeline Pankhurst in the United Kingdom and Alice Paul in the United States, and the more cautious leaders, such as Millicent Fawcett and Carrie Chapman Catt. Both sides contributed to achieving the goal, not in direct collaboration but in the neat convergence of their strategies: the demands of radical women made the pleas of the centrists seem reasonable by comparison. As Teele notes, there are lessons here for the continuing struggle for equality: rights for women do not automatically emerge but must be fought for and preserved.

The fight for suffrage was carried out not only to give women the vote, but also to make it possible to stand for political office. Further obstacles must be surmounted before women have an equal share in representative government. As Joan Scott put it in her 1987 essay in *Daedalus*, referring to gender and race, "The difficulties experienced by the bearers of these marks of difference indicate that access is more than a matter of 'getting through the door.'"¹⁶ Kira Sanbonmatsu in her contribution to this volume, "Women's Underrepresentation in the U.S. Congress," discusses the current situation of women officeholders in the United States. Even though American women have voted at a higher rate than men for four decades and held the majority of seats in city councils and statewide offices in some areas, men still outnumber women significantly in the posts with the greatest power and prestige.

Sanbonmatsu identifies three types of factors that help explain this persistent gap in office-holding: social and psychological; political; and racial. Under the first heading, age-old stereotypes that associate leadership with masculinity and emphasize the traditional sexual division of labor continue to stand as obstacles.

However, once a woman decides to run for statewide office or Congress, she is about as likely as a male candidate to succeed. Persuading more women to stand for office is thus a crucial goal.

The striking increase in the number of women candidates for office in the 2018 U.S. midterm elections and the continuing efforts to influence local, state, and national politics have been disproportionately within the Democratic Party. Whatever their party affiliation, racial prejudice and stereotypes mean that Black and Latina women face an especially daunting challenge in being elected. However, as Sanbonmatsu points out, given their position at the intersection of two major categories – race and gender – minority women can sometimes hope to build broader coalitions than those available to White women or Black men.

Despite the uptick in 2018, only 24 percent of the members of the U.S. Congress today are female, compared with 30 to 50 percent in Western Europe, and even more in female parliamentary majorities in Rwanda, Cuba, and Bolivia. The proportional representation systems of Europe are conducive to gender parity because parties rather than individuals compete for office. By contrast, women are at a comparative disadvantage in weak party systems such as in the United States, where it is consequential to lose seniority on account of child-rearing and to possess weaker fundraising networks on account of lower-wage jobs.¹⁷

Rafaela Dancygier's essay, "Another Progressive's Dilemma: Immigration, the Radical Right & Threats to Gender Equality," offers a striking demonstration of the gap between left- and right-wing parties in support for women's interests. Radical right-wing parties in Europe are in most cases dominated by men, even though several prominent women head such organizations. Male leaders, particularly in parties appealing to Muslim voters, support policies that preserve traditional gender roles. Dancygier demonstrates that in this situation, left-wing parties that would like to show cosmopolitan values by putting ethnically diverse candidates on the ballot risk undermining another set of progressive values: those in support of gender equality.

Traditional right-wing parties rarely advance women as candidates for office. Dancygier shows that, where voter mobilization and turnout matter for parties' electoral success, the consequences are dire for women of minority groups with patriarchal norms. Party leaders steer clear of nominating women from these groups for party lists because they must rely on powerful community leaders, almost always men, to get out the vote.

Susan Chira offers a vivid account of the surge of women's political activism in the United States following the 2016 election, in what she calls "Donald Trump's Gift to Feminism: The Resistance." The intensive organizing, protesting, and recruiting of women candidates in the two years following Trump's election paved the way for the record-shattering participation of women in 2018. Although many leaders of this effort identified as Democrats, women of both parties, including

record numbers of women of color, were mobilized to back the cause. Nonetheless, partisan lines held strong for those Republican women who enthusiastically supported Trump.

As Chira points out, all women do not define their self-interest, or their political priorities, in the same ways. This was clear in the 1920s, when newly enfranchised women did not vote as a group for what might be interpreted as “the interests of women.” Women who might be expected to bond around experiencing harassment or discrimination in the workplace may give a higher priority to other aspects of their identities based on race, class, sexual identity, or religious affiliation.

Chira discusses some of the ways in which women wield power once they obtain it. As she puts it: “Nancy Pelosi has offered a master class in the patient acquisition and exuberant flexing of power.” Yet the stereotypes have not been dissolved: the run-up to the 2020 U.S. presidential election, with unprecedented numbers of women candidates, has revived the familiar dilemmas about how women running for office are described and assessed.

One of the most striking developments of the past few years has been the #MeToo movement, prompted in part by revulsion to Trump’s misogynistic statements. Chira – and, in another essay in this volume, Anita Jivani – reminds us that the movement had been launched a decade earlier by a Black woman, Tarana Burke, although it was a tweet by Alyssa Milano that generated immediate, mass exposure. The “outing” of abusive men and visibility accorded to stories of sexual assault have been unprecedented, and the reverberations have been profound. Several of the essays in this issue allude to the movement and its consequences.

The motivating energies of the #MeToo movement were foreshadowed in February 1990, when the *Des Moines Register* published a series of pathbreaking articles on rape. The crucial decision by the editor, Geneva Overholser, was to list the woman’s name. Instead of remaining silent and hiding her identity, as rape victims had traditionally done, Nancy Ziegenmeyer wanted her story of sexual assault told in detail and wanted that story to be broadly heard. The story also showed the terrible effects of the rape on the man convicted of the crime, a Black resident of Ziegenmeyer’s town with a wife and two small children, sentenced to a long term in prison. Jane Shorer’s series entitled “It Couldn’t Happen to Me: One Woman’s Story” won a Pulitzer Prize for the *Register*.

The #MeToo movement has had several unintended consequences. Some men are now reluctant to mentor women, lest their actions be misinterpreted; others use the movement as a convenient excuse for failing to support women employees. Either case makes it more difficult for women to receive a promotion. Men are sometimes wrongly identified as perpetrators of assault and suffer the consequences. Women who step forward, from Anita Hill to Christine Blasey Ford, may be broadly vilified and attacked. Even more basic, the norms of the #MeToo

movement can lead women to identify themselves as victims rather than promote a sense of empowerment and agency to find allies and fight back.

However, the advantages of the movement are also clear: women suffering from abuse and assault are more willing to name themselves and their accusers and receive support from other women around the world. Workplace organizations engage in training to make employees more conscious of the dimensions of sexual harassment and assault. And thoughtful men ponder the messages conveyed by the movement and reflect on behavior that may hurt women, behavior that a man may have taken for granted in the world around him.

The hard-fought victory for suffrage is surely worth celebrating. But equality at the ballot box did not translate into equality for women in the workplace. Black women confront pervasive prejudice; all women deal with social expectations that “a woman’s place is in the home.” Women who choose to work outside the home face significant barriers in many professions.

Neoclassical economists argue that discrimination against women will gradually disappear because it is inefficient to recruit and promote a mediocre man rather than a highly qualified woman.¹⁸ This argument ignores a familiar set of calculations that work in the opposite direction. When a young woman launches a career, employers as well as family members often expect that she will give highest priority to family and take time off when a child is born. A whole cascade of self-enforcing incentives follows from this initial actuarially based expectation, affecting an individual woman’s prospects regardless of whether she plans to have children.

Parents may not invest in their daughter’s professional readiness. Accepting for herself the appropriateness of the traditional roles, a young woman may lower her sights for employment or a career. The cycle of statistical discrimination is reinforced: employers would be right, on average, in placing their bets on hiring and promoting men. Ambitious and professionally committed young women are thus at a significant disadvantage in many fields compared with men of comparable ambition and training.

Not all women (or men) want to work outside the home. Especially where the option is a low-wage job requiring rote performance rather than the challenges of a profession, a parent may choose to take care of young children and find challenges and opportunities in the home, rather than the workplace. However, given the falling marriage rates and frequency of divorce, a woman caring for children who lacks job training or experience may face serious economic hardship. Multiple alternative patterns that would make it possible for each family to choose its own distinctive course are unavailable.

One obvious solution would be the widespread availability of high-quality, affordable childcare. Other policies associated with more employment opportunities for women include flexible hours, maternity and paternity leave, and the

ability to work from home. Yet the situation is more complex than it may at first appear. Legislation requiring firms to offer parental leave, without paying the costs of replacement labor for those taking the leave, potentially saddles firms with a big bill for hiring and promoting women, as long as women are more likely to take leave. Unless the government covers these costs, this kind of policy amounts to an “unfunded mandate” that reduces firms’ motivation to hire women. It is important to consider the unintended consequences of well-meaning policies.

Torben Iversen, Frances McCall Rosenbluth, and Øyvind Skorge illustrate this problem of unintended consequences in their essay “The Dilemma of Gender Equality: How Labor Market Regulation Divides Women by Class.” Men are generally expected to be able to work long hours and be available for assignments nights and weekends. And given that productivity in management roles – unlike productivity in some lower-wage jobs – is positively correlated with the hours you devote to the job, working long hours is one good way of showing that you are ready for the rigors of management. Yet these long hours disadvantage any woman (or man) who has significant responsibilities in the home. Limiting working hours is therefore generally seen as a good way to level the playing field for women.

Paradoxically, however, heavily regulated labor markets in Europe that impose restrictions on hours worked yield a smaller share of women in top management positions than less regulated economies such as the United States’. Such regulations do support women workers in lower-wage jobs, assuring them a better income and a limit on the hours they are expected to work. But the same restrictions make it more difficult for a woman to signal how productive she is capable of being. Although ambitious men are limited in the same way, they do not face the powerful stereotypes that many employers use in determining how valuable an employee will be. Men can signal their readiness for management in other ways, whereas for a woman, disadvantaged from the start in expectations about her likely future performance, there are few ways as effective as working longer hours to demonstrate her value to her employer.

This finding goes a long way toward explaining the surprising fact that there are lower proportions of women in management positions in the private sector in Scandinavia than there are in the United States, although the same Nordic countries have more women in political leadership positions and women there fare better in lower-wage jobs. Class is therefore relevant to this analysis as one form of intersectionality.

Jamila Michener and Margaret Brower show how race factors heavily into economic inequality in the United States in their contribution “What’s Policy Got to Do with It? Race, Gender & Economic Inequality in the United States.” Like Iversen, Rosenbluth, and Skorge, they focus on the impact of public policies. Well-designed public policies can improve the situation of disadvantaged groups; but such groups may be further disadvantaged by other policies that favor some

sectors of society over others. The concept of intersectionality grounds this analysis, showing the interlocking effects of race, ethnicity, class, and gender.

Michener and Brower remind us that the Social Security program initially excluded nine out of ten African American women because domestic and agricultural workers were not covered by the policies. Similarly, the provisions and implementation of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program, a crucial part of the U.S. social safety net, have yielded systematic racial disparity. Michener and Brower also show how the restructuring of the U.S. economy between 1970 and the 1990s disproportionately disadvantaged young Black women in both industrial and white-collar jobs. Policies such as disability insurance or unemployment compensation may affect Black, Latina, and White women differently because of other circumstances in their lives.

The essay by Sara Lowes, “Kinship Structure & Women: Evidence from Economics,” demonstrates the importance of economics to the status of women in a very different context: matrilineal and patrilineal societies in the Democratic Republic of Congo today. She shows how these two different forms of kinship have markedly different implications for women, even in ethnic groups in close geographical proximity that share similar economic situations.

Women in ethnic groups structured so that property and family identity are traced through the female line remain close to the menfolk in their family of origin. Brothers and uncles are important potential allies and supporters, whereas a woman in a patrilineal kin group is absorbed into her husband’s extended family. Lowes shows how this difference leads to significant disparities in the attitudes and behaviors of women in the two different systems. Women in patrilineal systems choose to compete less than men in a research setting. But in matrilineal systems, women are as likely to choose competition or take risky gambles as men.

Lowes finds that women in matrilineal structures have more self-confidence and generally report being happier than those in patrilineal societies. They are more likely to believe that women should have some autonomy in decision-making; they are less likely to believe domestic violence is justified, and experience less of it. Women in matrilineal societies are more likely to participate in politics and invest in their children. Lowes shows how cultural practices such as payment of bride-price and location of residence can help explain these disparities.

Anita Jivani shifts our focus to the future of women workers in the United States. In “Gender Lens to the Future of Work,” Jivani explores the likely impact on women of technological shifts that will shape the future of work. As she notes, women now graduate from college at higher rates than men, yet men are more likely to be hired into promising jobs and are much more likely to be recruited into management positions down the line. The fact that women are much less likely than men to be educated in the STEM disciplines becomes a particular liability in an age in which technological skills are central in a growing number of fields.

Jivani discusses various kinds of retraining and “upskilling” provided by companies these days, as well as the ways in which computer science and engineering can be made more appealing to girls and young women in high school and college. As she points out, however, if retraining is provided “offline” so that it requires time after work or extra hours, this becomes yet another burden on working women. The service and caretaking sectors, comprising mainly female workers and not requiring much in the way of technological skills, are growing today. But such jobs usually pay less, have less status in society, and offer fewer opportunities for advancement than those stemming from new technologies.

Jivani’s argument parallels that of Iversen, Rosenbluth, and Skorge in showing how job flexibility can be a two-edged sword in terms of the advancement of women. On the one hand, the opportunity provided by innovative technologies to work from home or to set one’s own hours can be very valuable for women (or men) juggling career and family. But the unpredictability of contingent work arrangements or the gig economy in financial outcomes, job security, and the reliability of work schedules for planning one’s time may make things harder for such workers. And the lack of “face time” may make the work less rewarding by removing stimulating contacts with colleagues and reduce opportunities for promotion and selection into management.

The social norms that order and channel our lives are changing, though slowly and unevenly. As Mala Htun and Francesca Jensenius recount in “Fighting Violence Against Women: Laws, Norms & Challenges Ahead,” women in societies across history and cultures remain vulnerable to diverse forms of physical threat including rape, intimate partner violence, sex trafficking, honor killings, and genital mutilation. Htun and Jensenius show how such behavior has been taken for granted in many societies and demonstrate the importance of tackling this profound problem as a violation of fundamental human rights.

As a result of reenvisioning violence against women in terms of rights in the 1960s and 1970s, laws have been passed in many societies that subject such behaviors to criminal penalties. Enforcing the laws and expanding the number of countries where such laws are in effect has been an uphill battle. The prevalence of violence against women reflects and reinforces women’s subordinate status. Yet pushing hard to eliminate this behavior with heavy penalties can lead to a backlash, including underreporting and concerns about violating other human rights. As Htun and Jensenius make clear, the goal should be to find an appropriate balance.

In “The New Competition in Multilateral Norm-Setting: Transnational Feminists & the Illiberal Backlash,” Anne Marie Goetz extends the topic of multinational norm-setting from human rights to feminist norms in other areas

including the structure of the family, caregiving, and the broadened understanding of the concept of gender. She notes that progress can easily be reversed through “norm-spoiling” by conservative leaders and activists opposed to changes in the traditional status of women. As Goetz points out, domestic political developments based on either religious or market fundamentalism can turn states that have historically been supportive of women’s advancement into norm-spoilers, including the United States, Brazil, some East European states, and Turkey. Others – Australia, New Zealand, the Nordic countries, most of the European Union, and South Africa – continue to be strong allies. International feminists today are also cultivating emerging champions, especially some smaller states in Africa and Latin America.

Progress in validating norms that support women reached a high point in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, but has receded since. Goetz discusses several tensions in international feminism in dealing with this situation and specifically calls out the pitfalls of a policy that identifies women as victims. Through a set of interviews with international feminist activists, she documents the evolution of strategies for the next steps of the work in 2020 and beyond, reminding us that although the United Nations has uniquely important convening power, other kinds of multinational organizations devoted to improving the status of women can bring interested groups together and set significant goals.

We might hope that women in rich democracies, and especially those in leadership positions in those countries, have created a new environment that protects women from assault. The evidence is not so sanguine, as Olle Folke, Johanna Rickne, Seiki Tanaka, and Yasuka Tateishi find in “Sexual Harassment of Women Leaders.” Drawing on surveys of women in the workplace in Sweden, Japan, and the United States, the authors show that women’s risk of harassment grows dramatically with the share of men in an occupation. Women entering male-dominated professions and workplaces are significantly more likely to face sexual harassment than in professions that employ more women. This increase may in part be probabilistic in the sense that a larger number of male coworkers increases the likelihood that some will be opportunistic harassers. It may also be that male-dominated workplaces are more prone toward a toxic culture of negative masculinity.

Folke, Rickne, Tanaka, and Tateishi turn up an even more startling and counterintuitive finding. In all three countries, female managers are *more likely* to suffer harassment than female workers. This is surprising because corporate leadership should, one might think, confer the power to report and thereby deter harassment. Instead, the authors find that many women leaders are disinclined to report harassment for fear that their competence will be judged negatively if they do so. Climbing the corporate ladder does not confer immunity from harassment; it increases its likelihood in relatively gender-equal Sweden, as well as in the United

States and Japan. This is grim evidence of the extent and severity of obstacles lying in the path of women who launch ambitious careers in the world of men.

Also slow to change are norms about parenting and the requirements of caregiving. Opportunities for women in management are becoming more available in many sectors, despite problems such as those identified in these essays; yet the expectations for parenting have also become more demanding, especially in middle- and upper-middle-class households. Several professions have become more “greedy,” requiring those who hold such jobs to work very long hours and be available to clients whenever they are needed. At the same time, super-parenting is also on the ascendancy.

In urban communities in the United States today, it is uncommon for children to play after school in the neighborhood with their friends; instead, someone (usually the mom) is expected to drive the kids to soccer, music lessons, baseball, or ballet several afternoons a week. For middle- to upper-class families, the process of preparing for college admission is increasingly competitive, fueling a perception that excelling in sports and other activities will help a student get into one of the most selective institutions. As a result, it has become even more difficult for today’s young families to balance work and family life.

In her essay on “Cooperation & Conflict in the Patriarchal Labyrinth,” Nancy Folbre argues that the establishment of gender-neutral laws can never, by itself, achieve gender equality. Contestation and bargaining are essential aspects of the struggle for equality. But women will always be at a disadvantage in such bargaining because of their greater commitment to reproduction, in the broadest sense of “the creation and maintenance of human capabilities.” Therefore, only the establishment of new institutions to replace those bequeathed to us by centuries of patriarchy can do the job.

Folbre uses the ancient term “labyrinth” to describe the patriarchal structures that channel and constrain the activities of women, as Alice Eagly and Linda Carli do in *Through the Labyrinth: The Truth about How Women Become Leaders* (2007).¹⁹ Folbre defines institutions as rules-based practices that encompass a large proportion of the settings in which humans engage in social activity. She sees capitalism, for example, as a “particular class-based institutional structure.” Her main interests are in the distributional aspects of these institutions, allocating goods and services to some members of society and not to others. She focuses particularly on caregiving, an essential human activity disproportionately carried out by women. This includes not only childcare, but also care for elderly parents and partners who become ill or disabled. As Folbre notes, “both patriarchal and capitalist institutional structures enable people in general and men in particular to free ride on caregivers.”

In such settings, partnerships with men offer women many economic and other benefits. However, these partnerships may also constrain a woman’s ability to

bargain for different arrangements and seek rewards outside the home. Norms that institutionalize such relationships favor those already in an advantaged position and reinforce inequality. Folbre discusses some of the broader implications of women's larger role in caregiving, including a different perspective on welfare provisions, which helps explain the gender gap in political preferences.

Folbre's argument points to the importance of building new structures to replace the age-old patriarchal labyrinth. But how can we accomplish this? The institutions that structure our lives are accretions of deeply embedded assumptions and practices. Norms and institutions are notoriously resistant to deliberate change, yet innovations are surely required if women are to proceed further along the path toward equality with men.

Feminist theorists and activists have wrestled with this difficulty across centuries. Audre Lorde famously articulated the dilemma with her warning that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house."²⁰ In the same spirit, many radical feminists have asserted that the instruments for social change now ready to hand – theorizing, political reform, coalition-building, revolution – are all part of patriarchy's toolkit and spoiled for the purpose of advancing the equality of women by their past use in contexts heavily dominated by men. Where, then, will we find tools to reconstruct a world of institutions structured by patriarchy to make it more commodious and welcoming for women as well as men?

The authors in this issue of *Dædalus* proceed from the assumption that our goal should not be to "dismantle the master's house" of patriarchy, even if such a thing were possible, but instead to renovate and open up that structure to create new pathways for women. Not all tools are spoiled by their past use, and many familiar strategies and practices for social change are valuable in the work for women's equality or can be made so with little alteration.

Taking the next steps toward equality for women will require removing stubborn impediments to the ability of women throughout the world to define and pursue a better life for themselves and their families. Men of course face obstacles also; it is a rare human being who can state and then achieve a set of life goals in an unimpeded fashion. But as this set of essays has shown, women face an *additional* set of obstacles that are distinctive to our sex.

How can these obstacles be tackled and removed as we work to advance the condition and prospects of all human beings? Many factors need to come together to make such a venture possible. In the final section of this volume, we consider three such factors.

First, a theoretical task: we need a clearer understanding of what "equality" means in this context to get a better sense of what is worth striving for. Throughout this volume, we have implicitly assumed that equality is a "good thing" and that it is appropriate that women should come closer to it. But what does this

mean, conceptually? Equality has for millennia been a fraught concept in political philosophy and practice, often posed as a value to be achieved for humanity, but notoriously defined in many different ways.

Catharine MacKinnon's essay "Equality" unpacks one of the most familiar definitions of this term, that offered by Aristotle: formal equality means treating likes alike, and unlikes unlike.²¹ The dilemma has always been to figure out in what respects two objects are alike or unlike, and then what counts as "like treatment." MacKinnon points out that women throughout history have been "unlike" men in multiple ways, most obviously in reproductive capacities and organs. With biology as background, applying the Aristotelian definition brands women as "unlike" men and therefore appropriately treated in dissimilar ways. And in practice this has meant treating females as inferior to males.

MacKinnon documents some of the settings in which women have been denied social privileges by this "unlikeness," including being prevented from undertaking certain kinds of work, or routinely paid less than men for doing the same job. She also explores how the definition plays out in laws concerning sexual harassment. "Women can be impoverished, stigmatized, violated with impunity, and otherwise disadvantaged and still be considered treated equally" under the Aristotelian rubric, because of our "unlikeness." Regarding women as "different from men" easily transforms women into the "other" and makes maleness the norm.

The root of the problem, as MacKinnon makes clear, is that this way of structuring the world has meant that "the core meaning of inequality" is "not difference, but hierarchy." One way to avoid this outcome is to reject Aristotle's definition. There are multiple definitions on offer, including "equality of opportunity" and equality of respect or dignity.²² Alternatively, we might retain Aristotle's definition but interpret the meaning of "likeness" more broadly and emphasize that women, like men, are human beings, and we should therefore be treated "alike" in fundamental ways. This leads to the human rights framework discussed in the earlier section.

MacKinnon provides a valuable alternative to the Aristotelian notion of formal equality with the concept of "substantive equality," articulated in her essays and speeches, and now formulated into legal systems in Canada and elsewhere.²³ One important consequence of her recasting of the concept is that sexual harassment law can more effectively address hierarchically imposed sexuality. This allows us to address "the vicious social imperative to exchange sex for survival, or its possibility," whether this occurs in workplace expectations of sexual favors in return for employment or promotion, or in its most glaring form, prostitution.

Having defined what we mean by equality, we must determine the best way to approach the goal. Collaboration with like-minded men is one crucial part of the work. The most radical versions of second-wave feminism saw men as the enemy, stereotyping all males as threats to the safety and personal development of

women. More reasoned and purposeful instances of feminism involve male feminists as advocates and costrategists. This was the approach of the first-wave feminism of the suffrage movement; it has consistently been chosen by most second-wave feminists as well.

Debora Spar argues that it needs to be our strategy today. “Good Fellows: Men’s Role & Reason in the Fight for Gender Equality” brings to our attention some of the male theorists who have argued for a broader understanding of the “nature” of women and activities appropriate for female individuals. Several ignored or undermined these claims in other parts of their work, including John Locke and Frederick Engels. Nonetheless, their occasional insights imply that they “understood women’s standing as a necessary component of a just political order.”

Spar discusses arguments that explain why men should work for equality between the sexes. One set focuses on issues that interest men. Including women in the workplace has demonstrably improved performance in numerous settings: greater economic opportunities for women lead to greater prosperity for all. Women today have far more power to control their own reproductive activities than has ever been true before, weakening substantially the age-old link between sex and procreation. Men who want children will need to relate to women in different terms, investing more in their happiness and prosperity than would often have been true in the past.

There are also arguments for including men based on the needs and ambitions of women, who are still a distinct minority in most situations where power lies. In order to get a seat at the table, struggling from the sidelines will only carry us so far. We need to form alliances with well-intentioned, well-placed men.

Spar offers several suggestions for how men may work as effective allies: learning what sexual harassment is and how to stop it, calling out those who engage in sexual violence or assault. Men can also sponsor women around them in the workplace, investing in them as colleagues. They can support policies that identify parenting as gender-neutral and affirm their own commitments to their families. This will involve recasting the traditional division of labor so that men take on more of the household chores.

Like Alice Rossi’s essay in 1964, Spar’s is a radical vision, arguing for a fundamental “reformulation” of the way gender roles are developed and conceived, not just rejiggering what we are doing now or expanding the size of the pie. And as she notes, such a transformation cannot be carried on by women alone. To make this possible, we all need to reenvision masculinity, learning more about the distinctive issues men face in our society, and how their identities and roles are changing.

The final essay in the collection explores a third factor we must keep in mind: female leadership and our deliberate use of power to attain our goals. Nannerl Keohane’s essay on “Women, Power & Leadership” notes that there are more women in positions of significant leadership today than would ever have been

true in the past. She identifies factors that help explain how this has happened in the past half-century or so, addresses some of the obstacles to further advancement, and concludes with a brief look at the future that we might envision.

As Keohane points out, despite “the stubborn linkage between leadership and maleness,” women have often proved capable of wielding power and authority in those few auspicious settings that have allowed for female leadership. She identifies several developments since the late nineteenth century that have made it possible for many more women to be leaders. Yet as this issue of *Dædalus* demonstrates, quite a few obstacles still impede a woman’s path. These include primary responsibility for childcare and homemaking; the paucity of family-friendly policies that would make it easier to combine career and family; gender stereotypes perpetuated in much of popular culture; and in some parts of the world, continuing practices that deny women education or opportunities outside the home.

Some observers question whether women are in fact ambitious for positions of authority and power. Keohane considers evidence that shows that few women are anxious to hold such posts, preferring to support male leaders or work behind the scenes. But there is ample evidence on the other side of this debate, some of it documented in this volume. In any case, we cannot know “whether women are ‘naturally’ interested in top leadership posts until women everywhere can attain such positions without making personal and family sacrifices radically disproportionate to those faced by men.” She concludes her essay by reflecting on the historic tensions between feminism and power, and how these might be transcended by creative feminist theorizing and shrewd, strategic activism.

Quoting one of the great feminist theorists and activists, Simone de Beauvoir, Keohane reminds us that it is very hard to anticipate clearly things we have not seen; we should be wary “lest our lack of imagination impoverish the future.”²⁴ Beauvoir was convinced that we can be optimistic about the prospects for “the free woman” who is “just being born.” Although “women’s possibilities” have in the past too often “been stifled and lost to humanity,” it is in the interest of all of us that each woman should be “left to take her own chances” and forge her own path.²⁵ This ringing peroration might serve as a watchword for our volume.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Women & the Vote

Dawn Langan Teele

There are four contexts in which women have won voting rights: as part of a universal reform for all citizens (15 percent of countries that granted women suffrage); imposed by a conqueror or colonial metropole (28 percent); gradually, after some men had been enfranchised (44 percent); or a hybrid category, often in the wake of re-democratization (14 percent). This essay outlines the global patterns of these reforms and argues that in a plurality of cases, where women's suffrage was gradual, enfranchisement depended on an electoral logic. Politicians subject to competition who believed women would, on average, support their party, supported reform. The suffrage movement provided information, and a potential mobilization apparatus, for politicians to draw on after the vote was extended. Together, both activism and electoral incentives were imperative for reform, providing important lessons for feminist mobilization today.

Voting, either by voice or by secret ballot, has been around for a long time. But the idea that all citizens living under democratic governments should have the right to vote, regardless of sex, was once radical for both its class politics and its gender politics. Although many autonomous European communities used voting to determine local policy, voting as a way to organize political contests in large nation-states really began to take hold in the late eighteenth century. With the exception of France – which decreed that all men could vote during its (hastily reversed) first revolution in 1789 – most of the first nations to adopt electoral governance extended the vote only to a select group of men. Typically, these men were from the landed elite and often had to be “householders,” meaning that they were the person legally responsible for others that resided in their household. Under these rules, sons who lived at home may not have been allowed an independent vote, and in some places, such as the United Kingdom and Sweden, possession of more than one domicile (for example, a country house) allowed male householders an additional vote for each place where their property was located. Since plural voting arrangements gave men with more property more official say, social class and sex determined early voting rights in a concrete way.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, many countries in Western Europe and the Americas experienced economic growth due to imperialism (which thrived on resource extraction and slave labor) and industrialization (which

thrived on primary goods from the new worlds and poorly paid labor of men, women, and children). In places where voting rights were tied to specific levels of wealth, or to educational or literacy requirements, men could gradually acquire voting rights as their incomes rose above the threshold or as they became educated.¹ Although there are a few exceptions, women, even if they met income or educational requirements, were typically unable to select their representatives or represent others in government.² By the mid-nineteenth century, the few places where women had previously cast ballots (like in New Jersey or present-day Québec) rewrote their rules to make explicit that only men were included. The illiberality of the so-called liberal regimes of the nineteenth century has thus been an important topic of study among gender scholars.³

Popular movements for men's and women's franchise rights began to percolate after the 1840s, and in 1848, Switzerland became the first country to grant a lasting manhood franchise (though, ironically, it was the last major European country to allow women to vote, in 1971, trailed only by Liechtenstein).⁴ In country after country the connection between property and "interest," that is, between land ownership and a philosophically decreed legitimate stake in governance, was shucked off in favor of a system of one man, one vote. Of course, most countries did not go so far as to say that *all* men could vote.⁵ Many countries that moved to a broad male franchise continued to exclude ethnic and racial minorities. And other groups that were considered dependents – like children and wards of the state, convicts, or the mentally ill – could easily have their voting rights taken away. By the logic of economic dependence, women, who were legal property of first their fathers and then their husbands, were necessarily excluded. In most countries, if a woman needed to contract or earn wages, the signature of a man was crucial. If a woman committed a crime, the men of her family could be held responsible. Although women were considered citizens (as jurisprudence and court cases in many countries established), their duties were often different, and their rights were circumscribed.⁶ But during the course of the nineteenth century, the gradual acceptance of women's legal personhood, and the collapse of the householder as the basis for male political participation, cleared the legal hurdles that had prevented women's enfranchisement. The rest, as they say, is political history.

This essay paints, with broad strokes, the global picture of women and the vote. I identify four different institutional settings in which women were enfranchised and outline the global and regional patterns of enfranchisement. After briefly summarizing the big debates about causes of women's suffrage, I argue that for the largest set of countries, electoral politics and women's activism were crucial determinants of the timing of women's enfranchisement. I make the case that feminists today have a lot to learn from the failures and successes of the women's suffrage activists. Far from being a mere bourgeois women's movement that serves to embarrass rather than inspire, it bears stressing that in most countries,

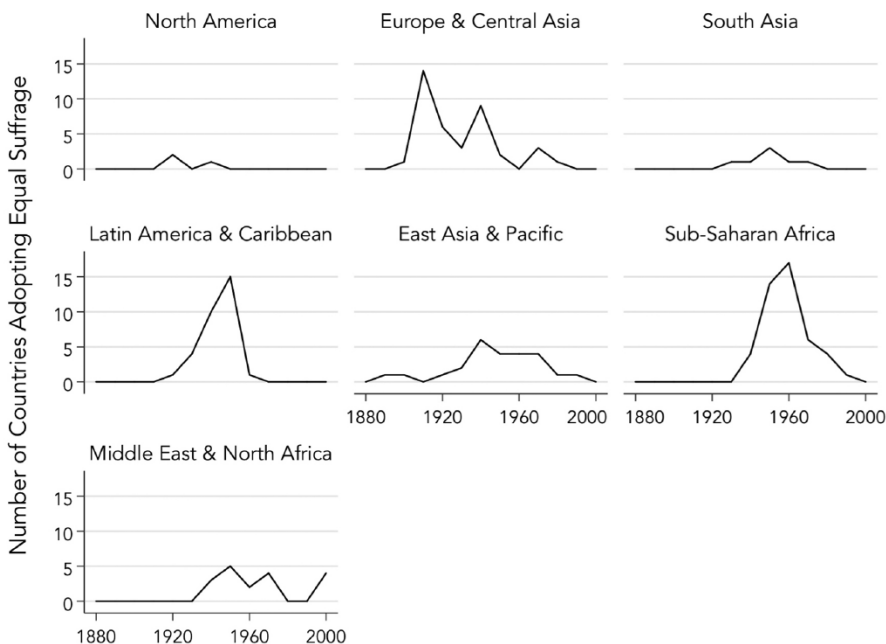
suffrage activism encompassed women from across the class and racial and ethnic spectra. The way that movement leaders at times successfully corralled these different sets of actors, all with different interests, and sometimes gave into baser impulses in their single-minded quest for the vote, are informative for the intersectional politics of the twenty-first century.

There are many levels of government in which elections can be used to pick leaders: from local school board elections, to municipal or state level elections, to national parliamentary or congressional elections, to supernational elections for the European Union. Although in most countries a single national body determines who has the right to vote at these different electoral levels, some federal countries – like the United States, Canada, Mexico, Germany, and Switzerland – allow subnational governments to delineate voting rules. Often, governments tested the waters of women’s electoral participation by allowing women to partake in local elections prior to extending national voting rights. These lower levels of enfranchisement may have been “concessions” to stave off more encompassing demands for gender equality, or they may have served a trial function, allowing politicians to observe and learn more about women’s political engagement and decision-making.

In addition to the multiple sites where voting occurs, voting rights can also take on multiple forms. “Limited male suffrage” rules allowed only some men to vote, while “manhood suffrage” allowed all men to participate. Many countries – even those that had granted manhood franchise – first experimented with women voters under limited rules, for example by allowing wealthy women to vote prior to opening the polls to all women (Norway and the United Kingdom). If the rules were applied in the same way for men and women, then we say that women had “equal suffrage.” If *all* adult men and women could vote, we call this “universal suffrage.” As several scholars have noted, countries in Latin America that used educational or literacy requirements to determine voting rights, or the United States, Canada, and South Africa, which maintained racial exclusions until the 1960s or later, allowed women to partake in equal suffrage throughout most of the twentieth century, but did not achieve universal suffrage until relatively recently.

In 1880, virtually no women had access to the electoral franchise at the national level. The first movers included the Isle of Man, which allowed women to vote for its independent legislature, the Tynwald, beginning in 1881; several states on America’s Western frontier (which had authority to grant suffrage at all levels of election); and the semisovereign governments in New Zealand and Australia. Beginning in the 1910s, equal suffrage rights – that is, women’s right to vote on the same terms as men – proceeded at a quick clip.⁷ By 1930, more than thirty countries had extended the equal franchise and, since 1950, every new consti-

Figure 1
Regional Patterns of Women’s Enfranchisement



Note: The y-axis plots the number of countries that extended equal suffrage—women’s suffrage on the same (sometimes exclusive) terms as men—in each decade. Overall, 177 countries are included. Source: Author’s calculations; and Dawn Teele, *Forging the Franchise: The Political Origins of the Women’s Vote* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2018).

tution that provided for male franchise rights has included women on the same terms.⁸

There were distinctive regional patterns of enfranchisement around the world. Figure 1 presents the number of countries in each region that extended equal suffrage to women by decade. The charts are organized by the earliest average regional date of enfranchisement to the latest. Since some regions (like North America) have fewer countries than other regions (like Europe and Central Asia), the lines will be lower for the whole region, but the figure highlights key moments of change.

The North American and European countries were the first to rapidly expand franchise rights to women, with high growth rates beginning in 1910 and again around the end of World War II (when France, Spain, and Italy enfranchised women). The early European surge includes Finland, the first to extend universal voting rights in 1911, and a large number of its neighboring countries that agglomerated into the Soviet Union at the end of World War I. Suffrage adoption

Figure 2
Paths to Women's Equal Suffrage by Region



Note: The x-axis shows the fraction of all the world's countries that are in each region. The y-axis shows the fraction of countries in each region that followed each path toward enfranchisement. Source: Dawn Teele, *Forging the Franchise: The Political Origins of the Women's Vote* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2018).

took off in East Asia and the Pacific, as well as the Latin American countries, in the 1940s. Nearly every Latin American country had granted women voting rights by the 1960s, but several countries in East Asia and the Pacific held out until later in the century.⁹ Sub-Saharan Africa saw a large expansion in women's rights around the 1950s, which peaked with the massive decolonization efforts and shift toward independence in the 1960s.

In addition to regional diversity in the timing of enfranchisement, there were several different pathways that countries took to women's suffrage: universal, imposed, gradualist, and hybrid (see Figure 2).¹⁰ In the universalist path, countries granted universal franchise to men and women at the same time, the first time suffrage was extended. The imposed route occurred when a colonial metropole decreed women's suffrage in its territories, or when suffrage was insisted upon by an occupying power, for example at the end of a war. The gradualist route implies an

alternation between men's and women's inclusion. There are several variants of this, but typically countries went from limited male, to manhood, to universal suffrage.¹¹ Finally, there are hybrid cases where countries may have allowed some men to vote early on, and then a new constitution implemented after regime change (or after periods of dictatorship) allowed for universal suffrage. In the world as a whole, universal franchise was implemented in 15 percent of countries that granted women's suffrage, while the hybrid category applies to 14 percent of countries. Imposed suffrage was second most common (28 percent), while gradual enfranchisement was the most common pathway (about 44 percent of today's countries).

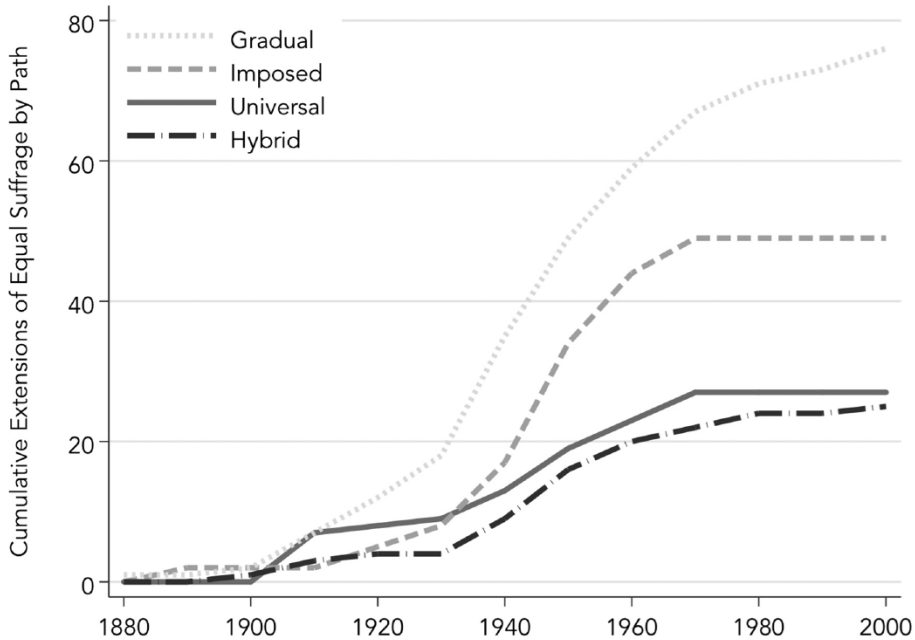
Figure 2 reveals striking differences in the pathway to enfranchisement by region. For example, the most common route to enfranchisement in East Asia and the Pacific countries, and nations in Sub-Saharan Africa, which were heavily colonized, was by imposition. After independence, many of the later democratizers in East Asia and the Pacific, as well as in South Asia, went for universal extension in one fell swoop. We see too that the gradualist path dominated North America, Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa, and Europe and Central Asia, a pattern that is related to early moves in some of these countries toward limited male franchise rights. The varying regional patterns of enfranchisement hint at the notion that women's enfranchisement was related to the conditions of imperialism and the overall trajectory of democratization within countries, although we know a lot less about imposed suffrage than we should.

Figure 3 provides a final way of visualizing the path toward suffrage over time, demonstrating the historical prominence of the gradualist path – most countries that adopted suffrage for women had already extended some form of voting rights to men – and of the imposed path, suggesting that once the first democracies adopted suffrage they were not shy to impose these values on the world at large, particularly in their imperial outposts.

Over the years, there have been many social-scientific arguments forwarded to explain variations in the timing of women's suffrage, including that women won voting rights because of their participation in war, that enfranchisement happened naturally as a result of industrialization, that it was an apolitical gift when the stakes were low, or that it stemmed from men's political needs.¹² Typically, these theories evolved from thinking about cross-national differences in the timing of suffrage, rather than from thinking about specific cases of women's enfranchisement.

Historians and most feminist political scientists and sociologists who have studied suffrage extensions in specific cases give more credence to the importance of women's mobilization for the vote, both within domestic movements and within international feminist organizations.¹³ What I suggest in my recent book *Forging the Franchise: The Political Origins of the Women's Vote* is that while there

Figure 3
The Evolution of Equal Suffrage around the World



Note: The y-axis shows the cumulative number of countries that had extended equal suffrage to women (sometimes with exclusions) in each decade in each pathway. Gradual cases gave some men voting rights before women. Imposed cases were often colonies or countries defeated in war. Universal cases extended the vote at the same time to men and women. And hybrid cases are combinations of the other pathways. Source: Dawn Teele, *Forging the Franchise: The Political Origins of the Women's Vote* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2018).

may not be a unified cause of women's enfranchisement, specific logics may have emerged within particular pathways. I focus on explaining gradualist cases: that is, women's enfranchisement in a context where some men had already attained the right to vote. In this set of countries, I argue that heightened electoral competition could provide an incentive for politicians to reform electoral law. When the strategy of the women's movement provided information consistent with certain parties' electoral needs – in other words, when some parties believed they would benefit electorally from the votes of mobilized women – electoral competition, in combination with a strong movement, produced reform.¹⁴

The electoral argument helps to make sense of a series of puzzles that crop up in country-specific accounts of enfranchisement related to the timing of reform and the political alliances that brought reform to bear. For example, why did some

countries resist reform in one year but then accept it the very following legislative session? Well, this could happen if an election was on the horizon and one of the vulnerable but powerful parties hoped to win with women's votes (such was the case with the Liberal Party in Québec in 1939).¹⁵

In addition to making sense of quick reversals regarding suffrage legislation, the electoral politics argument also helps to combat the idea that conservative ideology was what prevented women from winning the vote. Indeed, if we look at which party was in power when suffrage was granted in thirty-two countries from Europe, Latin America, and Central Asia, we find that the ideology of the head of state was nearly evenly split between left, center, and right.¹⁶ That is to say, conservatives were just as likely to preside over suffrage reform as centrist liberals or as far leftists. (In Latin America, however, where the suffrage extensions occurred slightly later than in Europe, a leftist was the head of state in seven of the twelve countries for which I have information.) Why would conservatives support women's votes? Several electoral reasons emerge, including that they might try to put their stamp on a reform they knew was coming down the line so as not to lose out in the next election (the strategy of the conservatives in federal Canada in 1917–1918). But perhaps more important, in many countries, conservatives thought they could win the lion's share of women's votes (as in Chile, where the Catholic Church was believed to have, in the disfranchised women's population, a "feminine reserve").¹⁷

Finally, electoral competition also helps to explain why many of the initial extensions of voting rights to women were limited: that is, on different terms than men, often requiring women to be wealthier or older than men had to be to vote. Such was the case in the first Norwegian suffrage extension in 1907 to only propertied women, and the 1918 reform in the United Kingdom that limited the vote to wealthier, older women.¹⁸ When conservative parties could be forced to agree to reform, they would only do so under conditions that they thought would not put them at an extreme disadvantage. This often included demanding that only women who were potential supporters of their party (and hence would act as a force for stability) be included.

The age-old question for scholars of suffrage is: did the women suffragists matter and to what extent? It can be difficult to argue that women were responsible for their own political emancipation because women did not take up arms against the state in order to win the vote, but instead had to earn it in the context of electoral and legislative politics. This can make it seem like women were merely there to march in flowing gowns for a public that had already changed its mind about women's rights. But to the extent that we can say *any* social movement mattered for securing whatever particular right, it is definitely safe to say that the suffrage movement was important.

Scholars disagree about the way in which the movement mattered, offering explanations like the use of public demonstrations (in the United Kingdom and Switzerland), the collection of large-scale petitions (in New Zealand, the United States, and Sweden), the pressure of the international feminist movement (in Latin America), the deployment of insider tactics like corralling legislators and log-rolling, changing public opinion, or doing favors for politicians or campaigns. Many scholars have noted that the places with the largest movements were in the first wave of enfranchising countries, and that the use of public tactics like holding rallies and marches was correlated with early enfranchisement.¹⁹ The late enfranchisement in places like France and Switzerland and in many Latin American countries are thus partly attributable to the more circumspect actions of wishful suffragists.

Yet the fact that male legislators in elected chambers presided over reforms has made it difficult to claim that any movement was *decisive*. This is especially because good cross-national data on the size of the suffrage movement over time do not exist, and because it is clear that a few countries extended the vote to women in the absence of a massive local push by women for these rights (for example, in Turkey). Hence the exact role the women's movement played for winning suffrage is part of a scholarly dispute. A key intuition from political economy, though, is that powerful groups do not concede power to others without some impetus, and women's mobilization was the crucial impetus that put suffrage on the political agenda locally, nationally, and internationally.

This is not to say that women who wanted the vote came together harmoniously to forward their agenda. In fact, the internal and external tensions between suffragists and would-be suffragists across class and racial groups have been the subject of many excellent monographs in history and political science. Although in the United States the racial conflict was a particularly pernicious cleavage that affected the nature of the suffrage movement, it is important to understand that each country had its own cleavage. In France, the cleavage was related to church-state relations and republicanism; in parts of Latin America, it was about the Church's role in fledgling democracies and conflicts over regime type;²⁰ in Switzerland, the linguistic and cantonal cleavage reigned supreme; and in many of the African countries, the cleavage was racial and ethnic, between colonizers and colonized. When women from the more privileged classes were very distant – ideologically and materially – from the majority of women, the difficulties of forming a cross-cleavage alliance among disparate groups of women loomed large.

My contention is that the size of the movement in any given country was related to the interests of would-be movement leaders. Many of the countries that extended the vote later in the twentieth century had high degrees of inequality throughout the 1900s. In these places, the types of women who may have had the education, initiative, and resources to commit to a long-term social campaign

were often more concerned with maintaining their class privilege, or with preserving their preferred form of government, than with casting a ballot.²¹ In some countries, commitment to other political goals, like socialism and anti-imperialism, crowded out suffrage mobilization among otherwise feminist activists. Thus, the size of the movement can itself be viewed as a response to local level political and economic conditions and the desires of would-be suffragists. Viewed in this way, it becomes possible to understand some of the tensions that have been well documented between women's organizations, such as why massive antisuffrage organizations emerged in many countries (with women in charge of the political campaign against women's involvement in politics). It also helps to understand why, in contexts where male suffrage had already reached manhood status, women's suffrage groups were often less well organized than when there was a limited male suffrage: suffrage extensions would have much more profound consequences when they had to apply to all women, and often representatives from the upper class were unwilling to take that bargain.

Finally it is important to acknowledge that although much of the pressure for the first women's suffrage extensions was internally derived (albeit with early and fruitful friendships and correspondences of women hailing from different nation-states), in many cases, the international suffrage movement proved important both for inspiring and motivating local political suffragists, and for exerting a fair amount of moral suasion on male politicians. Although national level politics were still instrumental for determining the exact coalitions that supported women's votes and the timing of the enfranchisement, the international democratic consensus exerted considerable normative pull in the post-World War II era in the direction of minimally equal political rights for women.²²

What can we learn from the suffrage movement that can inform the feminist politics of this new century? The first key lesson is that women did not win the vote primarily by waiting for men to wake up and realize the justice of the claim, but instead had to fight – both meticulously behind the scenes as well as loudly in public – to be taken seriously. Although notable men did aid suffrage in many contexts, the main protagonists in this movement, and all of its true leaders, were women.²³ For those women, the activities that they engaged in were pushing the boundaries of the time, even if the mainstream suffragists were less avant-garde than some of the far-left feminists.

Second, the class and racial politics that cleaved through the movements, many of which may seem like an embarrassing stain on a momentous achievement, actually provide analytic leverage for understanding the size and scope of social movements today. The fact that many of the leaders of the suffrage movement were upper-middle class does not imply that the movement was won by and for the bourgeois. To the contrary, the integration of women from all walks of life,

and particularly the activism of immigrants and the working classes, were crucial in most countries, and particularly in those with the two longest and most sustained movements, the United States and the United Kingdom.²⁴ But what the suffragists had that feminists today have not found is a single issue to guide their fundraising and focus. Although suffragists wanted policy changes in a host of arenas, coalescing on a single issue may have provided the momentum for their sustained social movement. It also allowed many of the largest umbrella organizations to claim nonpartisanship and therefore court women from many camps. The feminist impulse today does not seem to have such a unifying impulse, and perhaps too few efforts are made to coordinate with women from very different ideological traditions.

Yet even if feminists can find an issue to agree upon, this does not mean that dissent from the radical fringe should be suppressed. Because leaders of the more mainstream movement often decried the tactics of the radical fringes – such as with the steady Millicent Fawcett and the pugnacious Emmeline Pankhurst in the United Kingdom, or the formidable Carrie Catt and the brazen Alice Paul in the United States – historians (and the popular arts) have and will continue to have a lot to say about the seeming “cat fights” between suffragists and suffrage organizations. But the radicals may have served an important function for the success of the mainstream movement. The existence of a militant wing allowed the moderates access to the press and to politicians under the mantle of respectability. This increased the status and sway of the suffrage centrists. In this sense, if the radical fringe allowed the demands of the centrists to be viewed more favorably by men in power, both wings were integral to the victory.

Third, although women did not form a solid voting bloc in most countries, it bears stressing that many major changes in women’s rights were achieved along the road to suffrage.²⁵ Many of the same women who fought for suffrage argued for the right to own property, to transact commercially, to have intellectual rights to their own inventions, to safe working conditions, to maintain their citizenship even if they married foreigners, and to birth control. These legislative achievements should be viewed as part of the legacy of the suffrage movement. What these lessons imply for politics today is that women’s rights are not just normal goods that emerge automatically over time, but rather are fragile resources that have to be demanded, tended, and defended. As the saying goes, well-behaved women have rarely made history.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ On earning-into the voting population in the United States, see David A. Bateman, *Disfranchising Democracy: Constructing the Electorate in the United States, the United Kingdom, and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). On literacy requirements and the vote, see Stanley L. Engerman and Kenneth L. Sokoloff, "The Evolution of Suffrage Institutions in the New World," *The Journal of Economic History* 65 (4) (2005): 891–921.
- ² Electoral laws often differentiated between "active" suffrage—the right to vote—and "passive" suffrage—the right to hold office. Most countries extended both to women at the same time, but there are some exceptions like Belgium, the Netherlands, and Nepal; see Dawn Teele, *Forging the Franchise: The Political Origins of the Women's Vote* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2018), 193, note 52. Although typically women could not vote at all until the twentieth century, John Markoff suggests a few exceptions: in medieval and early modern Europe, communities in which local rules were decided by vote often allowed women who owned property to partake in decision-making. In colonial times, New World enclaves saw voting by property owning, tax-paying women and widows in Massachusetts, New Jersey, and parts of present-day Québec. John Markoff, "Margins, Centers, and Democracy: The Paradigmatic History of Women's Suffrage," *Signs* 29 (11) (2003): 85–116.
- ³ Important works in political theory include those by Susan Okin, who famously argued that the assumption of the "private sphere" of women's lives meant that women were only partially individualized in liberal societies. The ideological constraints of liberal thought have put feminists in a constant tension as to whether to pursue policies that accept difference between men and women or to argue for equality tout court. Nancy F. Cott, "Marriage and Women's Citizenship in the United States, 1830–1934," *The American Historical Review* 103 (5) (1998): 1440–1474. And as Eileen McDonagh shows, states that clung longer to hereditary monarchical institutions often ended up being more inclusive toward women in politics due to their emphasis on kinship networks. Eileen McDonagh, "Political Citizenship and Democratization: The Gender Paradox," *American Political Science Review* 96 (3) (2002): 535–552.
- ⁴ For an account of the Swiss suffrage movement, see Lee Ann Banaszak, *Why Movements Succeed or Fail: Opportunity, Culture, and the Struggle for Women's Suffrage* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).
- ⁵ For a theoretical discussion of the ethics of disenfranchisement of various groups, see Claudio López-Guerra, *Democracy and Disenfranchisement: The Morality of Electoral Exclusions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
- ⁶ Whether women were citizens and whether citizens had voting rights was adjudicated in several countries. For example, the Chilean Civil Code from the nineteenth century established that the masculine noun *ciudadano* applied to both men and women, but women who tried to register to vote in 1875 were prevented from doing so. Asunción

Lavrin, *Women, Feminism, and Social Change in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, 1890–1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 288. Note that in some countries, women who married foreigners often lost their citizenship rights, though not so for men (this was the case in the United States until the Cable Act in 1922). See Cott, “Marriage and Women’s Citizenship in the United States.” Women in many Latin American countries including Argentina, Paraguay, Chile, and Uruguay had better nationality rights than women in the United States. International feminists tried to standardize the laws during the Hague Codification Conference of 1930. See Katherine M. Marino, *Feminism for the Americas: The Making of an International Human Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019).

⁷ Australia excluded aboriginals in its initial constitution, and the U.S. states, via Jim Crow, excluded most Black people from voting, hence both are cases of equal suffrage. Since New Zealand’s colonists included Maori voters among their electorate, the 1893 reform was universal.

⁸ The global norm change after the 1950s could be due to the 1945 Equal Rights Section of the UN Charter and the UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. As Marino describes in *Feminism for the Americas*, the UN declarations were important for cementing the legitimacy of women’s rights, including suffrage, in internationalist circles in Latin America. On diffusion, see Francisco O. Ramirez, Yasemin Soysal, and Suzanne Shanahan, “The Changing Logic of Political Citizenship: Cross-National Acquisition of Women’s Suffrage Rights, 1890 to 1990,” *American Sociological Review* 62 (5) (1997): 735–745.

⁹ On the literacy and property requirements that remained in Latin America after the 1960s, refer to Engerman and Sokoloff, “The Evolution of Suffrage Institutions in the New World.”

¹⁰ These are my categories; see Teele, *Forging the Franchise*, introduction. But another way to conceptualize the pattern is whether the reforms were “joint track” with the male working classes or piecemeal, with wealthier women included before the masses; see Blanca Rodríguez-Ruiz and Ruth Rubio Marín, *The Struggle for Female Suffrage in Europe: Voting to Become Citizens* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), introduction.

¹¹ Norway is one of the few places that had manhood franchise (1898) but that limited the women’s vote, at first to property holders in 1907. By 1913, the contradiction was eliminated and universal franchise instantiated.

¹² For an in-depth discussion of social scientific theories of women’s enfranchisement, see Teele, *Forging the Franchise*, chap. 2. On the role of war, see Daniel L. Hicks, “War and the Political Zeitgeist: Evidence from the History of Female Suffrage,” *European Journal of Political Economy* 31 (C) (2013): 60–81. Hicks finds that the correlation between war and suffrage is driven by European countries and World War II (*ibid.*, 67).

¹³ Banaszak, *Why Movements Succeed or Fail*. See also Ellen DuBois, “Woman Suffrage and the Left: An International Socialist-Feminist Perspective,” *New Left Review* 186 (1996): 20–45; and Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle: The Woman’s Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1995). For broad exposure to movements for suffrage around the world, there are a few great edited volumes that feature chapters by country experts. On Australasia and the Pacific, see Louise Edwards and Mina Roces, eds., *Women’s Suffrage in Asia: Gender, Nationalism and Democracy* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2006), 127–151; and Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan, eds., *Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives* (New York: New

- York University Press, 1994). On Western Europe, see Rodríguez-Ruiz and Marín, *The Struggle for Female Suffrage in Europe*. And for work on a variety of countries, including some in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, see Irma Sulkunen, Seija-Leena Nevala-Nurmi, and Pirjo Markkola, eds., *Suffrage, Gender and Citizenship: International Perspectives on Parliamentary Reforms* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008). To read about internationalism in the suffrage movement, especially in Latin America, see Ann Towns, "The Inter-American Commission of Women and Women's Suffrage, 1920–1945," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 42 (4) (2010): 779–807.
- ¹⁴ Recently some government scholars have argued that instead of looking to the women's movement for information about how women will vote, politicians in New Zealand used the heuristic of women's dispositions to infer women's future political loyalties. Mariel J. Barnes, "Divining Disposition: The Role of Elite Beliefs and Gender Narratives in Women's Suffrage," *Comparative Politics* (forthcoming).
- ¹⁵ Sylvie D'Augerot-Arend, "Why So Late? Cultural and Institutional Factors in the Granting of Québec and French Women's Political Rights," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 26 (1) (1991): 138–165; and Manon Tremblay, *Québec Women and Legislative Representation*, trans. Käthe Roth (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010).
- ¹⁶ These figures are calculated for thirty-two countries using Thomas Brambor, Johannes Lindvall, and Annika Stjernquist, "The Ideology of Heads of Government, 1870–2012," Codebook, Version 1.5 (Lund: Department of Political Science, Lund University, 2017).
- ¹⁷ Joan Sangster, *One Hundred Years of Struggle: The History of Women and the Vote in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018). On Chile and the Catholic Church, see Erika Maza Valenzuela, "Catolicismo, anticlericalismo y la extensión del sufragio a la mujer en Chile," *Estudios Públicos* 58 (1995): 137–197.
- ¹⁸ Key sources on the suffrage movement in the United Kingdom include Sandra Stanley Holton, *Feminism and Democracy: Women's Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain, 1900–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Martin Pugh, *The March of the Women: A Revisionist Analysis of the Campaign for Women's Suffrage, 1866–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Susan Kingsley Kent, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860–1914* (Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2005).
- ¹⁹ Banaszak, *Why Movements Succeed or Fail*; Patricia Grimshaw, *Women's Suffrage in New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1972); and Holly J. McCammon, Karen E. Campbell, Ellen M. Granberg, and Christine Mowery, "How Movements Win: Gendered Opportunity Structures and U.S. Women's Suffrage Movements, 1866 to 1919," *American Sociological Review* 66 (1) (2001): 49–70.
- ²⁰ See Isabel Castillo, "Explaining Female Suffrage Reform in Latin America: Motivation Alignment, Cleavages, and Timing of Reform" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 2019).
- ²¹ In Teele, *Forging the Franchise*, I present evidence of the ambivalence about the vote for feminists in the United States, France, and the United Kingdom, but other authors have noted similar patterns elsewhere. For example, in 1922, a prominent Chilean feminist and newly minted suffragist Amanda Labarca wrote to the famous Uruguayan feminist Paulina Luisi expressing concerns that women would vote according to the will of Church leaders: "Would the vote of women in Chile favor the liberal evolution of the country or would it delay it by increasing the numbers and the power of the clerical-conservative party?" Cited in Corinne A. Pernet, "Chilean Feminists, the International Women's Movement, and Suffrage, 1915–1950," *Pacific Historical Review* 69 (4) (2000):

672. Pernet attributes the “slow pace” of Chilean women’s activism for the vote to Larbarca’s concerns.
- ²² The scholarship on the international women’s movements and collaborations is quite well developed. An early text is Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women’s Movement* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997). In addition, see Towns, “The Inter-American Commission of Women and Women’s Suffrage”; and Margaret H. McFadden, *Golden Cables of Sympathy: The Transatlantic Sources of Nineteenth-Century Feminism* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015). For a devastating account of the imperialism of U.S. suffragists in the Americas writ large (which also highlights Latin American feminists’ contributions to antifascist movements and to human rights in the international sphere), see Marino, *Feminism for the Americas*.
- ²³ Brooke Kroeger, *The Suffragents: How Women Used Men to Get the Vote* (New York: SUNY Press, 2017); and Ben Griffin, *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain: Masculinity, Political Culture and the Struggle for Women’s Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- ²⁴ For instance, see Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Vintage, 1981); Laura E. Free, *Suffrage Reconstructed: Gender, Race, and Voting Rights in the Civil War Era* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2015); Ellen Carol DuBois, “Working Women, Class Relations, and Suffrage Militance: Harriot Stanton Blatch and the New York Woman Suffrage Movement, 1894–1909,” *The Journal of American History* 74 (1) (1987): 34–58; Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*; Pugh, *The March of the Women*; Susan E. Marshall, *Splintered Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Campaign against Woman Suffrage* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997); and Susan Englander, *Class Conflict and Coalition in the California Woman Suffrage Movement, 1907–1912: The San Francisco Wage Earners’ Suffrage League* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992).
- ²⁵ J. Kevin Corder and Christina Wolbrecht, *Counting Women’s Ballots* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); and Anna L. Harvey, “The Political Consequences of Suffrage Exclusion: Organizations, Institutions, and the Electoral Mobilization of Women,” *Social Science History* 20 (1) (1996).

Women's Underrepresentation in the U.S. Congress

Kira Sanbonmatsu

Women's elective office-holding stands at an all-time high in the United States. Yet women are far from parity. This underrepresentation is surprising given that more women than men vote. Gender – as a feature of both society and politics – has always worked alongside race to determine which groups possess the formal and informal resources and opportunities critical for winning elective office. But how gender connects to office-holding is not fixed; instead, women's access to office has been shaped by changes in law, policy, and social roles, as well as the activities and strategies of social movement actors, political parties, and organizations. In the contemporary period, data from the Center for American Women and Politics reveal that while women are a growing share of Democratic officeholders, they are a declining share of Republican officeholders. Thus, in an era of heightened partisan polarization, women's situation as candidates increasingly depends on party.

Elective officeholders in the United States have always been majority male. This gender imbalance in politics may seem unremarkable and unworthy of investigation precisely because it appears to be a permanent feature of the political system. But a closer inspection reveals that the underrepresentation of women is, in fact, quite puzzling.

American women vote at a higher rate than men and have for four decades.¹ Women's majority status as voters should dispel the idea that women are somehow less political than men. If one looks subnationally, variation in the level of women's office-holding becomes apparent. Indeed, women in 2019 held a majority of seats in the Nevada Legislature, the first time that women constituted a state legislative majority in U.S. history. At moments, in some places, women have outnumbered men as members of city councils and as statewide officials. Several states have been represented by two women U.S. senators simultaneously. And a woman – Nancy Pelosi – presides over the U.S. House of Representatives as speaker, which represents a return to the position she held from 2007 to 2011; she is third in line to the presidency.

Still, American women are far from parity with respect to elective office-holding. The ideals of American democracy may not require that representa-

tives precisely mirror the public demographically, but the quality of the representational relationship has been intimately connected to women's descriptive representation – or the lack thereof.² While scholars may assume that social and economic equality will give rise to political equality, the reverse may be true: women's political equality may be needed in order to achieve equality in other domains.³

The challenges American women face in politics are partly structural. The United States has typically lagged behind other nations with respect to women's representation because of its single-member congressional districts. In 2019, women constituted 23.7 percent of Congress compared with a global average of 24 percent.⁴ The United States lacks a statute or constitutional provision for a gender quota for candidates or officeholders. Quotas are increasingly popular around the globe with half of all countries using quotas in elections for parliament. Without a proportional representation system or gender quotas, the United States stands apart from most industrialized democracies.⁵

The two-party system and absence of term limits advantage incumbent members of the U.S. Congress, incumbents who have, historically, been disproportionately men.⁶ As a result, women have been most likely to enter Congress after winning open-seat contests. These electoral rules mean that most election cycles bring few opportunities for new candidates. Women congressional candidates are partisans; they run on the party label and must secure the party's nomination in order to compete in the general election. But they do so without the benefit of a party quota or other mechanism for creating a more gender-balanced institution. American politics and government also differ from other democracies in the extent of their social provision; a more generous U.S. welfare state might create greater public interest in maternal traits and therefore in women political leaders.⁷

With this backdrop of structural challenges in mind, I examine scholarly accounts of how social and political factors shape women's presence in the U.S. Congress. I consider how women's opportunities for political participation and influence in the United States have been contingent on race and ethnicity. Scholars of women's election to office have become more attentive to inequalities among women and especially the intersection of gender and racial categories, and intersectional theorists, including Kimberlé Crenshaw, have identified the inadequacy of thinking about gender or race alone.⁸ Accounts of minority or female office-holding that fail to adopt an intersectional lens are likely to be partial or incorrect.

The relationship between gender and congressional office-holding is not fixed; instead, we observe change over time in the presence of women and variation across the two major parties. In other words, while male dominance of congressional elections has deep roots, it is neither natural nor inevitable.

Running for office – and especially congressional office – has been a predominantly male enterprise for most of American history. Since the founding, gender and race together have shaped legal access to citizenship, voting rights, and elective office.⁹ The Civil War and subsequent federal amendments ended slavery and conferred citizenship on former slaves, but the right to vote and hold office was only extended to Black men. Their office-holding experiences were also short-lived: the Jim Crow system, violence, and new legal restrictions would end Black men's election to Congress from the South. While the first White woman, Jeannette Rankin, entered Congress in 1917 – prior to the extension of suffrage to women by constitutional amendment in 1920 – it would take another half-century with the election of Patsy Takemoto Mink in 1965 for the first woman of color to be seated in Congress. Racial discrimination and voter suppression limited the ability of people of color to vote, meaning that not all women had access to the franchise after 1920. And race and ethnicity continue to shape the ability of people of color – women as well as men – to compete for elective office.¹⁰

For the early part of the twentieth century, it was rare for women to reach Congress, except as the widow of a sitting member who died in office.¹¹ The exclusion of women from the vote forestalled their opportunities for candidacy and office-holding, even after suffrage.¹²

Women have confronted not only formal legal barriers such as being prohibited from voting and holding office, but also other barriers related to men's greater access to and accumulation of informal social, educational, and economic credentials. Gender roles in society, the sexual division of labor, and racial and ethnic inequalities have combined to advantage White men in politics. The “social eligibility pool” of those individuals believed to hold the informal qualifications for office has largely been male.¹³

Meanwhile, racially polarized voting, stereotypes, and gatekeeper skepticism have reduced opportunities for candidates of color. Statewide electorates, which are almost always majority White, have been more difficult settings for women of color compared with the context of majority-minority legislative districts.¹⁴ The first Black woman to reach the Senate, Carol Moseley Braun, did so in 1993. It would not be until 2013 that the second woman of color would be elected to the Senate, when Mazie Hirono became the first Asian American woman to serve. And Catherine Cortez Masto of Nevada would become the first Latina to enter the Senate in 2017, marking the first time more than one woman of color served in the Senate simultaneously.¹⁵ Prejudice and stereotypes based on race, gender, and/or their intersection mean that White women, Black women, Asian American women, Latinas, and Native American women are likely to have different experiences on the campaign trail.¹⁶

Political institutions from political party organizations to political campaigns, as well as actors such as voters and donors, may be biased against women or with-

hold support as a result of societal expectations about women's roles and their abilities.¹⁷ The language around campaigns and elections reinforces cultural expectations that politics is a masculine space. Public opinion polls from the twentieth century document widespread sexism, issue stereotypes, trait stereotypes, and general skepticism about the appropriateness of women wielding political power. As recently as the 1960s, a party leader advised that one would only run a woman candidate in a hopeless race, as a "sacrificial lamb" for the party. Women candidates may be perceived to be violating their social role and their expected qualities as caregivers and passive dependents.¹⁸

From an early age, girls and boys internalize society's expectations, including the assumption that men, more than women, are qualified for politics and elections. Political ambition consistently reveals a gender gap with respect to citizens' aspirations.¹⁹ Even today, with the presence of women in Congress at an all-time high, the experience of successfully reaching Congress as women creates a sense of commonality and solidarity within the institution.²⁰

Women's disproportionate responsibilities in the home have also fundamentally shaped their political careers, altering opportunities for political involvement and the timing of women's candidacies.²¹ After all, politics arguably represents a third shift for women who shoulder paid work and the second shift of household labor.²² Women's decision-making about candidacy is also more "relationally embedded" than men's, meaning that women are more likely to take into account the perspectives of others, including family members, in deciding to become a candidate.²³

Social norms, roles, and stereotypes have been subject to contestation and transformation, however. The second wave of the women's movement that emerged in the 1960s indirectly aided women candidates by fundamentally altering women's educational and economic opportunities and facilitating liberalization in attitudes toward women. As a result, what had been the common route to Congress – the "widow's path," in which women would briefly take the seats vacated by the death of their husbands – was gradually surpassed over the course of the twentieth century by more traditional strategic entry patterns typical of male candidates.²⁴ While a candidate's motherhood status may dampen voter support, parental status can advantage candidates in some circumstances today.²⁵

Socioeconomic stratification intertwined with race means that women of color candidates, and potential candidates, lack equal access to resources.²⁶ Women of color serving in state legislatures report having to overcome more efforts to discourage their candidacies than their White women colleagues. In a national study of elected officials, sizable proportions of women of color in the Gender and Multi-Cultural Leadership National Survey reported experiencing race-based discrimination that affected their party support and fundraising; they also experienced unequal treatment in assessments of their qualifications.²⁷ Women of color have made significant strides in winning election to the U.S. House of Representa-

tives, particularly from majority-minority districts. Women of color constitute 42 percent of all women members and 8.8 percent of all members of the U.S. House in 2019, according to the Center for American Women and Politics; but their presence in the U.S. Senate remains unusual.

Because women fare about as well as men in general election contests, as well as in primary contests, scholars contend that the main problem is the scarcity of women candidates.²⁸ However, some research has questioned the notion of a level playing field because women appear to be more strategic than men about when to enter a race and may need to be more qualified in order to obtain the same vote share. Women also face more competition than men when they run for Congress.²⁹

Because the supply of candidates interacts with the demand for candidates, we would not expect candidates to emerge in unfavorable contexts.³⁰ Some voters are more supportive of women candidates than others, leading to the existence of what political scientists Barbara Palmer and Dennis Simon have called “women-friendly districts.” Interestingly, however, they find that while White women are more likely than White men to be elected to Congress through these districts, Black women and Black men are elected from similar types of districts.³¹

Ironically, often overlooked within the U.S. politics literature about women's election to office is politics itself, with more scholarly attention paid to social dynamics than to political dynamics.³² But political actors including parties and interest groups shape candidate recruitment, campaigns, and ultimately election results, with gendered and raced implications. Because American candidates do not run on a party list, they are assumed to be self-starters, leading most women and politics scholars to neglect the role of parties in the United States as both recruiters and gatekeepers. Scholarly interest in the partisan imbalance in women's office-holding, in which Democratic women outnumber Republican women, is rising, however.³³

Whereas most research on elections in the United States typically understands gender to be primarily or exclusively a social category, the political realm itself is a source of information about women in society. And the realm of politics, including the institution of Congress, has not always been welcoming to women.³⁴

Some of the obstacles facing women in politics are rooted in law and policy. In the modern period, the policy victories of the civil rights movement, including the Voting Rights Act and subsequent interpretations of the Act, have been vital to office-holding by women of color, eliminating formal and informal restrictions on voting and establishing the ability of minority communities to elect candidates of their choice. Given the opportunity to elect a candidate of their choice, majority-minority districts have typically done so. The creation of majority-minority legislative districts helps to explain the rise of women of color in elective office, including Congress.³⁵

Because immigration from Asia and Latin America rose as a result, the elimination of race-based distinctions in immigration policy in the 1960s also paved the way, indirectly, for more women of color to gain office.³⁶ According to data from the 2010 U.S. Census, Blacks make up 13.6 percent, Latinos 16 percent, Asians 5.6 percent, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders 0.4 percent, and American Indian and Alaska Natives 1.7 percent of the population.³⁷ Of these groups, Black women have been the most successful in securing elective office.

Informal recruitment and selection processes can also be a barrier to minority women's candidacies. Without informal support, and financial support, it has been challenging for women of color to make inroads outside of majority-minority districts. Indeed, Ayanna Pressley, who in 2018 became the first woman of color to win a seat in Congress from Massachusetts, ran for her first elective office – city council – over the protestations of political leaders who advised her that she was better suited for an advocacy role.

It is worth noting, however, that intersectional theorists have injected dynamism into theories about how structural inequalities affect women of color, questioning the assumption that race and gender always combine to create a situation of double disadvantage.³⁸ They note the potential for women of color to build broad coalitions because of their location at the intersection of race and gender categories.

Although electoral politics was not the main focus of second-wave feminist activity in the 1960s and 1970s, some activists did take up formal politics and the cause of women candidates.³⁹ Beginning in the 1970s and continuing to the present day, women's political action committees (PACs), groups, and donors have been essential to recruiting, training, and funding women candidates. As political scientist Barbara Burrell has documented, women congressional candidates have achieved considerable fundraising success, even surpassing the campaign contributions of their male counterparts in some cases.⁴⁰ As political scientist Susan J. Carroll and I have argued, the presence of support and recruitment mechanisms drives women's representation, and not just the absence of impediments.

The overrepresentation of men in elective office can fuel the assumption that men are better political leaders and dampen interest in women candidates. But the fact of women's underrepresentation can create political momentum for women's candidacies. In 1992, for example, in the so-called Year of the Woman election, public awareness of women's underrepresentation in Congress, including their status as only 2 percent of the Senate, led a record number of women to run in the wake of the Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas sexual harassment hearings. And women disregarded the conventional wisdom that women must run as men to be successful.⁴¹ Public attention to the extent of women's underrepresentation intersected with a large number of open seats as well as heightened awareness of the problem of sexual harassment.⁴²

Donald J. Trump's unexpected defeat of Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election and the subsequent Women's March in 2017 led to the unprecedented number of women candidates in the 2018 midterm election. As anti-Trump sentiment mounted and the #MeToo movement took shape over the course of 2017, more women declared their candidacies, many of whom were first-time candidates. Similar to the 1992 election, public awareness of women's underrepresentation in politics and heightened attention to policy issues that disproportionately impact women as a group interacted with a large number of open congressional seats. As a result, women entered primaries in record-breaking numbers for Congress, governor, and state legislature and went on to break records as major party nominees.⁴³ In the end, 2019 saw 127 women serving in Congress and 2,127 women in state legislatures, establishing two new U.S. records.⁴⁴

But in both 1992 and 2018, the uptick in candidates and officeholders was disproportionately Democratic. In fact, although a stunning 476 women entered primaries for the 435 seats of the House, surpassing the previous record of 298, the raw number of women running for the chamber was not a historic high for Republican women. Despite a record number of women entering the House in 2019, the number of Republican women declined. Republican women also declined as a percentage of all Republican members of the House. Nonincumbent Democratic women were more likely to emerge victorious from their primaries than Democratic men, suggesting that Democratic women were advantaged in the 2018 elections.⁴⁵

Left parties have traditionally been more supportive of women's equality and women candidates.⁴⁶ Thus, the disproportionate presence of women within the Democratic Party – as voters, activists, candidates, and officeholders – is consistent with this crossnational trend. It also reflects the Democratic and Republican Parties' relationships with organized feminism and civil rights issues.⁴⁷

Since 1980, women have been more likely to vote for the Democratic candidate in presidential elections. Gaps are also evident in congressional and gubernatorial elections and in voters' partisan attachments.⁴⁸ Political party continues to be the most important predictor of congressional vote choice, although stereotypes about candidates are shaped by both party and gender.⁴⁹ And the greater representation of women among Democratic officeholders is evident to the public and appears to affect the magnitude of the gender gap in partisan identification.⁵⁰

The two major parties are quite distinct with respect to the infrastructure available to women potential candidates. This can be seen clearly with respect to the partisan gap in Congress historically and particularly in the contemporary era. The 1992 election was essentially the “year of the Democratic woman,” as the relatively young PAC EMILY's List (Early Money Is Like Yeast), founded in 1985, bundled contributions from a women's donor network to finance women's campaigns. EMILY's List only supports pro-choice Democratic women candidates,

and their strategy has been to provide women candidates with early money, putting their weight behind candidates in competitive primaries. The role of EMILY's List in helping elect Democratic women to Congress cannot be overstated.

Recent studies of fundraising confirm the vast differences in the financial environment faced by women of the two major parties. Democratic women congressional candidates, but not Republican women candidates, are advantaged with respect to their gender, party, and ideology. While female donor networks and organizations exist on the Republican side of the aisle, they are not as well known as EMILY's List and do not approach its level of influence.⁵¹

The financial cost of running for Congress is high and rising. All else equal, this aspect of American politics places women, as well as men of color, at a disadvantage because of the effects of gender and race on employment opportunities, personal income, and wealth. While women have outvoted men, men have dominated political giving by rate and amount of contributions. Women's PACs and donor networks have disrupted male dominance to some extent, and women's giving has increased in recent years, but the financing of politics continues to put women at a disadvantage. The existence of gendered patterns of giving exacerbates this economic disadvantage.⁵²

Candidate emergence and candidate recruitment patterns have also affected Democratic and Republican women differently. Moderates have been largely eliminated from Congress as the two parties have become more polarized. This change has disproportionately adversely affected Republican women in politics, who traditionally come from the party's moderate wing.⁵³ Recruitment on the Republican side favors conservative candidates, and conservative candidates are disproportionately male.⁵⁴ And with many more women serving in and holding leadership positions in the Democratic Party, it is more likely that women candidates will be recruited.⁵⁵

For strategic reasons, Republican women in Congress have been overrepresented as communicators of the party message compared with their presence in the party.⁵⁶ Despite the party efforts to showcase women in leadership roles, the stubborn fact of Republican women's underrepresentation – as well as their declining presence in the party – remains. The dwindling presence of Republican women is unfortunate given that women are more effective members of Congress than their male colleagues, particularly when they are in the minority party.⁵⁷

The misogyny of Trump (as a candidate and now president) also affects women differently according to partisanship.⁵⁸ While the Republican Party has periodically sought to increase the racial and gender diversity of its candidates, that strategy seems to be a nonstarter in an environment in which Trump, as party leader, routinely disparages women and minorities, and particularly women of color. Studies of “modern sexism” – a form of sexism that seems to have replaced old-fashioned sexism – are on the rise in the Trump era. Trump's misogyny as a can-

didate and president creates an unwelcome environment for Republican women candidates. In contrast, the energy of the women's marches and #MeToo movement and the strong anti-Trump sentiment on the left appear to have fueled the explicitly gendered appeals made by the new women candidates who ran in 2018. Experiences with pregnancy, motherhood, sexual assault, and sex discrimination animated political advertising in 2018 in new ways.⁵⁹

In 2019, the number of women of color serving in Congress – forty-seven – represents a historic high. The 2018 midterm saw numerous “firsts” with respect to women's office-holding in Congress, including the first Native American women, Debra Haaland (D-NM) and Sharice Davids (D-KS); the first women of color elected from New England, Ayanna Pressley (D-MA) and Jahana Hayes (D-CT); and the first Latinas elected from Texas, Veronica Escobar (D) and Sylvia R. Garcia (D). The youngest woman ever to enter Congress, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), a Latina, defeated an incumbent from her own party and a member of House leadership in 2018. The national Democratic tide and public interest in women candidates helped to propel these Democratic women to office. While these firsts for women of color signal progress, the fact that they occurred only recently is a poor reflection on the country's record of inclusion.⁶⁰ With explicit sexist and racist messages emanating from the White House, it is perhaps not surprising that almost all women of color serving in elective office are Democrats.

Throughout the past century, women in Congress have usually been the staunchest advocates for policies important to women as a group. Women in Congress seek to provide representation for all women including those beyond their states and districts, albeit with different ideas of what it means to represent women.⁶¹

Institutional and societal challenges as well as obstacles rooted in racial inequality have historically limited women's access to Congress. Concern about women's underrepresentation and collective efforts to elect more women have twice disrupted the status quo of congressional elections, most recently in 2018. But the situation of women candidates varies greatly by political party, and the party imbalance among women in Congress is widening.

Future research on women's election to Congress would benefit from a more sustained intersectional approach, even if that approach can be, as political scientist Wendy Smooth has noted, a bit messier than single-category approaches.⁶² As scholars grapple with the best empirical methods to accomplish intersectional research, they must also strive to incorporate additional categories. One area that scholars have neglected within the American women and politics field is the election of sexual minorities. Several openly gay women serve in Congress in 2019, including two women senators: Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ). While some scholars have examined the challenges that sexuality poses for

women candidates, much more research is needed to identify how LGBTQ identity and politics affect the level of women's representation.⁶³ Women are a large and differentiated group, and political equality for women as a whole must take into account sources of inequality beyond gender alone.

For our book *A Seat at the Table*, Kelly Dittmar, Susan Carroll, and I interviewed more than three-fourths of the women serving in the 114th Congress (2015–2017); they explained that the presence of women in the institution is a “big thing.”⁶⁴ House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi (CA) explained the significance, for American women, of seeing “that someone who may have shared their experience – whether it is to be a working Mom or whatever it happens to be – [has] a voice at the table.”⁶⁵ And women in Congress should reflect the diversity of American women. As Representative Joyce Beatty (D-OH) noted, “[Having more women of color in Congress] makes a difference when little African American girls can dream that they, too, can serve in Congress.”⁶⁶ And Representative Kristi Noem (R-SD) explained that “Most of the voters in this country are women. So they deserve to be represented and have people there that think like they do.”⁶⁷

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Another Progressive's Dilemma: Immigration, the Radical Right & Threats to Gender Equality

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Immigration and the diversity it brings have led to the emergence of the “progressive’s dilemma” whereby open societies that take in immigrant outsiders may find it difficult to maintain the solidarity required to sustain the welfare state. In this essay, I address another progressive’s dilemma: Focusing on the case of Western Europe, I argue that when open borders give rise to radical-right parties, immigration can inadvertently also endanger progressive achievements in gender equality. Though xenophobic policies frequently constitute their core message and the primary source of their appeal, radical-right parties are also defenders of traditional family values and outspoken critics of measures that promote the economic and political advancement of women. Moreover, the composition of these parties, both in terms of voters and politicians, is disproportionately male. As a result, when radical-right, anti-immigrant parties enter national parliaments, the descriptive and substantive representation of women suffers, sometimes reversing long-held gains in gender equality.

Politics in advanced democracies used to revolve around class cleavages, with the large centrist parties on the left and the right offering competing visions about redistribution and the size of the welfare state. Over the past several decades, class politics has been supplemented with another, cross-cutting cleavage, one centering around progressive social values and cosmopolitanism on the one hand, and traditional values and ethnocentrism on the other. Political parties on the left have made issues such as gender equality, LGBTQ rights, and open borders critical parts of their platforms, while parties on the right have been more likely to emphasize traditional family values and the cultural threats associated with immigration.¹

This restructuring of the political space, along with growing levels of ethnic and cultural diversity, has led to the emergence of the “progressive’s dilemma”: how can open societies that take in immigrant outsiders maintain the solidarity required to sustain the welfare state? Answers to this question constitute an ongoing and unresolved debate.² What has been overlooked in this debate, however,

is that the dilemma is not just about marrying sociocultural diversity with economic redistribution. Increasingly, elements *within* the progressives' sociocultural agenda are also clashing.

In this essay, focusing on the case of Western Europe, I argue that immigration not only threatens the sustainability of the welfare state, it can also inadvertently endanger progressive achievements in gender equality via a strengthening radical right. Open borders and the ethnic diversity they generate have in many countries given rise to powerful radical-right parties, with anti-immigration policies and xenophobic rhetoric frequently their core message and the primary source of their appeal.³ But they are also often defenders of traditional family values and outspoken critics of measures that promote the economic and political advancement of women. Moreover, the composition of these parties, both in terms of voters and politicians, is disproportionately male.⁴ As a result, when radical-right, anti-immigrant parties enter national parliaments, the descriptive and substantive representation of women suffers.

To make these arguments, I present three threats that radical-right parties pose to the advancement of women's interest and gender equality in politics: 1) the overrepresentation of male-voter interests; 2) the pursuit of policies that promote conservative gender roles and oppose measures to enhance gender equality; and 3) the small number of elected female candidates among radical-right parties. I then address how a more recent rhetorical shift toward gender equality among some radical-right parties does not represent an actual change in policy positioning, but rather serves to discriminate against European Muslims. I conclude with a brief discussion about potential ways out of the progressive's dilemma surrounding immigration and gender.

Europe has been experiencing large-scale immigration for many decades. In most West European countries, the foreign-born now constitute more than 10 percent of the population. In 2016 alone, two million non-EU citizens migrated to the European Union, while EU countries granted citizenship to one million persons.⁵ The inflow and settlement of a diverse mix of labor migrants, asylum seekers, and their families have transformed European societies and labor markets, and they have also had significant political ramifications. One of the most salient electoral consequences has been the ascendance of radical-right parties that campaign on fiercely xenophobic platforms. Though an uptick in immigration does not automatically trigger a nativist backlash, the arrival and settlement of large numbers of migrants has been a crucial ingredient in the emergence and growth of contemporary radical-right parties in Europe.⁶

Relatedly, hostile views toward immigrants distinguish supporters of radical-right parties from the rest of the electorate. Studies based on a wide range of surveys and countries consistently find that ethnocentrism and a desire

to reduce the number of immigrants help predict who casts votes for the radical right.⁷

The rise of the radical right in response to immigration and cosmopolitanism presents a key facet of the much-discussed progressive's dilemma: the notion that ethnic diversity severs societal bonds of solidarity and weakens leftist political forces, both of which are required to maintain robust welfare states.⁸ At least two mechanisms can be at work: Some voters' support for redistribution may decline because they do not want to finance government transfers going to disliked immigrant minorities. By contrast, other voters may still cherish the welfare state, but they first and foremost want to support a party that promises to end immigration, and they therefore cast their lot with radical-right parties. When such parties also want to shrink the welfare state, curbing immigration and maintaining redistribution can become incompatible goals among a significant number of voters.⁹

Debates about this version of the progressive's dilemma are ongoing and largely unresolved.¹⁰ Yet immigration – if it contributes to the electoral success of radical-right forces – can also bring to the fore a much less widely recognized tension within the progressive camp. Whereas the focus until now has been on trade-offs along two dimensions, pitting economic against sociocultural concerns, immigration and the accompanying growth of the radical right threatens to create dilemmas *within* the left's sociocultural agenda: when immigration causes an increase in radical-right parliamentary representation, open border policies can unwittingly undermine gender equality.

When radical-right parties enter parliaments, they can undercut women's representation in several ways. First, radical-right parties are disproportionately supported by men. While there is disagreement about the causes behind the growth of radical-right parties, the gender gap in radical-right party support has been one of the most durable findings in the literature. It has even earned these parties the label of *Männerparteien* (parties for or of men).¹¹ As political scientist Cas Mudde has pointed out, gender “is the only sociodemographic variable that is consistently relevant in practically all European countries.”¹² Examining the gender gap in twelve West European countries in 2010, social scientist Tim Immerzeel and colleagues found an average gap of 4.3 points, with 11.1 percent of men and 6.8 percent of women supporting radical-right parties.¹³ In some instances, the difference is much higher, reaching 6.4, 9.0, and 13.3 percentage points in Switzerland, Austria, and Norway, respectively. France is the only country where the gap has narrowed or even closed in some elections.¹⁴ However, in none of these countries do female supporters of the radical right outnumber their male counterparts.

In addition to gendered voting patterns, party membership of radical-right parties is also overwhelmingly male. Moreover, women are less likely than men

to participate in radical-right politics on the basis of their ideological convictions. Research has found that women who are members of radical-right parties and participate in activist circles are frequently pulled in by the men in their lives – romantic partners, brothers – who are already active in the far-right milieu.¹⁵

Existing scholarship has identified a number of reasons for the male bias among the radical-right's core electorate. Some arguments relate to gendered labor market positions: because men have traditionally been overrepresented in blue-collar, industrial jobs, they are more likely to belong to the “losers of modernization” whose material well-being and social status have been threatened by deindustrialization, offshoring, and immigration. The rise in postmaterial values, gender egalitarianism, and ethnic diversity can compound these threats.¹⁶ Men's newly precarious position can make them susceptible to radical-right parties that promise a return to the old order in which native, White men occupied the top of the economic and social hierarchy.¹⁷

A related line of reasoning draws upon gender gaps in authoritarian attitudes. Men tend to take a tougher stance than women toward criminal justice, and radical-right parties commonly link immigration to crime and societal breakdown, vowing to restore law and order via deportation, immigration bans, and more aggressive policing. This issue linkage helps radical-right parties formulate a coherent issue agenda: concerns about crime have been found to be an important predictor of fears over immigration, and large numbers of Europeans believe that immigration contributes to crime.¹⁸ It also helps account for gendered radical-right voting patterns.¹⁹

Others have argued that while women and men do not differ too much in their degree of anti-immigrant sentiment, women are less likely to accord immigration high salience when it comes time to cast ballots. Gender differences in issue salience, rather than preferences per se, can therefore explain part of the gender gap.²⁰

Irrespective of the causes behind the gender gap, so long as men and women differ in their policy preferences and priorities (and radical-right parties in fact represent the interests of their mostly male core electorate), the rise of radical-right parties effectively reduces the substantive representation of women.²¹

Second, the rise of the radical right can stall the advancement of feminist causes. Radical-right parties frequently advocate for a return to traditional family values and speak out against policies that aim to promote women's economic and political advancement. Their emphasis on family values is rooted in part on the importance of motherhood, especially in the context of declining birth rates: for the survival of the (ethnically pure) nation, it is critical that native women prioritize their roles as mothers and caregivers. As a result, radical-right parties have supported tax policies meant to incentivize women to bear more children and to care for them at home. Tax breaks that rise with the number of chil-

dren or direct compensation for “housewives” are part of their policy arsenal, as are restrictions on women’s reproductive choices.²²

Most European radical-right parties recognize that it is increasingly unrealistic for women to remain outside the labor force altogether. In light of these realities, and to broaden their appeal, some have explicitly stated their support for women’s economic independence.²³ However, these parties nevertheless want to ensure that native women’s preoccupation with their careers does not replace their desire for childbirth. In fact, raising the fertility of native women is seen as an antidote to immigration. As the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) stated in its 2011 program: “Austria is not a country of immigration. This is why we pursue a family policy centered around births.”²⁴ Similarly, during the 2017 German general election campaign, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) produced a poster prominently displaying the pregnant belly of a (White) woman and featuring the message: “Merkel says we need immigrants. We say: ‘New Germans’? We make those ourselves!”

In line with its traditional conception of gender roles, the radical right typically strongly opposes gender quotas in all realms of society. For example, in its 2017 manifesto, the AfD derides state-sponsored gender quotas as illegitimate, arbitrary, and ultimately unconstitutional, and it campaigns for their repeal.²⁵ The Swiss People’s Party (SVP) similarly rejects all “quota rules and so-called gender-politics” and seeks to abolish all equal opportunity offices (*Gleichstellungsbüros*).²⁶ Even the SVP’s youth wing vehemently opposes “quota women” (*Quotenfrauen*), viewing government quotas as tools employed by the lazy and the weak, and by socialist feminists.²⁷

Opposition to quotas also extends to radical-right parties in Scandinavian countries, where gender equality measures have generally been more widely accepted. The Sweden Democrats explicitly reject gender quotas, as does the Danish People’s Party and the Norwegian Progress Party.²⁸ Though these parties usually point out that they believe in the dignity of women and in their equal status before the law, they oppose gender quotas and gender mainstreaming, viewing them as excessive and misguided efforts at equalization (*Gleichmacherei*). Not only do radical-right parties fear that measures aimed at creating equal opportunities between the sexes hurt their male support bases, but for many, such policies also contravene the “natural” order of things.²⁹

Finally, consistent with their disproportionately male support bases and their suspicion of feminist causes and gender quotas, radical-right parties tend to produce mostly male candidates. I should note at the outset that, compared with other parties, radical-right parties do not seem to be lagging behind with respect to having women in visible leadership positions. Marine Le Pen of the French National Rally, Pia Kjaersgaard of the Danish People’s Party, and Al-

ice Weidel of the Alternative for Germany are among the prominent examples of past and present radical-right women leaders. However, when examining parliamentary seats, men tend to outnumber women by significant margins. The growing strength of radical-right, anti-immigrant parties therefore tends to decrease female representation in parliaments, especially since, where they exist in Europe, candidate gender quotas tend to be voluntarily adopted by parties, rather than mandated by law.³⁰

To assess the magnitude of this development, I collected data on the gender composition of all current West European national parliaments in which radical-right parties have a significant presence: namely, countries where these parties attained a vote share of at least 10 percent in the most recent general election. The results are displayed in Table 1. The gender gaps across party types are substantial. Whereas, on average, just over one-quarter (26 percent) of radical-right parliamentarians are female, this number reaches 40 percent among all other parties. In six out of nine cases, differences reach eighteen points or higher. Germany displays the largest gap: the share of female MPs is twenty-three percentage points lower among radical-right parties when compared with all other parliamentary parties. Switzerland and Sweden are close behind with a gap of twenty-two points.

If the national parliaments listed in Table 1 did not include radical-right parties and kept their overall gender balance unchanged, female descriptive representation would rise by three percentage points overall, *ceteris paribus*. In Switzerland and Austria, where these parties are both particularly strong (holding 32.5 and 27.9 percent of seats, respectively) and particularly male, the share of women parliamentarians would rise by seven and five points, respectively. In only one case, Denmark, do we observe a positive difference: 41 percent of the seats held by the Danish People's Party are occupied by women compared with 38 percent among all other parliamentary parties, a case I will return to briefly below.

It is important to note that in some cases, the share of women in radical-right parties does not fall below that observed among more centrist right-wing parties.³¹ But this fact does not negate the progressive's dilemma: left parties almost always feature a higher share of women. In cases in which immigration facilitates the rise of the right and the decline of the left, female representation falls.

One of the youngest European radical-right parties, Alternative for Germany, entered the German Bundestag for the first time in 2017, gaining over 12 percent of the vote. It is nearly all male: only 11 percent of the AfD's ninety-four seats are held by women. The rise of the AfD illustrates the progressive's dilemma around immigration and gender particularly well. The party owes its rapid ascent first and foremost to the sizable inflow of migrants that entered Germany in the years leading up to the election. Well over one million refugees, many of them from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, arrived in the country, encouraged by Angela Merkel's liberal stance toward those fleeing violent conflict at home and seeking asylum in Ger-

Table 1
 Proportion of Female Politicians in National Parliaments by Party Type

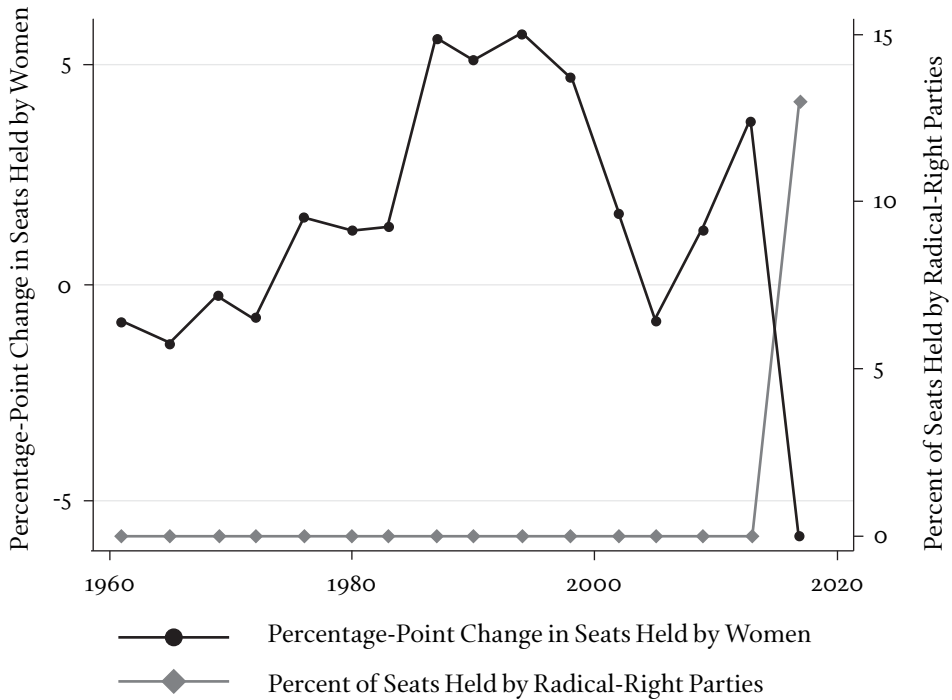
	Percent of Female Politicians in:			
	Parliamentary Radical-Right Parties	All Other Parliamentary Parties	Entire Parliament	Percentage-Point Difference between Party Types
Germany	11	34	31	-23
Switzerland	17	39	32	-22
Sweden	29	51	47	-22
Finland	24	43	41	-19
Austria	24	42	37	-18
Norway	26	44	42	-18
Italy	29	37	36	-8
Netherlands	30	32	32	-2
Denmark	41	38	39	+3
Overall Averages	26	40	37	-14

Note: This table refers to the composition of national parliaments in December 2018 (based on data collected by the author). It includes all West European countries where radical-right, anti-immigrant parties received at least 10 percent of the vote and are represented in parliament. The following parties are coded as radical-right and anti-immigrant: Alternative for Germany, Swiss People’s Party, Sweden Democrats, True Finns, Freedom Party Austria, Progress Party (Norway), Lega (Italy, Chamber of Deputies), Party for Freedom (Netherlands), and the Danish People’s Party.

many. Parties on the left – the Social Democrats, the Greens, and the Left Party – also strongly defended open borders and the right to asylum and continued to do so even when the issue began to fracture the center-right. The AfD succeeded in keeping the immigration issue in the headlines and in mobilizing many voters who wanted to stop the inflow; the desire to reduce the number of immigrants was the most salient issue among voters who cast their ballot for the radical party.³² And, as elsewhere, the majority of these voters were male. Whereas 9 percent of German women voted for the AfD, 15 percent of German men did so.³³

Though these gendered voting patterns have been widely recognized, what has been less appreciated is that the entry of the AfD in the German Bundestag helped reverse a long-running trend in the steady rise in the number of parliamentary seats occupied by women. Figure 1 charts the percentage-point change in the share of female Bundestag representatives since the 1960s (left y-axis) and seat

Figure 1
 Seats Held by Women and by Radical-Right Parties in Germany's
 Federal Parliament (Bundestag)



Note: This figure shows that the share of women has increased steadily since the mid-1970s, with only two exceptions: a slight one-point drop in 2005 and a substantial six-point drop in 2017 when a radical-right party entered the Bundestag for the first time. Source: Michael F. Feldkamp, “Deutscher Bundestag 1994 bis 2014: Parlaments- und Wahlstatistik für die 13. bis 18. Wahlperiode,” in *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen*, vol 1 (Berlin: ZParl, 2014), 3–16; and Michael F. Feldkamp and Christa Sommer, *Parlaments- und Wahlstatistik des Deutschen Bundestages 1949–2002/03* (Berlin: Deutscher Bundestag, 2003).

shares of radical-right parties (right y-axis) over the same time span. The share of female politicians has been rising since the mid-1970s, reaching its highest value in 2013 (36.5 percent). Though there was a slight dip of one percentage point in 2005, an unprecedented six-percentage-point drop occurred in 2017. This descent coincided with the entry of the AfD: eighty-four AfD men and ten AfD women took seats in the Bundestag. To be sure, these losses in female representation are not just of the AfD’s doing; other parties also featured fewer women than in the previous Bundestag.³⁴ But the entry of an almost exclusively male anti-immigrant

party clearly put the brakes on the advancement of women candidates in Germany's national parliament.

The German example is particularly striking. It illustrates in stark terms the potential trade-off between gender equality in politics and open immigration policies. But developments in other countries suggest that there might be signs of change. Denmark's anti-immigrant People's Party was long led by a woman and includes more female than male members of parliament. The Dutch Party for Freedom brands itself a defender of gender equality and notably voted against cuts in public childcare.³⁵ In France, gendered voting patterns among supporters of the National Rally are disappearing. One reason behind this change is the increasing economic insecurity in the female-dominated service sector.³⁶ Another has to do with Marine Le Pen's targeting of young women. Le Pen, herself twice divorced and having raised three children, acknowledges the challenges of motherhood, especially among single women in precarious economic circumstances. As the party is seeking to capture a younger, more modern, and female electorate, its traditionally strong opposition to abortion – which her party had previously called an “anti-French genocide” – is also weakening.³⁷

Radical-right parties in Denmark, the Netherlands, and France have had a much longer presence in local councils and national parliaments than has the German AfD. Part of their longevity and success can be attributed to their moderation, at least in some aspects of their agenda, which has helped them make inroads among the female electorate.³⁸

Do these developments signal a softening of the progressive's dilemma? Though these parties have remained stridently anti-immigrant, proposing ever harsher immigration laws and tougher integration requirements, to be durable and successful, they might have to modernize their views on gender relations.

Close observers of these parties would likely be skeptical of this interpretation. The roots of the radical right's repositioning on gender, critics have alleged, is not to be found in their newfound ideological commitments to gender equality, and neither is it sincere. Rather, where radical-right parties have begun to adopt feminist rhetoric, it has always been in connection to immigration. Specifically, these parties have been campaigning on feminist issues to widen the gulf between Europe's Muslim communities and the rest of society while simultaneously exposing perceived failures of multiculturalism, one of the left's blind spots.³⁹

Muslims in Europe, while diverse in origin, religiosity, and cultural backgrounds, tend to subscribe to more patriarchal social norms and traditional family values than does the electorate at-large. As issues pertaining to sexual liberation and feminism have gained more resonance among European voters, they are confronted with an ethnoreligious minority group that is much less supportive of gender equality in the private and public sphere. As a result, even cosmopolitan

voters that typically favor liberal immigration policies have become uneasy about the presence of Muslims in European cities.⁴⁰

Seizing on this tension, radical-right parties have begun to instrumentalize gender equality as a key strategy to differentiate the “modern majority” from the “backwards, patriarchal” minority, with the hopes of peeling away voters from mainstream parties that endorse immigration and multiculturalism.⁴¹ Issues of veiling and the “headscarf debates” they spawn have been especially salient among the radical right. Bans on veiling of various forms (in schools, public institutions, or even covering the entire public sphere) frequently feature prominently in their platforms. They allow radical-right parties to appear as backers of gender equality while at the same time communicating that European nation-states cannot accommodate Islam without fundamentally altering their cultural character. As Geert Wilders, leader of the Dutch Freedom Party, has put it: “mass immigration” and “Islamic gender apartheid” threaten to flush “decades of [women’s] emancipation down the toilet.”⁴²

Yet, fiery rhetoric aside, policy proposals to combat gender inequities more generally are typically absent.⁴³ Radical-right party manifestos reveal this incongruence quite clearly. For example, when discussing gender equality in their 2018 election program, the Sweden Democrats briefly noted Sweden’s long-standing tradition of gender egalitarianism, then quickly pivoted to the threats posed by honor-related violence and female genital mutilation, before dismissing “gender theories” and quotas as unnecessary and ineffective.⁴⁴ Turning to Norway, the very first page of the Norwegian Progress Party’s 2017 manifesto lists the banning of “women-discriminating” garments like the burka and niqab as one of the party’s policy priorities. Much further down, on page twenty, the party also mentions its categorical opposition to gender-based quotas.⁴⁵ This type of inconsistent positioning is quite common. Examining the manifestos of six successful European radical-right parties, social scientist Tjitske Akkerman has found that while they vary in their degree of conservatism, none of them can be characterized as liberal with regard to their positions on gender relations.⁴⁶ Even the Danish People’s Party, with its disproportionate number of female parliamentarians and its emphasis on the Islamic threat to achievements in gender equality, ultimately advocates for conservative family values and for policies that prioritize women’s caregiving roles.⁴⁷ Akkerman therefore concludes that while “support for gender equality and women’s rights has now become widely spread over the whole political spectrum ... only the radical-right parties [are] left to defend the last vestiges of (modern) conservative family relations.”⁴⁸

The progressive’s dilemma around immigration and gender thus shows no signs of abating. That the radical right’s nods to gender equality do not represent actual policy shifts in the feminist direction should not come as

a surprise. After all, one of its main sources of strength lies in backlash politics: namely, its successful appeal to men suffering from status loss vis-à-vis not only immigrant minorities, but also women.⁴⁹ Moreover, so long as the promotion of native women's fertility rates remains one of the most appealing ways to reduce future immigration and to maintain White dominance, traditional family values and the valorization of motherhood will continue to be important aspects of the radical right's program.

In short, the radical right cannot and will not help progressives resolve their dilemma around gender and immigration. A more realistic way out of this predicament is a backlash to the backlash: if a sufficient number of previously unengaged voters and potential candidates recognize that the rise of the radical right hinders or even reverses progress on feminist causes, they might be motivated to engage in politics. The example of the United States is instructive here. The election of a radical-right, misogynistic president and his party's attack on women's reproductive rights has been widely credited for mobilizing sections of the female electorate and for greatly enlarging the pool of women running for office.⁵⁰ Similarly, in several Scandinavian countries, feminist parties have sprung up in recent years to address stalled efforts at advancing gender equality. In Denmark, the Feminist Initiative (F!) runs on the slogan: "Out with the racists! In with the feminists!" The party explicitly links the country's preoccupation with immigration and the associated success of the radical right with Denmark's falling behind in global gender equity rankings.⁵¹

The electoral success of feminist parties and candidates remains variable and modest to date. But if these political forces succeed in raising awareness about the fact that, notwithstanding their women-friendly rhetoric, radical-right parties undercut *all* progressive achievements, their impact could be stronger than their numbers suggest.

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vis-à-vis family planning/abortion, and the equal status of same-sex partnerships.” Akkerman, “Gender and the Radical Right in Western Europe,” 42.

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Donald Trump's Gift to Feminism: The Resistance

Susan Chira

Donald Trump's surprise win in 2016 galvanized once-politically quiescent women and jolted those who had believed second-wave feminist victories were enduring. This "resistance" drew on two potent forces: the passion of the newly awakened, primarily grassroots participants; and the organizing experience of professionals and institutions determined to channel that passion into sustainable electoral and policy gains. The movement expanded beyond the political to encompass the social and cultural spheres and gave women of color a place in the spotlight. As women ran for national, state, and local office in record numbers, the #MeToo movement toppled men who once harassed with impunity. Record numbers of women won in the 2018 midterms, retaking the U.S. House of Representatives for the Democrats, and six women declared their candidacy for president in 2020. But it remains unclear whether these gains will be lasting and overcome remaining ambivalence about women and power.

On November 8, 2016, many American women confronted a crushing reality: their fellow Americans (including a plurality of White women) had elected a brazen misogynist as president, rejecting the first woman to run as a major party nominee. His sexual swagger, stream of insults about women's looks, and infamous taped boast of forcing himself on women shattered every political taboo that decades of feminism had labored to put in place. More concretely, his conversion from supporter to opponent of abortion, his pledge to appoint stalwart conservatives to the Supreme Court, and his determination to repeal Obamacare promised policies that would roll back women's rights once seen as settled law. Women who backed Clinton thought they would be celebrating a historic first; instead they were lamenting a staggering reversal.

On November 6, 2018, women shattered records in a display of raw political power at every level of government: as candidates, voters, volunteers, and donors. For two years, Democratic women had been on the march, running for office in unheard-of numbers and gathering in churches, sororities, brew pubs, and suburban dens to address postcards, plan protests, and storm constituent meetings. Women were the force that wrested control of the House of Representatives

from Republicans. Health care, gun control, and education, issues women have long rated as urgent, helped drive many votes to Democratic candidates. Suburban women deserted Republicans to flip many key seats; women of color mobilized voter turnout seldom seen in a midterm election. Nevada became the first state in the country with a majority of women in the legislature. Nancy Pelosi was once again speaker of the House, outwitting the president in their showdown over a shutdown. By early 2019, six women had announced they would run for president in 2020, one century after American women first won the right to vote.

These bookends capture a familiar dynamic for women in their long struggle for rights and representation: opportunity followed by regression, progress in fits and starts. While women won a record number of seats in Congress, they still have not hit the 25 percent mark. The gaps extend beyond politics. More than fifty years after equal employment laws opened new professions to women, the number of women running corporations is vanishingly low, and even dropped in 2018. Equal pay eludes women. They continue to shoulder more childcare and household work, holding them back from advancement in their jobs or persuading some of the most privileged to leave the workforce altogether. Women remain disproportionately poor. Divorce or single parenthood still leave them more vulnerable than men. The #MeToo movement has toppled once-immune men and replaced many of them with women, but new cases of sexual harassment seem to pop up daily, revealing its deep and stubborn roots from Hollywood to the factory floor.

Yet the leap from 2016 to 2018 also reveals something unexpected: Donald Trump's election turned out to be a boon as well as a curse for the feminist movement. The shock and anger galvanized women into political action and prompted a resurgence of feminist energy not seen in decades. Even as Trump's Supreme Court appointments and regulatory changes erode protections on fronts from abortion restrictions to campus sexual assault, women have mustered a formidable counterattack. The movement has combined two potent forces: the passion of the newly awakened, primarily grassroots participants; and the organizing experience of professionals and institutions determined to channel that passion into sustainable electoral and policy gains.

The night after Clinton's loss, women in a New York restaurant were weeping openly, their arms wrapped around their weeping daughters. In a suburb of Phoenix, Melinda Merkel Iyer recalled trying to soothe two sobbing, scared daughters; she could not sleep herself that night. And if liberal, White, relatively privileged women were shell-shocked, women of color of all classes now faced the president-elect's race-baiting, scaremongering about immigrants, and appeals to White supremacists. Facebook, later to be exposed as an unwitting tool of Russian bots bent on defeating Hillary Clinton, was flooded with anguished posts and meetups to mourn: the first glimmerings of what has come to be known as the resistance. Melinda Iyer joined their ranks not long after the election, one of count-

less women across the country spurred to political activity by their rage and despair at Trump's election.

Yet women were not united in grief; far from it. In Mississippi, Krysta Fitch, at thirty-two, had cast the first vote of her life for Donald Trump: she explained that as a devout Christian, she did not believe women should run for office. In Washington, D.C., Cleta Mitchell had no qualms about women's role in public life; she is a prominent lawyer, a former state legislator, and National Rifle Association board member – and an enthusiastic Trump supporter. In one of the Michigan counties that flipped from Obama to Trump in 2016, Victoria Czapski welcomed his tough talk on immigrants; she feared some were terrorists and said all immigrants must enter the country legally, as her great-grandparents did.

In head-spinning fashion, the 2018 midterm results appeared to be a rebuke not just of Donald Trump, but of the reversion to the Mad Men-era he embodied, the unchallenged dominance of White men. Women not only won office in record numbers, but the candidates were also remarkably diverse, including Blacks, Latinas, Muslims, Native Americans, gay, bisexual, and transgender women, military veterans, and CIA officers. The spontaneous primal scream of the Women's March had become an organized political movement, one that both embraced and eclipsed standard political parties and institutions.

Yet the divisions 2016 exposed – of race, class, and gender – remain. The country is both transfixed and repelled by strong women, who are all too often seen as overbearing, strident, and transgressive. While women's ambition knows no partisan boundaries, attitudes about gender roles often diverge by party affiliation. That is why women who break from tradition often face resistance not only from men, but also other women.

The grinding slog to transform American workplaces into ones not only free of sexual harassment but also more hospitable to women's leadership will test the durability of the #MeToo movement. A persistent ambivalence about women's power is even now playing out in the discussion surrounding Elizabeth Warren's presidential candidacy. As she rose in the polls, so did attacks on her as unelectable, unlikable, shrill, or angry – tropes often used to undermine women in politics and other fields. The 2020 presidential campaign looms as an important test of how gender assumptions and stereotypes play out in a field of multiple women, and whether the country is in fact open to a woman as commander in chief.

The subways of Washington, D.C., on a January morning in 2017 were the first clue: you could not even cram onto the platforms, there were so many women in their bright pink pussy hats and handmade placards. No one knew what to expect from a march launched not by any organized women's movement but rather a Facebook post by a retired lawyer in Hawaii named Teresa

Shook. By the time the masses converged on the Mall, it was clear that turnout would surpass all expectations. It was a festival of protest, the mood not only defiant but exuberant, the signs a grab bag of every conceivable cause, united only in their revulsion for the president who had been inaugurated the day before. Marchers hoisted children on their shoulders or guided elderly parents through crowds so dense at times it was difficult to walk. They waved signs lettered in magic marker: “Hate Does Not Make America Great,” “I Will Not Go Back Quietly to the 1950s,” and “I’m 17 – Fear Me!” They chanted, “This is what democracy looks like.” These scenes were repeated in cities across the country and, even more surprisingly, the world.

That night, the professionals took charge. If the marches had been kicked off spontaneously and independently of existing women’s organizations, by the time they took place, experienced organizers were determined to channel the neophytes’ energy into sustained resistance. At a four-hour post-march meeting cum pep rally, a parade of organizations made pitches to interested marchers about causes they could champion.

Priority one: preserve health insurance, including contraception and pregnancy care, as core health benefits of Obamacare. On the spot, marchers launched a mass call-in to their senators asking them to vote against repealing Obamacare. The next day, Planned Parenthood and other groups led training for organizers on channeling mobilization toward political action. The sponsors of the march culled names from those who had registered and worked to recruit them as volunteers for the 2018 midterms. The Women’s March sent out specific tasks that women could perform to keep the political momentum going and urged them to form “huddles.” These were local groups convened to plot specific political actions on a grassroots level: a successor to consciousness-raising groups, but with an immediate focus on concrete tasks.

The resistance soon expanded far beyond the loose and often fractious coalitions that constituted the Women’s March organization itself, which had become a national nonprofit. Women across the country, many new to political activism, formed chapters of Indivisible, one of a bevy of emerging groups that offered explicit instructions on how best to exert political power as constituents and organizers. The aim of these groups, including Swing Left, Act Blue, Sister District, and Flippable, was to take Democratic control of Congress in the midterm elections.

Indivisible’s downloadable handbook on what levers work to sway members of Congress became a template for women around the country, whose first act was to pack local town halls vowing to hold their members of Congress accountable for any vote to repeal Obamacare. Even as some Republican members of Congress canceled meetings, women from Minnesota to Pennsylvania rallied to shame them. Their first tangible victory came later that year, when enough Republicans, feeling the local heat, defected to defeat attempts to repeal Obamacare.

The resistance to Trump was a movement of several fronts. One strand drew on relative newcomers to politics: women newly emboldened to run for office along with a legion of volunteers driven to do something by their opposition to Trump and his policies. Usually, women have to be coaxed to become candidates. Now they were raising their hands in unheard-of numbers, taking advantage of a large number of open seats, which, compared with challenging incumbents, have historically been easier for women to win. Immediately after the election, groups that specialized in training or funding candidates such as Emerge America, She Should Run, EMILY's List, or Vote Run Lead, were deluged with calls: more in a week than many had received in a year.

Women who had been reeling in the days after the election began to act. From Melinda Iyer in suburban Phoenix to Megan McCarthy in a deep-red suburb of St. Louis, they took small, local steps that grew into sustained opposition. Trying to shake off despair, Iyer logged on to the Arizona state legislative website. She discovered Arizona's Request to Speak program, which allows a verified voter to register an opinion on a bill and ask to appear before the legislature.

At first, she said, she noticed a lawmaker rolling his eyes and others texting under the table as she spoke. She began to flag a variety of conservative bills, including tax measures she feared would deprive schools of money, voucher programs, or redistricting attempts, in a do-it-yourself newsletter first read by hundreds, then tens of thousands. A few months after the election, she was live-tweeting from the Arizona statehouse to muster opposition to a voucher proposal. Though that push failed, she helped collect enough signatures to force it on to a November ballot. There, voters soundly defeated the proposal, handing Iyer's troops another victory.

"We're not going to sit back anymore and let policies go through in the middle of the night," she said. "I never thought I'd be in a place where I'd know the Koch brothers' lobbyists by sight – and they'd know me."

She no longer worries about legislators underestimating her; in fact, she said lawmakers and advocacy groups now reach out to her when they want help spreading the word about bills they back.

Iyer drew inspiration from two important engines of activism; she joined a chapter of Indivisible and a burgeoning movement of parents and educators angry at the deep budget cuts state governments had inflicted on schools (later to emerge as #RedforEd and one of the forces behind a wave of teachers' strikes).

In February 2017, McCarthy assembled her first cadre of volunteers for her "huddle" in Ellisville, Missouri, at the Crafty Chameleon bar. Once resigned to holding back their political opinions for fear of alienating conservative neighbors in a district that has reliably elected Republicans, the women (and a handful of men) brainstormed about possible actions: Hold potluck suppers to meet and support local immigrants. Convene interfaith gatherings. Attend more marches – against the Dakota Access pipeline, for the release of Trump's tax returns. Bombard

members of Congress with letters and calls. Help with voter registration, since Missouri has adopted a strict voter-ID law.

As the midterms drew closer, one of the members of the huddle, with no previous political experience, ran for local office. Although she lost, she was the first Democrat to compete in that district since 2010 and was able to win nearly 45 percent of the vote in a staunchly Republican district.

“Women make it happen,” McCarthy said.

As the army of neophytes assembled, they joined a more experienced corps: grassroots organizations often staffed and led by women of color, from the South to the Sun Belt. For decades, Black women – through churches, sororities, and other mainstays of Black life – were foot soldiers in the effort to register and turn out voters. They were often overshadowed in the public eye by men who took leadership roles in the civil rights movement, even though their role was well known within their communities.

But their experience of resurgent racism – both close to home in racial incidents and through the national megaphone of Trump’s racist statements – imbued them with renewed urgency. When Roy Moore ran for senator in Alabama in 2017, with a record of bigotry toward Blacks, Latinos, Asians, and gay people and charges that he had sexually harassed underage girls, it was Black women who were key to his defeat. Women like LaTosha Brown, cofounder of the Black Voters Matter Fund, and Adrienne Shropshire, executive director of BlackPAC, directed money and foot soldiers to Alabama. Those efforts helped the surprise victor, Doug Jones, surpass even President Barack Obama’s share of the Black vote and win 98 percent of Black women who voted.

In states like Arizona, years of hostility to immigrants, embodied by, but hardly limited to, Sheriff Joe Arpaio, bred a generation of Latino activism. Women like Carmen Cornejo, chairwoman of Chicanos Por La Causa and a longtime advocate for the Dreamers, and Alejandra Gomez, co-executive director of Lucha, a local advocacy group, demonstrated their political power by rallying voters to unseat Arpaio in 2016.

As the midterms approached, turning out Latinx voters would prove as crucial in purpling states like Arizona as was the drive to animate Black voters in key Southern and Midwestern races. Many of these groups had long felt taken for granted by the Democratic Party establishment. And they were determined that both the party and the new infusion of politically engaged women, particularly well-meaning White suburbanites, recognize their experience and leadership.

“They need to trust that women of color can be strategists,” Gomez said. “We know we’re in it for the long haul. We want these women to also be in it for the long haul, not just this fired-up moment.”

Such tensions have long been a part of feminism, stretching back to suffragist days, when some White leaders of the movement appealed to racism to win rat-

ification of the Nineteenth Amendment in Southern states. And they had flared in the run-up to the Women's March in 2016, when Black women already angry about the plurality of White women who had voted for Trump objected to the initial lack of Black representation among the march's early leaders. While the march soon recruited experienced leaders of color, wounds festered and the Women's March organization itself split into rival factions, driven by accusations that some of these new leaders were anti-Semitic.

These skirmishes were a preview of a much more fundamental strategic and moral debate within the ranks of those determined to defeat Donald Trump. Women and people of color have provided much of the energy and fervor to resist him. But the Democratic Party is wrestling with how essential (or even possible) it is to woo back White, noncollege educated voters, particularly in the electorally significant Midwest. The midterms and the next presidential election will prove an existential test for the party, and the power and prominence of women of all backgrounds in the political struggle to come.

It seemed as if the furor over Trump's behavior and attitudes toward women would play out just as victims of sexual harassment had endured for decades: an initial uproar, then a return to male entitlement and impunity. When the Access Hollywood tapes became public, politicians scrambled to distance themselves and pundits predicted Trump could not survive the revelations. The most searing reactions came in the torrent of online testimonials of harassment and abuse under the hashtag #MeToo. Although prompted by a White actress's post asking for women to share their stories, #MeToo had been launched a decade earlier by a Black woman, Tarana Burke, trying to call attention to the abuse and harassment endured by women and girls of color. Yet as has all too often been the case, Burke labored in relative anonymity to tell their stories.

Trump defied the predictions of doom. Many of his women supporters dismissed the tape as "locker room talk" and swatted away the accusations of multiple women that he had groped or kissed them without their consent.

But the fury and anguish about harassment did not ebb; it went underground and then burst spectacularly into the open. Many women continued to seethe not just about Trump's election, but what also appeared to be the indifference to their viral testaments of abuse. And women who once were understandably afraid to speak out began to take the immense risk of abandoning the shield of anonymity, coaxed by dogged reporters.

A window cracked open at Fox News with the exposure and downfall of Roger Ailes and Bill O'Reilly. But it was not until a handful of actresses and administrative assistants went public with their accusations that Harvey Weinstein forced himself on them – and in many cases, then paid them off to keep quiet in confidential settlements – that #MeToo ignited and spread around the world.

It was a dizzying time – news media executives, movie stars, corporate chiefs, Silicon Valley tech titans, academics, artists, musicians, architects, directors, playwrights, novelists, dancers, chefs – a cascade of men accused of preying on women were, remarkably, pushed out of jobs even if they were the chief rainmakers or creative forces.

Yet just as Tarana Burke had found, justice was more elusive for women with less visibility, money, or social status and, all too often, women of color. Restaurant servers endured harassment in exchange for the tips necessary for even a minimally living wage, or lost income when they rejected advances. Women laboring on farms and cleaning hotel rooms all reported abuses ranging from rape to harassment. And on factory floors where the earliest cases establishing sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination were originally won, an entrenched culture of sexual swagger, entitlement, and bullying proved a stubborn scourge.

At two Ford Motor Company plants in Chicago, lawsuits, investigations, and findings of discrimination by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) stretched back decades.

When Darnise Hardy arrived on the line in the 1970s, one of the first women to work on the floor, she was told she belonged in the kitchen. In 1993, when a young Suzette Wright arrived at the plant, she was greeted with sexual taunts. And nearly twenty years later, Christie Van's supervisor pressed her for sexual favors.

Women filed the first of many lawsuits in the 1990s. The EEOC found evidence of sexual and racial harassment and reached a settlement with Ford that included having outsiders monitor the factory for three years. For a few years, workers said incidents subsided. Then the Great Recession of 2008 nearly bankrupted the automobile industry and diverted attention from harassment to survival. When production finally began to rebound, incidents of harassment spiked. In 2015, half of all sexual harassment and gender discrimination complaints lodged with the EEOC about Ford's domestic operations originated in Chicago.

In the last few years at Ford's Chicago plants, one woman said a male coworker bit her on the buttocks. A laborer described in pornographic detail what he wanted to do to another woman, then exposed himself to her, she said; later, he pushed her into an empty room and turned off the lights before she fled. Once more, the EEOC issued a finding of discrimination and hashed out a settlement with Ford in the summer of 2017. Once more, the company vowed to change and paid a stiff penalty, while outside monitors headed to the factory floor.

What was particularly sobering was that top Ford managers were not cartoon villains. They insisted they wanted the harassment to stop, but they underestimated its scale, urgency, and staying power. The monitors in the first settlement had ended their stint in 2003, but noted warning signs: staffers inexperienced in investigating complaints, the lack of a policy against fraternization, and the practice of promoting people widely perceived to be harassers. All of these issues would resurface.

Ford delayed or declined to fire those accused of harassment, leaving workers to conclude that offenders would go unpunished. It let sexual harassment training wane and, women charge, failed to stamp out retaliation.

Workers and their advocates also pointed to failings of the local union, torn between its mission to represent both accusers and the accused, with a leadership that included alleged predators. Many women accused their union representatives of either harassing them, dismissing or trivializing their complaints, or pressuring them into silence because of fears the plant would be shut down.

The struggles to set Ford's Chicago plants in order are echoed by institutions across the country that not only are trying to change workplace cultures, but also are battling culturally imbued attitudes about sexual entitlement and the very nature of masculinity. Like the sexual revolution in the 1970s, the new spotlight on sexual harassment prompted a searching, uncomfortable assessment not only of the workplace, but also of private life: what constitutes consent, how to read sexual cues, the role of pornography in shaping men's approach to foreplay and sexual conquest, whether bad sex is a form of harassment, whether men would now shy away from mentoring women. This confusion and resentment, too, would detonate in the political arena.

Somehow, women are still shocked and angry to find that sisterhood is fickle. Women, in fact, do not define their self-interest in the same ways. That was true at the peak of the women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s, and it remains true in the age of Trump.

A truism of political science is that party affiliation drives voting, far more than gender. And women who voted for Trump spanned the gamut: conservative Christians like Krysta Fitch who believed the Bible made men the head of the household; nurses like Rebecca Gregory who supported Planned Parenthood but objected to President Barack Obama's stance on the police; engineers like Deb Alighire of Michigan who trusted his business acumen to bring back jobs to decimated manufacturing areas; women like Victoria Czapski who worried about terrorism and immigration.

Most women I interviewed over the past two years either felt his insults to women were exaggerations by a hostile news media or decided they were a far lower priority than other issues. "If I turned down every candidate who objectified women, I'd vote for no one," Gregory said. Many women I met, whether they subscribed to traditional gender roles or not, whether they embraced being called feminist or shunned the label, were hardly meek and subservient. They were often forceful and opinionated.

Yet it was the Brett Kavanaugh confirmation hearings in September 2018 that exposed how raw, wide, and partisan the gulf between American women remains. While mostly Democratic women rallied around Christine Blasey Ford, finding

her testimony sincere and courageous and explaining her memory lapses as the understandable result of trauma, Trump's base had markedly different reactions. Some dismissed her as part of a partisan plot: Kavanaugh himself, his face contorted with rage, denounced the hearings as a political hit job and insulted members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, most notably Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota. For others, the hearings resonated with a note Trump had struck: that could be your husband or son falsely accused in a wave of #MeToo hysteria. And still others, most notably some who had either survived sexual abuse or whose close relatives had, echoed some of the divides of class that helped power Trump's election. They prided themselves on stoicism and grit, implying that unlike elite women, they could not afford to dwell on their experience years later.

"PTSD, c'mon, get real," said Crystal Walls, a sixty-year-old waitress in Southaven, Mississippi, who said her daughter had been raped, beaten, and left unconscious in a motel room twenty years ago. "Maybe she needs to talk to some servicemen that really understand PTSD. It's not that I don't understand rape, big time. But if it affects you that bad, which it did my daughter, you go to counseling, whatever you need to do. My daughter's gone on just fine with her life."

Some were also skeptical of the gaps in Ford's memory. Krysta Fitch said her stepfather abused her for several years, beginning when she was about nine years old and ending with his arrest and imprisonment when she was thirteen. "I just have a hard time believing that someone would wait that long to say something," she said of Ford. "For her not to be able to remember most of the things that happened doesn't make sense to me. There are small, minute details that stick with you no matter what. I mean the room you're in, or the smell of that person, it stays with you."

So why don't women who share the all-too-common experience of being demeaned and harassed by men share a common bond that might transcend political party? And why would women oppose rights and freedoms that seem to be in their own self-interest? It is a question that has tormented feminists since the fight for suffrage.

It depends on which identities – woman, wife, mother, race, class, political, or religious affiliation – are more central for which woman. Just as Phyllis Schlafly rallied conservative women against the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970s by defending motherhood and homemaking, political scientists have found that many conservative women tend to define their power and privilege through the men in their lives. Trump's appeal to economic, racial, and gender resentment and his promise to return to old hierarchies appealed to a segment of women even as it did to men, a study by political scientists Erin C. Cassese and Tiffany D. Barnes showed.¹ Many of these women scored high on a scale of "hostile sexism," meaning that they saw women's gains coming at the expense of men. They also clung to the advantage of being White as compensation for the disadvantage of being a woman.

Melissa Deckman, a political scientist at Washington College, in Chestertown, Maryland, who has written about women in the Tea Party, surveyed likely female voters in the midterms and found that Democratic women ranked gender equality among their top political priorities; Republican women ranked it among the lowest, far behind terrorism, immigration, and education.²

After two years of training, fundraising, and testing the waters, women mounted their most direct lunge at political power in 2018 as they ran for office at all levels of government. The midterms offered an existential test of the resistance, and women's centrality to it. And they offered clues about the most effective ways of selling voters on women and power: how to champion and defang images of strength and assertion.

In every way, the midterm candidates and campaigns broke the mold. Insurgent women of color like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York and Ayanna Pressley of Boston challenged longtime White male incumbents in their own parties, pulling off upset primary victories in safe Democratic seats. Notably, Republicans fielded relatively few women; the party has lagged in creating fundraising and recruitment infrastructure aimed at women.

The women of 2018 campaigned in new ways. They were unapologetic about motherhood. A few breastfed babies in their introductory videos, while Mikie Sherill of New Jersey defied the conventional wisdom that bringing kids to campaign events would provoke questions about how women could juggle Congress and children. Lucy McBath won Newt Gingrich's formerly safe Republican seat in suburban Atlanta, propelled by a raw video describing her son's death in gun violence.

They were aggressive. Dana Nessel won her race for Michigan's attorney general with a pull-no-punches ad about sexual harassment: "Who can you trust most not to show you their penis? Is it the candidate who doesn't have a penis?"

They claimed male emblems of power as their own. In campaign ads and videos, a crop of women military veterans projected strength and patriotism, dressing in uniform or posing in a bomber jacket next to a fighter plane. Those credentials helped some Democrats flip seats in more centrist districts, including Elaine Luria in Virginia and Chrissy Houlahan in Pennsylvania.

And many women were determined to exert power they had long been denied as voters or candidates of color. LaTosha Brown has spent more than a quarter-century as a grassroots organizer studying how Black voters can gain power in their own communities, lessons she put to work rallying and motivating voters to turn out across the South. Raised in Selma, Alabama, she was surrounded by landmarks of the civil rights movement and reminders of continuing discrimination and voter suppression. She plastered a bus with images of raised Black fists, and drove through countless small towns in Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee, drawing appreciative honks from Black drivers and some avert-

ed stares from Whites. She and her colleagues chose states with marquee races, like Stacey Abrams's quest in Georgia to become the first Black female governor in the nation. Brown opened each meeting with a spiritual or civil rights anthem and closed each one with a prayer. She and her colleagues have found that shaming Black voters to turn out by citing the many who died to win that freedom is often counterproductive; they must be convinced their vote will make a difference. So at every stop, she talked to voters and volunteers about the importance of change at the local level, like running for seats on the school board or in races for sheriff or prosecutor.

For decades, through the civil rights and women's liberation movements, women of color remained largely invisible, partly out of deference to Black men who were often prime targets of racial violence, partly because sexism was hardly limited to White men. Not only did they march and endure water hoses, dogs, beatings, and imprisonment, they also taught school, cooked church suppers, held down their households when Black men were killed or jailed, and brought their children with them to the polls to impress on them the urgency of voting.

In the midterms, many were in the spotlight at last. They did not win all the victories they sought: Abrams lost by the smallest margin of any Democrat in decades, amid widespread charges of voter suppression. Brown allowed herself some flashes of bitterness, but no despair.

"One of the gifts of Black women is that we're extremely resilient," she said. "We don't have the luxury of giving up. We see how fragile democracy is. But you will see that people still feel a sense of pride and accomplishment of the work that has been led by Black women. My belief is that if enough of us are building relationships together, we're going to assert the America that we seek."

That assertion began as women took office in January 2019 – and it both enthralled and appalled a nation still unaccustomed to muscular displays of female power.

Nancy Pelosi has offered a master class in the patient acquisition and exuberant flexing of power. She methodically put down a rebellion against her reclaiming the post of speaker of the House, one that smacked of sexism and ageism. She outwitted and flummoxed a pugilistic president in a duel over the government shutdown that riveted the country. In a now-famous televised encounter, she deftly parried Trump's attempts to talk over, ignore, and undercut her. She was steely, calm, and pointed. He demanded money for the wall; the master vote-counter told him flatly he would come up short. He tried to unnerve her by referring to her leadership challenge; she shot back, "Don't characterize the strength that I bring to this meeting as the leader of the House Democrats."

A president who revels in insult by tweet found himself one-upped in the art of the put-down. As a candidate, Donald Trump was so invested in totems of mas-

culinity that he felt he had to reassure voters about the size of his penis; she dismissed his calls for the wall as “like a manhood thing for him.” Nor did she hesitate to use her authority as a mother and grandmother as its own sort of weapon; she dismissed the president’s behavior as akin to a toddler’s tantrums. The impeachment inquiry has posed an existential challenge to Trump, and Pelosi, initially wary, is now at the heart of the most consequential duel of power – between branches of government and this man and woman – that the country has witnessed in decades.

But with women’s ascent came attacks and unease, particularly if those women were not White or political centrists. Ocasio-Cortez has become a lightning rod for the right, who have deployed familiar weapons of gender: branding her as a hypocrite for wearing expensive (and borrowed) clothes in an *Interview* magazine photo shoot and falsely accusing her of hiring her boyfriend on the government’s dime.

She has broken all the rules in Congress, where deference to seniority is the norm and newcomers are expected to avoid the spotlight. It may be particularly galling to see such a young woman – she was twenty-nine when she won her seat in Congress – command so much attention and so coolly deflect criticism.

As the presidential race heats up, so has the debate about how women running for office are characterized and covered. Women once more are confronting charges of being unlikeable or unelectable – questions frequently raised about Elizabeth Warren – prompting accusations of continuing double standards. Women candidates are wrestling with how much to emphasize gender, as Kirsten Gillibrand did in her unsuccessful primary bid, or downplay it, as Amy Klobuchar has. There remains a political buzz about men running for office that tends to elude women, as many charge was the case for Beto O’Rourke or Pete Buttigieg compared with Stacey Abrams. It is both heartening and depressing that several of the men running for president felt compelled to say they would name a woman as vice president: on the one hand, women have become a potent enough political force that they must be placated; on the other, the faithful number two is a place women know all too well.

And yet, as Warren’s rise in the polls shows, women remain credible candidates for president. She hasn’t confined herself to traditional women’s issues or expected codes of behavior, nor has she run away from what she’s learned as a woman in men’s fields. Warren’s popularity has been fueled in part by her detailed policy positions: an area in which women in politics have long excelled, by necessity. Her struggle to juggle work and family as a divorced mother resonates with many women, and her childcare proposal is the most comprehensive of any candidate’s. She is also seen as a willing pugilist who punches back at Trump – hardly the model of traditional feminine decorum.

Just as the women who won the grueling battle for suffrage knew a century ago, the prize of full equality for women remains elusive. The backlash to women’s

power epitomized by the rise of Donald Trump remains a potent strand of American life, but perhaps less potent than many women feared in 2016. The work of wresting and sustaining power for women will remain, no matter who prevails in 2020.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Erin C. Cassese and Tiffany D. Barnes, "Reconciling Sexism and Women's Support for Republican Candidates: A Look at Gender, Class, and Whiteness in the 2012 and 2016 Presidential Races," *Political Behavior* 41 (3) (2019): 677–700.
- ² Melissa Deckman, "What Women Want: Issue Priorities for Women Voters in Election 2018," Gender Watch, August 10, 2018, <http://www.genderwatch2018.org/what-women-want/>.

The Dilemma of Gender Equality: How Labor Market Regulation Divides Women by Class

*Torben Iversen, Frances McCall Rosenbluth
& Øyvind Skorge*

Women shoulder a heavier burden of family work than men in modern society, preventing them from matching male success in the external labor market. Limiting working hours is a plausible way to level the playing field by creating the possibility of less gendered roles for both sexes. But why then are heavily regulated European labor markets associated with a smaller share of women in top management positions compared with liberal market economies such as in the United States? We explain this puzzle with reference to the difficulty of ambitious women to signal their commitment to high-powered careers in regulated markets.

Despite a large influx of women into mainly service sector jobs over the past four decades, women continue to be underrepresented in the labor market, and they earn less on average than men. These gender differences are almost certainly linked to greater de facto responsibilities of women in child-rearing and household work, but there are major and intriguing differences across rich democracies.

In low- and mid-level jobs, the differences are fairly well understood. In Europe, union bargaining and wage compression put a higher floor under the lowest paid jobs where women disproportionately find themselves in every country. The gender gap in wages is smaller in Europe as a result, although another reason could be that low-productivity jobs may be scarcer. Regulated working hours, compatible with work-family balance, complements family-friendly policies such as public subsidization of childcare. Yet if this broadly accepted story is accurate, we should also expect the number of female managers of large firms and university-educated professionals to be rising as we travel from the United States and the United Kingdom to continental Europe and further north to Scandinavia. In fact, the reverse is true. Although the number is small everywhere, the share of women in high-powered private sector careers in the United States significantly exceeds that in Germa-

ny or Denmark. The explanation cannot be the long hours and inflexible schedules of professional work, since this is equally true in the United States. Also of no help are theories of occupational performance that predict greater female success in jobs requiring relationship management and multitasking, since these criteria characterize managerial jobs across the United States and Europe.

Our explanation instead focuses on unintended consequences: regulations that curtail working hours at nonmanagerial levels discourage employers from promoting women to higher levels, given that they have incomplete information about candidates. To employers who can measure productivity only imperfectly, long working hours are a signal – though a noisy one – of expected productivity and therefore of suitability for many kinds of higher-level managerial jobs. Labor market regulations tend to equalize both wages and employment opportunities for men and women when productivity is linked to hours worked, but it has the perverse effect of intensifying statistical discrimination against women in high-end jobs, even when these jobs are themselves unregulated. This logic explains the opposite effects of working-hours regulation at the low and high ends of the occupational hierarchy. Sadly, all good things do not go together, and labor market regulations produce good and bad results at the same time.

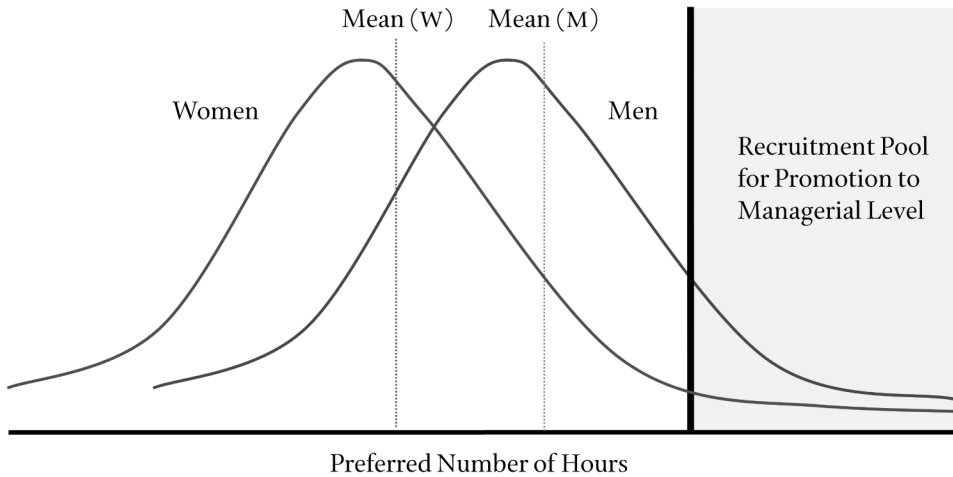
We begin by distinguishing jobs along three dimensions: 1) whether hours worked are positively associated with (hourly) productivity; 2) whether there are ample opportunities for promotions based on competition rather than seniority; and 3) whether working hours are regulated (restricted) below the management level.

As a general matter, low- and mid-level jobs may or may not be regulated in terms of working hours and wages, whereas top-end jobs are typically unregulated. While both women and men may have equal levels of ambition, family responsibilities are borne disproportionately by women in a way that reduces, on average, their availability to work around the clock (see Figure 1).

It is not difficult to see that, if the number of hours worked on average increases the worker's productivity, employers will be disinclined to hire or promote women because they are expected, as a statistical matter, to be less productive. Capping the number of hours worked, however, can address this problem. If men and women must work the same number of hours, the gender gaps in employment and wages will shrink, all else equal. Hours regulation can therefore be a powerful tool to improve gender equality, as a number of prominent gender scholars have argued.

If we also care about competitive promotions to managerial ranks, however, a countervailing logic kicks in. When employers recruit workers for jobs requiring long hours, they look for candidates available for around-the-clock work without career interruptions.

Figure 1
The Distribution of Preferences for Working Hours by Gender



If working hours are unregulated, employers can both observe past career interruptions and hours logged, and are likely to promote those who have demonstrated career ambition through past performance. Even assuming no prejudice, the larger number of men in the recruitment pool will turn up more men than women in managerial positions.

It is important to note that “hours worked” are a noisy, unreliable signal of future productivity. Since employers cannot know in advance the commitment of those who are promoted to working long hours, they use past and current hours as shorthand. Workers therefore have an incentive to work longer hours than they would like to, even considering the wages they are able to earn as a result.¹ This is supported by empirical evidence suggesting that a substantial fraction of workers do in fact clock longer hours than they would like. According to the 1995 Swiss Labor Force Survey, for example, approximately 70 percent of both male and female full-time workers said they would prefer working less than they actually do.² People hang around the office at late hours to show their commitment to the boss despite lost time with their families and in leisure.

Being forced to signal future productivity by working long hours today poses a particular problem for women, given the time-consuming extra home duties that society assigns by gender.³ Because many important hiring and promotion decisions occur at a relatively young age, employers worry that women will leave or cut back their hours if they have children.⁴ This is likely to delay promotions for

women, and puts pressure on women to work even harder than men to signal their commitment. If fewer women than men can make those trade-offs, fewer women will be promoted.⁵

It is no wonder, then, that many women avoid investing in careers that require longer or more rigid hours than they want to devote. Economists Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz, for example, have found that many women interested in medicine become veterinarians because of the smaller up-front investment and the flexible working schedule, despite lower wages.⁶ Women have gone from making up 10 percent of the graduates of veterinary school in the 1980s to nearly 80 percent in 2007. Many women who do become medical doctors work fewer hours than would be necessary to recoup their financial investment in education and forgone income. Economists M. Keith Chen and Judith Chevalier have found that the median female primary-care physician does not work enough hours to amortize her up-front investment in medical school, leading to the stark conclusion that many female doctors are financially worse off than if they had become physician assistants instead.⁷

On the face of it, restricting working hours would seem a good way not only to slow down the rat race for workers in general, but also to move toward greater gender equality. Perversely, however, hours regulation can make matters even worse for career women. *So long as society produces and reinforces gendered family roles, women on average prefer to and/or are expected to work fewer hours than men.* This is borne out by the actual working hours of men and women. Since men and women are otherwise assumed to be identical as workers (most notably in terms of education), the stark implication is that employers will disproportionately promote men.

In the real world, there are, of course, many other factors that matter in promotions than formal qualifications and willingness to work long hours. Employers take into account quality of work, education, seeming competence and intelligence, social skills, personality, appearance, and so on. Moreover, workers can signal dedication and commitment to hard work in indirect ways by, for example, going to work-related social functions whose hours are not regulated. Still, on balance, strict hour regulations put women at a disadvantage in competing for high-powered jobs.

A paradoxical implication of our argument is that men who are promoted in regulated systems will on average be less willing to work long hours than their peers in unregulated systems. This is because they have not all been selected from among the most ambitious workers. For women with preferences above the regulated maximum, on the other hand, the effects of regulation are unambiguously bad.

To draw out more testable empirical implications, we distinguish between nonmanagerial and managerial jobs. Workers in *low-skill occupations* and *manual occupations* do not become more productive by working long hours. Indeed, physical fatigue ensures that marginal productivity will decline above a certain, fairly low threshold.⁸

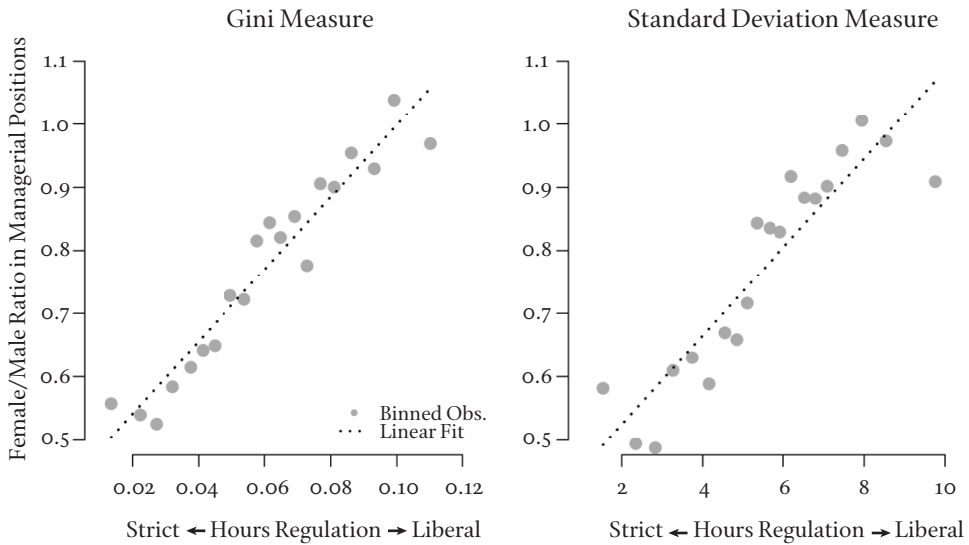
The story is different in *professional*, *semiprofessional*, and *managerial* jobs. The rise of service sector jobs has drawn women into the labor market, and in many social and personal services, women now outnumber men. Still, the ability of a woman to compete across the board in nonmanual labor markets continues to depend substantially on working hours. In all top-end managerial jobs, managers spend long hours in the office to ensure the productivity of others in the organization, including other managers. This is surely one reason that top-end jobs are not regulated, even in otherwise regulated systems. But it puts women at a disadvantage compared with men. How much of a disadvantage depends on hours and related regulations at lower levels. If women cannot reveal their ambition through exceptionally hard work and long hours at that level, promotions will go even more disproportionately to men, relative to unregulated systems. The result is that hours regulations unambiguously hurt women in top-end managerial jobs even if it helps women in nonmanagerial jobs.

Our analysis builds on evidence presented in our 2019 working paper, “Divided by Ambition: The Gender Politics of Labor Market Regulation.”⁹ Data are compiled from annual European Union Labour Force Surveys (EULFS) from 1992 to 2008 for Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Together, our individual-level data set contains more than sixty-seven million observations.¹⁰

Our argument predicts that fewer women will make it into managerial ranks precisely in those countries and sectors that limit working hours. That is what we find. Across countries and sectors, there is a tight relationship between the possibility of working long hours in recruitment positions and women’s chances of being in managerial positions. Figure 2 shows this relationship statistically, first with a “Gini” measure of the distribution of actual weekly hours for each sector. The Gini coefficient varies between 0 and 1, where 0 means that all employees in a sector work the same hours and 1 means that one employee works all the hours. In our sample, where full-time actual hours vary between thirty-five and eighty, the hours Gini coefficient ranges from 0.01 to 0.16.¹¹ Our second operationalization of working hours, in the scatter plot on the right side of Figure 2, measures the standard deviation in long hours relative to the modal actual hours worked among respondents who work thirty-five or more hours a week by sector. The results are remarkably similar across the two measures.

We also find a positive relationship between less restrictive working hours and women’s access to leadership positions *between sectors within countries* and *between countries within sectors*.¹² Figure 3 shows that the three countries with less restrictive hours regulations – France, Ireland, and the United Kingdom – have relatively more women in managerial positions. Using either measure, hours

Figure 2
Hours Regulations and the Gender Difference in Managerial Positions
(Residualized on Year and Country)



Source: Eurostat, European Union Labour Force Surveys, 1992–2008 (Luxembourg: Eurostat, European Commission, 1992–2008).

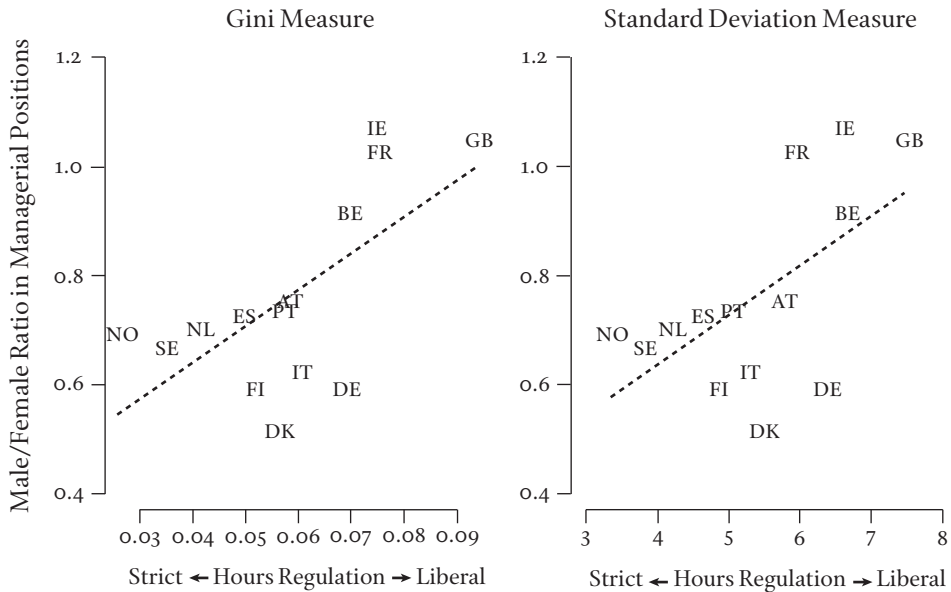
flexibility corresponds with a higher average share of women in management. Denmark and Germany are negative outliers, and this does not appear to be due to measurement issues since the same pattern emerges if we use International Labor Organization data instead. The two cases clearly deserve closer analysis, but much of the cross-national variance points to differences in working hours regulations.

Within sectors, there is a strong positive relationship between lower hours regulation and women in management, except for wholesale and retail, where the line is flat. We surmise that a large number of store managers generally need to be present only during opening hours, and opening hours tend to be more restricted when working hours are also strongly regulated.

Finally, we find that working hours regulations increase women’s share of non-managerial jobs, as we can see in Figure 4. This is strongly supportive of our argument that managerial labor markets function differently than nonmanagerial labor markets, and what promotes gender equality in one may hinder it in another.

While it is often argued that strict hours regulations help level the playing field between men and women, and while this seems to hold for low- and mid-level

Figure 3
Hours Regulations and the Gender Difference in Managerial Positions
(Country-Level Means)



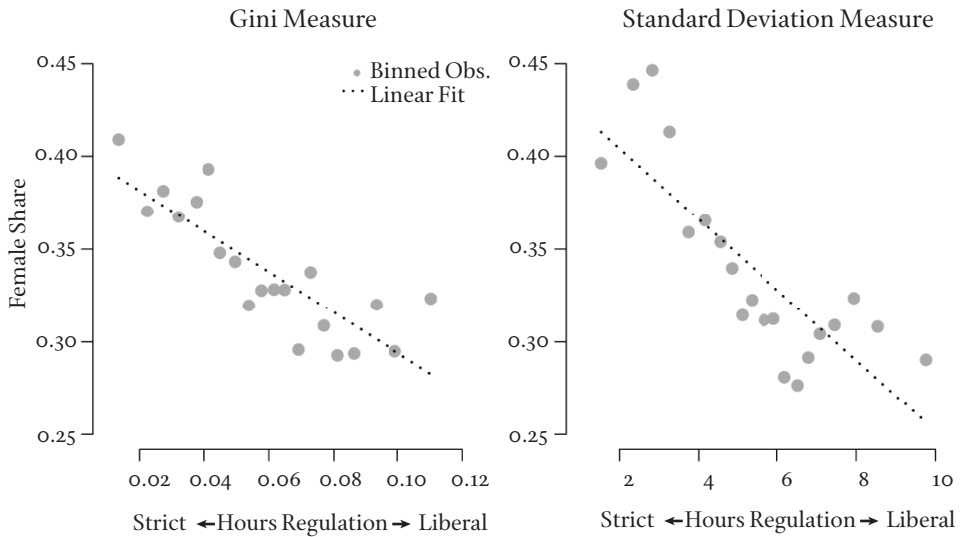
ES—Spain; PT—Portugal; IT—Italy; NL—Netherlands; SE—Sweden; NO—Norway; DK—Denmark; FI—Finland; AT—Austria; BE—Belgium; FR—France; DE—Germany; IE—Ireland; GB—Great Britain. Source: Eurostat, European Union Labour Force Surveys, 1992–2008 (Luxembourg: Eurostat, European Commission, 1992–2008).

jobs, it does not hold for high-powered careers in which the inability of ambitious women to reveal their commitment automatically gives men an advantage. Paradoxically, it is precisely when long hours are most valued by businesses that strict regulations will hurt women, even though more men than women are able and willing to supply long hours.

The obvious alternative explanation for the difficulty of women to break into positions of economic power is that they face a culture of discrimination rising out of traditional gender stereotypes. Undoubtedly there is some truth to this, and policy and business scholar Jette Knudsen’s comparison of promotion decisions by American and Danish firms operating in Denmark suggests that differences in corporate culture do matter.¹³

Yet it is implausible that a cultural interpretation could account for the general pattern we have uncovered. As we have shown, the effect of hours regulations is

Figure 4
Hours Regulations and the Share of Women in Nonmanagerial Recruitment Positions (Residualized on Year and Country)



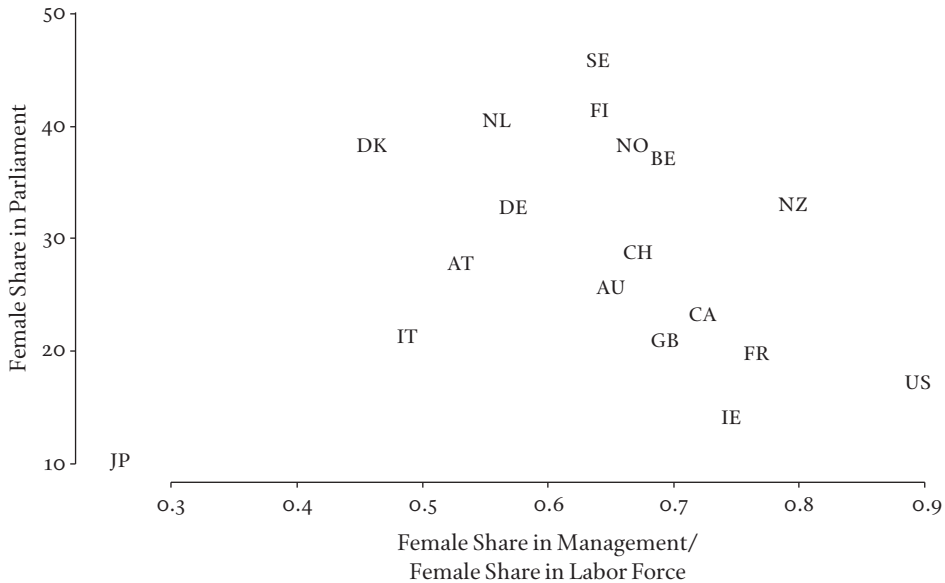
Source: Eurostat, European Union Labour Force Surveys, 1992–2008 (Luxembourg: Eurostat, European Commission, 1992–2008).

the opposite in managerial and nonmanagerial labor markets, which is difficult to reconcile with a single gender norm against women’s employment.

Still, there may be a norm against women in management, which coincides with more restrictive hours regulations. If this is true, however, it is hard to understand why women do so poorly at the top end of the occupational pyramid in countries with strong left parties and a long-standing commitment to gender equality (notably in Scandinavia). Indeed, this commitment is clearly on display in substantial female representation in the national legislature and in government. In Spain, for example, the socialist government pursued a policy of virtual gender parity in both the parliament and the executive, yet women have made few inroads into corporate boardrooms.

Representation of women in the political elite is *negatively* related to representation of women in the economic elite, as illustrated in Figure 5. Excluding the obvious outlier, Japan (which we discuss below), there is a clear negative correlation of -0.42 . This is particularly surprising because over time there is a strong *positive* relationship between female labor force participation and representation in the national legislature in every country, a relationship that almost certainly also

Figure 5
Female Representation in the Political and Economic Elite in Sixteen
OECD Countries, 2008 – 2012



DK–Denmark; IT–Italy; AT–Austria; NL–Netherlands; DE–Germany; SE–Sweden; FI–Finland; AU–Australia; NO–Norway; CH–Switzerland; BE–Belgium; GB–Great Britain; CA–Canada; IE–Ireland; FR–France; NZ–New Zealand; US–United States. Source: International Labor Organization, Labour Statistics Database, “Population and Labour Force” (Geneva: International Labor Organization, 2015); and Klaus Armingeon, Virginia Wenger, Fiona Wiedemeier, et al., *Comparative Political Data Set 1960–2017* (Bern: Institute of Political Science, University of Bern, 2018).

applies to the share of women in management.¹⁴ One would expect that women who acquire experience and competences in the labor market, and form strong independent political views in the process, expand the pool of candidates for national elected office.¹⁵ Why, then, is there a strong negative cross-national relationship between the share of women in management and in the legislature?

Our explanation goes back to the general model outlined in *Women, Work, and Politics: The Political Economy of Gender Inequality*. For reasons spelled out by political scientist Thomas Cusack and colleagues, regulated markets and proportional-representation (PR) electoral systems coevolved in the early twentieth century.¹⁶ Regulation, associated with both strong insiders and skilled unions, and PR, which produces more center-left government in favor of such regulation,

both help explain why it is hard for women to break into the highest positions in business.

At the same time, the electoral system powerfully shapes the incentives and opportunities for women to enter politics. Unlike single-member district systems, PR electoral systems do not require politicians to commit to uninterrupted careers in order to cultivate close relations with their constituencies and to build up bargaining power within the legislature. In closed list systems, PR instead produces strong parties where commitment to the party label is more important than building up personal political capital (which is looked at with suspicion by party leaders). Party-centered systems make it far easier for women to have political careers, compared with candidate-centered ones, and it gives party leaders no (rational) reason to discriminate against women when promoting them through the party organization.

Japan is a significant outlier, combining low female shares in both corporate boardrooms and in the legislature. But the reasons why in fact highlight the logic of our argument. Unlike in Northern Europe, where labor regulations tend to reflect the political strength of organized labor, Japan's top firms offer job security to compete for scarce skilled labor, despite weak unions. These firms avoid hiring women into long-term labor contracts because women are expected to quit upon childbearing, taking with them the firm's investment in their human capital. For Japanese firms, women are simply a bad financial bet. In politics, female candidates do more poorly in the single-member districts than in the PR tier, but they do not do particularly well in either one, reflecting the small number of women with managerial or local government experience.

An obvious question raised by this analysis is why women do not help institute reforms of the labor market in systems where they are well-represented in politics. Most women favor labor market regulations because it helps them balance family and career. But for those women who put their career ahead of their family, as many men do, such regulations are a double-edged sword. In a separate paper, we find empirically that career-ambitious women are more likely to lean right than career-unambitious women, all else equal.¹⁷ The absence of a level playing field between men and women in a sense pushes ambitious women in the direction of favoring deregulation, and thereby induces a cleavage among women that would otherwise not exist. Women with low- or mid-level jobs are protected from long hours, but ambitious women are largely shut out of corporate boardrooms. This splits the female vote and hampers efforts to present a unified women-friendly policy agenda.

Hours regulation could help workers slow down the rat race.¹⁸ The problem for women is that even the slower European work week stretches conventional expectations of motherhood to their limit – seven hours

a day – and corporate leadership typically requires longer hours than that. Given the gender wage inequality that results from unequal availability to work, it is hard to dispense with the existing family bargain in which the partner making less money (still, in most cases, the female) shoulders more of the family work in order to free the man to earn more money: the basis for gains from trade within a marriage. Society is caught in a self-reinforcing sexist equilibrium.

Many women, of course, do benefit from the shortened work week. Restrictions on working hours narrow the gender wage gap in lower-level occupations. But they do so at the cost of shrinking the percentage of women who make it up the ladder. Although grasping the net welfare benefits of hours regulation would require more information than we have about selection effects and constrained preferences, our analysis demonstrates, at a minimum, that the decision of whether or not to regulate hours entails substantial distributional consequences across different groups of women. Women who are willing to forgo a family life have a substantially greater chance of career success in an unregulated market than in a system that muffles signals of outlier levels of ambition. However imperfect a marker of productivity and ability, working long hours (one could just as well write “rat” across one’s forehead) replaces gender as a signal in countries without hours regulation.

Until the average woman is able or willing to spend as much time on her career as the average man, a firm would have to pay a wage premium to get gender equality in its upper management. Imaginative public policy could subsidize the costs of family-related absences by providing tax credits or procurement priority to firms that meet desirable targets, thereby socializing the costs of family time now borne by underpaid or nonworking mothers. But any action involving legislation requires widespread political support and the absence of a blocking coalition: a difficult proposition when women’s own preferences about family and work are so widely distributed.

Alternatively, if the average man were able or willing to spend as much time on his family as the average woman, firms would be less likely to view female employees as greater flight risks and gendered statistical discrimination might wither away. Scandinavian countries reserve some portion of family leave for fathers in order to shift gendered family norms, but the rewards of long hours at work in managerial careers are such that few men take more than the minimum fathers’ quota and many forgo their rights to paid leave altogether. This pattern is unlikely to change dramatically until the health, emotional, and social benefits of family engagement are widely touted to outweigh the career benefits of staying in the rat race. And so, the sexist equilibrium persists.

European women not satisfied with a smaller wage gap in the lower rungs are pressing for government-mandated quotas for women on corporate boards, and several European countries have mustered the legislative coalitions to pass the req-

uisite laws. European women dream of leapfrogging the United States, where 40 percent of managers, 15 percent of high-ranking managers, and only a handful of Fortune 500 CEOs are female.¹⁹ Early experiments with quotas on boards in Norway generated a backlash in some quarters by the men who feel unfairly passed over and by women who had to bear the burden of proof that they reached the top on merit.²⁰ But Iceland, France, Spain, and the Netherlands are forging ahead with quota laws, and Belgium, Germany, and Sweden are considering similar legislation.²¹

The quota debate may prove to be constructive in Europe, but it has not gained traction in the current U.S. legal and political environment. Perhaps firms themselves will be motivated by the 2007 McKinsey study that shows that European firms with at least three women on their executive committees outperformed their rivals both in average return on equity and operating profits.²² Although naysayers are quick to argue that only profitable firms could afford the luxury of appointing unqualified females in the first place, the study points out, plausibly enough, that women in leadership positions are likely to be important interpreters of female spending and investment patterns in an era of growing female spending power.

The gender wage gap is smaller in jobs where output is easier to measure than by the shorthand of hours, and perhaps technological or organizational advances in productivity measurement will hasten the trend. Some studies find smaller gender wage gaps in more competitive market niches, although a “macho culture” could deter many women from venturing into some of those occupations. Whatever the current situation, it is a sure bet that firms will not draw more deeply from the pool of female talent until it is profitable to do so, or policy interventions make it so.

AUTHORS' NOTE

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What's Policy Got to Do with It? Race, Gender & Economic Inequality in the United States

Jamila Michener & Margaret Teresa Brower

In the United States, economic inequality is both racialized and gendered, with Black and Latina women consistently at the bottom of the economic hierarchy. Relative to men (across racial groups) and White women, Black and Latina women often have less-desirable jobs, lower earnings, and higher poverty rates. In this essay, we draw attention to the role of the state in structuring such inequality. Specifically, we examine how public policy is related to racial inequities in economic positions among women. Applying an intersectional lens to the contemporary landscape of economic inequality, we probe the associations between public policies and economic outcomes. We find that policies have unequal consequences across subgroups of women, providing prima facie evidence that state-level decisions about how and where to invest resources have differential implications based on women's race and ethnicity. We encourage scholars to use aspects of our approach as springboards for better specifying and identifying the processes that account for heterogeneous policy effects across racial subgroups of women.

In the United States, economic inequality is both racialized and gendered.¹ This means that the intersecting categories of race and gender are systematically associated with wide disparities in economic outcomes. For example, women across racial groups earn less income than men, but Black and Latina women earn less than both White women *and* Black and Latino men.² Similar patterns occur across a variety of economic indicators. In terms of income, poverty, and employment, Black and Latina women remain marginalized: they have the lowest earnings, face the most intense occupational segregation, and have the highest poverty rates.³

Sociologists, economists, and other social scientists have identified a host of factors that explain the relative economic status of Black and Latina women. Racial discrimination, constrained social networks, labor market inequities, and much more underlie the processes that generate disparate material outcomes for Women of Color.⁴ Still, there is a lot we do not know about the mechanisms that stratify

Black and Latina women. In particular, scholars have an inadequate understanding of how public policy affects women's economic positioning by gender and race.

In this essay, we investigate whether and how social and economic policies differentially shape women's economic positioning across racial and ethnic groups. We begin by charting disparities between White women and Women of Color across a range of key economic indicators including educational attainment, employment, wages, and poverty. Then, we assess statistical associations between economic outcomes and state-level policies for White, Black, and Latina women. We find substantial heterogeneity in the relationships between economic policies (such as minimum wage laws and disability insurance), social policies (such as cash, food, and medical assistance), and the economic status of women across racial and ethnic groups. Our empirical and theoretical approach is grounded in the concept of intersectionality, a framework developed by Black feminist scholars to capture how a multiplicity of intersecting social identities determine one's power, life experiences, political interests, and more.⁵ By adopting an intersectional approach, scholars can study heterogeneous groups with more nuance, remaining attentive to various junctions of different social positions and categories. Applying the lens of intersectionality to questions about economic inequality prompts us to investigate the ways that Women of Color – specifically Latina and Black women – are affected by social and economic policies relative to their White counterparts. Doing so reveals the complex role of the state in gendering and racializing economic inequality.

Numerous factors shape race and gender inequalities in economic outcomes, but we stress the role of policy, bringing the state more into view.⁶ Concentrating on social and economic policies – primary levers through which government determines and regulates access to resources – is important for three reasons.

First, *policy is uniquely vital to producing and reducing inequality*. The state wields enormous power to differentially determine the fortunes of its denizens.⁷ The New Deal of the 1930s offers especially pertinent lessons on how policy can create, maintain, and exacerbate racialized and gendered economic inequality.⁸ One of the centerpieces of the New Deal – Social Security/OAI (Old Age Insurance) – included provisions that disqualified workers in the agricultural and domestic industries.⁹ These provisions meant that nine out of ten African American women workers were automatically rendered ineligible.¹⁰ Social Security did not incorporate domestic workers until 1948 and agricultural laborers were left out until 1950.¹¹ Despite its prominent status as “the closest thing to a race-blind social program the United States has ever known,” Social Security was marked by inequity at its origins. This was particularly consequential for Black women, who lost

state-based financial resources for well over a decade during a time when others were gaining them.¹² Policy matters for inequality.

The second reason we center policy in our analytical approach is because it is *amenable to change*. When the design or implementation of policy exacerbates inequality, policy-makers, advocates, and other engaged members of the political community can work to modify and improve it. The ability of such actors to advance change hinges upon knowledge about how public policy affects economic inequality. To extend the previous example with a more contemporary focus, Social Security continues to have disproportionate effects on Americans by race and ethnicity, with lower total benefit amounts for People of Color.¹³ This disparity is no longer the result of occupational exclusion. Instead, it stems from larger structural realities: Black and Latino Americans spend fewer years in the workforce, make less income from work, and do not live as long as their White counterparts.¹⁴ Unless we are attentive to such policy inequities, we can neither conceptualize nor configure policy to account for such disproportionalities.¹⁵

The third reason we emphasize policy is because it *reflects and affects democracy*. Political institutions that are part and parcel of the democratic process produce and enable economic inequality. Federalism, for instance, exacerbates racialized economic inequality through social policy. Historically, Aid for Dependent Children (cash assistance) resulted in unbalanced welfare coverage by race and ethnicity, with Black Americans receiving significantly less than their White counterparts.¹⁶ More contemporary cash assistance programs, such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and its successor Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), have also been marked by the institution of federalism in ways that reinforce economic disparities by geography, race, and ethnicity.¹⁷ Even in-kind benefits like health insurance proliferate such inequities through the mechanism of federalism.¹⁸ These differential outcomes by state reveal the ways policies are shaping Americans differently within a federated political structure. By determining access to and experiences with government resources meant to bolster economic security, the political institutions that contour the delivery of public policy both reflect and affect democratic politics. Such processes of policy feedback – the term used to describe the recursive relationship between policy and politics – have profound implications for democracy.¹⁹ Given the relationship between policy and democracy, it is imperative to assess the connections between public policy, economic inequality, race, and gender.

When the economy goes through a process of restructuring, resulting changes affect individuals differently based on their gender, class, race, and ethnic positioning in the social hierarchy. For example, the industrial restructuring of the economy between the 1970s and 1990s had disparate effects on Americans by race and gender.²⁰ Sociologist Irene Browne found

that processes of reindustrialization during this period disproportionately affected young Black women who experienced high increases in unemployment as a result of the expansion of retail trade industries.²¹ Young White women were not similarly affected. Although the 1980s are often depicted as an era that reduced economic inequalities for women, Black women actually experienced greater economic inequality, decreased earnings, and increased unemployment during this time.²²

The 2007 recession is another important instance of how economic conditions divergently shape the lives of women. During the recession, Black and Latina women across levels of educational attainment experienced the highest unemployment rates compared with women from other racial and ethnic groups.²³ Even after the recession officially ended, the unemployment rates for Latina and Black women remained high: the number of Latina and Black young women who were unemployed increased from 25.3 percent in 2007 to 40.5 percent in 2010.²⁴ Similarly, while the postrecession poverty gap between men and women reached a historic low in 2010 (with 16.2 percent of women and 14.0 percent of men living in poverty), poverty rates were highest among Latina and Black women.²⁵ Both historical and contemporary economic shifts highlight the exceptionally precarious position of Women of Color in the American economy.

Public policies are widely purported to provide stability and security in the face of such precarity. But do policies counterbalance the racial disproportionalities of the economy or do they perpetuate such imbalances? This question is too large for any single essay. Thus, we focus deliberately on social and economic policies designed to support those who are most vulnerable to shifts in the economy, with an emphasis on the divergent implications of such policies for women who are differentially positioned within the labor market.

The *social policies* we are most concerned with are those primarily directed at helping people to secure the necessities of material survival like food, medical care, and cash. Key social policies include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), TANF, Medicaid, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). In contrast, the *economic policies* we emphasize are less oriented toward providing specific material resources and more geared toward shaping the structure and returns of the labor market. Such economic policies include minimum wage laws, prevailing wage laws, workers compensation policies, and disability insurance policies. Admittedly, some policies – like the earned income tax credit (EITC) – straddle the boundaries of the policy domains we delineate. Notwithstanding the fluidity of the division between social and economic policies, highlighting this difference is useful for several reasons.

First, it maps onto practice. Many scholars, practitioners, and policy-makers implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) consider these policy realms as separate

domains. Second, these policy categories have different implications for the experiences and needs of women. Social policies generally meet the basic needs of women across various strata of the labor market, with a particular applicability to women living in or near poverty. Economic policies are most relevant to women who are (or have recently been) employed, particularly those occupying low-wage jobs.

This distinction informs the design of the empirical analysis that we offer below by helping us to develop expectations about *how* policies should affect women. In particular, we anticipate that social policies will matter most for women who are unemployed and economic policies will be most consequential for women who are employed. Indeed, social policies provide unemployed women with supplemental income, resources, and public services (such as food stamps and Medicaid) while economic policies tend to provide benefits associated with being employed (such as tax credits and workers compensation).

In addition to these core assumptions concerning labor market positioning and policy type, we also expect that both social and economic policies will have distinct implications for women across racial groups. Existing research provides us with a basis for anticipating dissimilar policy effects across racial and ethnic groups. For example, recent studies indicate that TANF, a particularly salient social policy, exacerbates the Black-White child poverty gap.²⁶ Even more generally, access to the benefits that Latina and Black women disproportionately rely on is often quite constrained: research suggests that 88 percent of women in poverty with children – many of whom are Women of Color – are not receiving social benefits like cash assistance or food and nutritional benefits.²⁷

Economic policies follow a similar pattern. In the 1970s and 1980s, economic nondiscrimination policies such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Act (EEO) were used as a political tool to reduce gender inequality in the labor force. Yet these policies did not shift racialized inequality among women.²⁸ While the EEO had the largest effect on Black women's economic position compared with White women, Black women still experienced less wage gains overall compared with White women.²⁹ Moreover, decades after the EEO, Black and Latina women continued to experience labor market discrimination, which affected their employment status, wage earnings, and economic mobility.³⁰

Altogether, interdisciplinary research on race and public policy gives us substantial reason to expect that both social and economic policies will have differential consequences across racial and ethnic groups.

To explore this hypothesis, we begin with a description of the contemporary landscape of economic inequality across these groups. We highlight four dimensions of economic status for Black, White, and Latina women: 1) educational attainment; 2) employment status; 3) earnings; and 4) poverty

level. These dimensions are not exhaustive; there are other metrics relevant to economic positioning. Still, taken together, these outcomes highlight separate, interrelated, and complementary elements of economic standing. Notably, they are each to some degree a function of both economic conditions and policy realities. Educational attainment is a first-order foundation of economic positioning that affects (albeit differentially across groups) one's economic trajectory across the life course. The federal government along with states and localities play a large part in determining access to and quality of education. Employment status is determined by factors including educational attainment, national and local labor market conditions, and (crucially) economic policies such as nondiscrimination policies, laws regulating contracts, and much more. Similarly, one's work income is a product of both individual-level and macroeconomic factors, but is also contingent on a wide range of policy interventions such as minimum wage statutes. Finally, the extent to which a person is living below the poverty line is influenced by all of the other dimensions we consider (education, employment, wages) and is also significantly conditioned by public policy.

Patterns of inequality between women of different racial groups are widely reported but often in a piecemeal fashion and rarely with an eye toward an intersectional assessment of women's economic positioning. We bring together baseline economic data to paint a comprehensive picture. As expected, we find substantial racial disparities across each of the dimensions noted above. Figures 1 – 4 illustrate these outcomes.

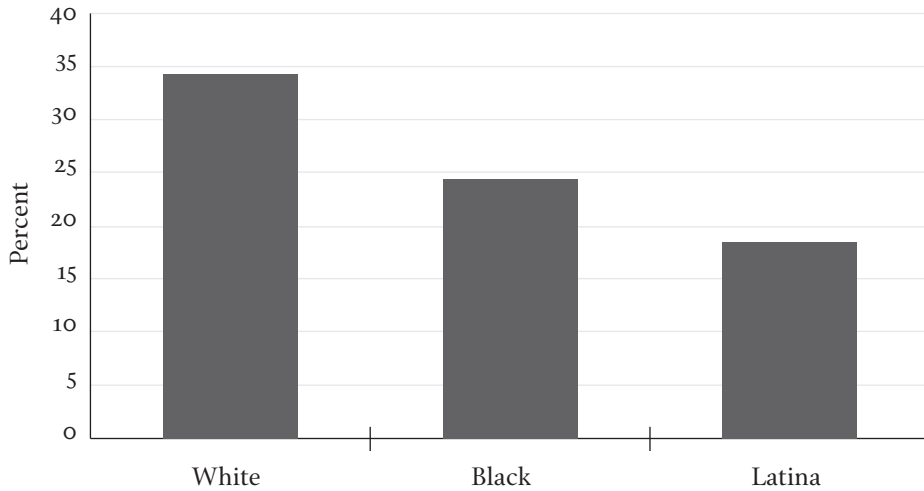
First, there are wide disparities in educational attainment. Figure 1 shows that in 2017, White women led the way in terms of the share of women (ages twenty-five and older) with a bachelor's degree (34 percent). Black women were significantly less likely to obtain this degree (24 percent) and Latina women almost half as likely as White women to obtain a bachelor's degree (18 percent).

Similar patterns emerge with employment. Figure 2 displays the share of women who reported being unemployed in 2016. Even during this postrecession time of economic upsurge, Black women had the highest rate of unemployment (7.8 percent), followed by Latina women (6.3 percent). White women had the lowest unemployment rate (4.2 percent).

Turning to earnings, Figure 3 charts the wide disparity in median earnings between White, Black, and Latina women. In 2017, White women's weekly earnings were \$814 per week, compared with \$673 for Black women and \$618 for Latina women.

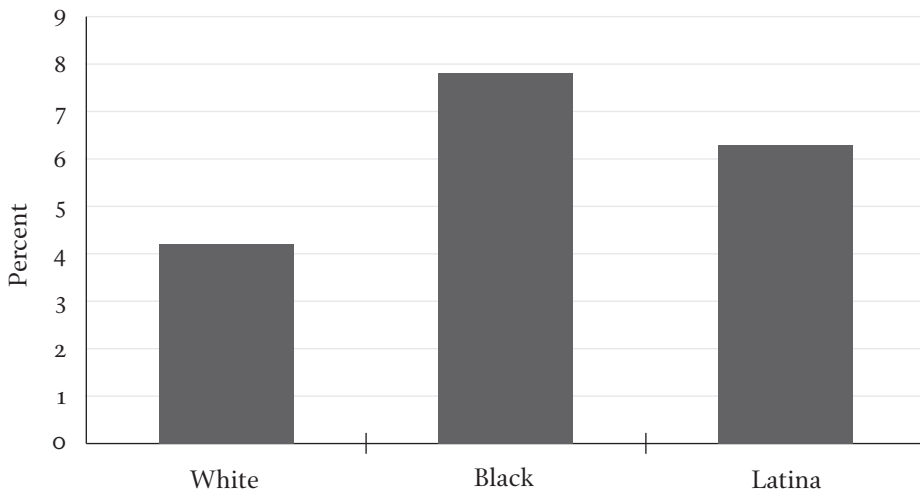
Finally, a look at poverty uncovers comparable patterns. Figure 4 highlights racial differences in poverty rates. In 2013, White women had the lowest poverty rate (11.7 percent), followed by Latina women (24 percent) and Black women (25.7 percent). It is quite striking that White women are less than half as likely as either Black women or Latina women to be living in poverty.

Figure 1
Women Bachelor's Degree Holders or Higher in 2017 by Race/Ethnicity,
Ages Twenty-Five and Older



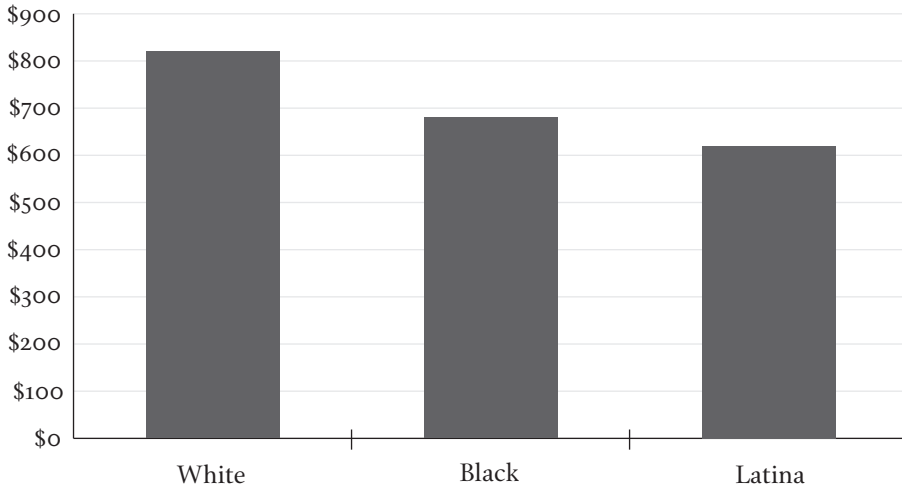
Source: United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017, available through IPUMS USA (Integrated Public-Use Microdata Series), <https://ipums.org>.

Figure 2
Women's Unemployment Rate in 2016 by Race/Ethnicity,
Ages Sixteen and Older



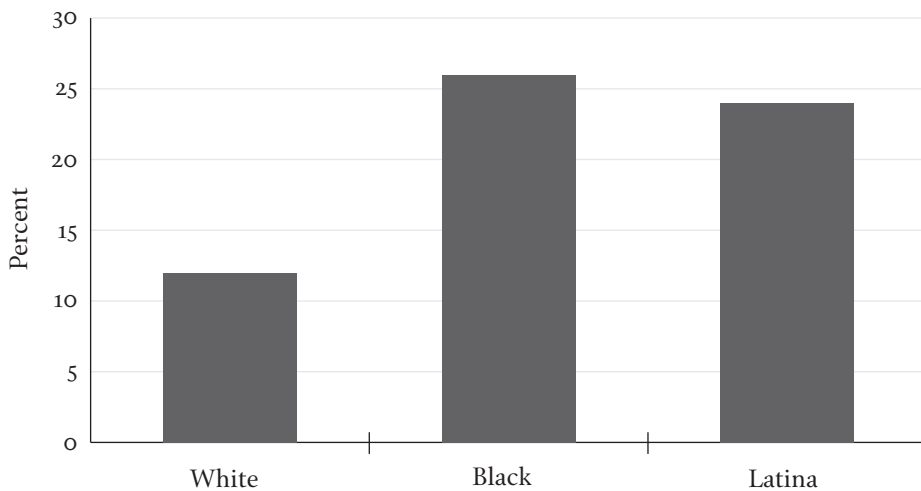
Source: United States Census Bureau, Current Population Survey 2016, available through IPUMS (Integrated Public-Use Microdata Series), <https://ipums.org>.

Figure 3
Women's Median Weekly Earnings in 2017 by Race/Ethnicity,
Ages Sixteen and Older



Source: United States Census Bureau, Current Population Survey 2017, accessed via the Institute for Women's Policy Research, <https://iwpr.org>.

Figure 4
Women's Poverty Rates in 2013 by Race/Ethnicity, Ages Eighteen and Older



Source: United States Census Bureau, Current Population Survey 2013, accessed via Status of Women in the States, <https://statusofwomendata.org>.

The patterns shown above are not surprising, but they are important. Disparities among groups of women are often muted or overlooked in favor of comparisons with men. White men generally outpace all women economically.³¹ Black men sometimes fare worse than Black women (especially with respect to educational outcomes).³² Comparisons to men across and within racial groups are often highlighted over and above differences between women. By focusing on comparisons among women, we show that across most metrics of economic well-being, Black and Latina women are considerably disadvantaged.

What role does public policy play in structuring this state of affairs? Making strong causal arguments is beyond the scope of this essay. It is difficult enough to make a convincing case that a *single* policy intervention has affected a *single* economic outcome for a *single* racial group. We cannot offer causal evidence that a set of economic and social policies *caused* aggregate changes in multiple patterns of inequality across numerous groups of women. Instead, we offer correlational analyses to make a *prima facie* case that state-level social and economic policies have varied implications across groups of women. We argue that this highlights the need for careful thinking about the heterogeneity of policy effects. We cannot fully explain why the specific patterns we find exist. Instead, we use these analyses as a springboard for encouraging further exploration of the policy dimensions of racial differences in economic outcomes.

Our immediate empirical objective is to gauge whether state-level social policies have varying associations with women's economic status across racial groups. Our emphasis is on the racially heterogeneous *individual-level* upshots of *state-level* policy. This means that we are not primarily concerned with whether receiving a particular policy benefit at the individual level is associated with improved individual-level economic positioning. Rather, we highlight whether the type or generosity of benefits at the state level correlates with individual-level economic status. Put most straightforward, we consider the consequences of state-policy choices for individual-level outcomes.

Empirically identifying the relationship between economic status and public policy is difficult for numerous reasons.³³ In particular, economic status is correlated with both access to and experiences with public policy, especially at the individual level. Using state-level policies as our main independent variables helps to mitigate this. More substantively, taking this approach allows us to consider the consequences of state-level policy regimes for women across racial groups. This is in line with our larger emphasis: not on the discrete "effects" of any single policy for an individual person who receives that policy benefit, but on the overarching role of social and economic policy in structuring outcomes for women.

We also recognize that one's economic position is complex and not dependent on one factor, such as wages or poverty. Thus, we make the choice to include an

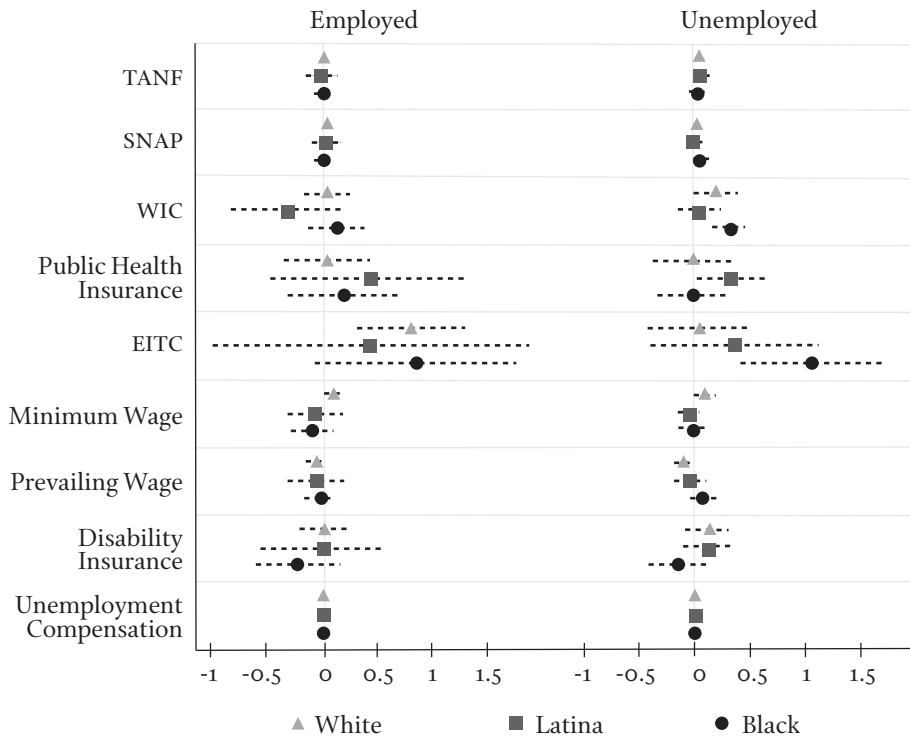
index variable that accounts for this complexity. We conceptualize *economic status* as an (additive) function of three factors that each (dichotomously) reflect an important aspect of respondents' position in the economy: 1) whether a respondent had any education beyond high school; 2) whether a respondent is below or above the official poverty line; and 3) whether a respondent earns a wage above the median of sampled respondents. We chose to include dichotomous measures of these outcomes because these markers (such as having college experience or being below or above the poverty line) are often associated with substantial differences in economic trajectory.³⁴ The index we created gauges respondents' combined positioning in each of these domains. Increasing scores indicate more "positive" economic status (the highest-scoring respondents have an education beyond high school, wages above the median, and are not living in poverty).

To construct this economic status index, we used 2009 individual-level microdata from the Annual Social and Economic Supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS) available through the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS).³⁵ The CPS contains responses from over seventy-five thousand Black, White (non-Hispanic), and Hispanic/Latina women across the United States.³⁶ We selected 2009 as the year for our analysis both for ease and for its theoretical value. Our honesty about presenting correlations (as opposed to causal estimates) follows from this choice. Coming at the tail end of the most recent recession (2007 – 2009), 2009 was one of the most difficult years in recent economic memory, and the supportive and stabilizing effects of public policy were acutely important during this time. We thus underscore a time that is especially significant vis-à-vis how policy operates when women are most vulnerable in the larger economy.

Our key independent variables gauge social and economic policy at the state level. These variables come from multiple sources, but each is housed in the Correlates of State Policy database.³⁷ Our social policy variables include measures of states' provision of food assistance (levels of SNAP and WIC participation), cash (TANF benefit levels), and health care (proportion of population with any public health insurance). Our economic policy variables include measures of the state EITC rate; the availability of state disability insurance; an indicator of whether the state minimum wage is above the federal minimum; an indicator of whether a state has prevailing wage laws; and a measure of states' average amount for unemployment compensation. Finally, we incorporate a basic set of controls at the individual level (from the CPS), including age, marital status, number of children, citizenship status, disability status; *and* at the state level (from the Correlates of State Policy data set), including state poverty rate and state general expenditures.³⁸

To examine the correlations between economic status and state policy, we employ multilevel regression.³⁹ Following the theoretical expectations described earlier, we model economic status separately for each racial/ethnic subgroup as well as for women who are employed and unemployed.

Figure 5
State Policy and Women’s Economic Position in 2009 by Race and Employment



Source : United States Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement, available through IPUMS (Integrated Public-Use Microdata Series) and CPS (Current Population Survey), <https://ipums.org>.

Recall that the goal of these models is to assess the heterogeneity of correlations between women’s economic status and state-level public policy across racial groups. Tables 1 and 2 along with Figure 5 illustrate significant heterogeneity.⁴⁰ We can neither explain nor account for each of the correlations. Instead, we describe some notable patterns. State TANF policy has few significant correlations with women’s economic status, with one exception: a marginally significant economic boost for unemployed Latina women.⁴¹ Higher levels of state SNAP benefits are moderately (positively) correlated with economic positioning for employed White women. More expansive WIC policy appears to correlate significantly (and positively) to economic status for unemployed Black and White women. State provisions of public health insurance are associated with more

Table 1
State Policies and Women’s Economic Position in 2009 by Race (Employed)

	White	Latina	Black
Age	0.0172*** (0.000918)	0.0129*** (0.00219)	0.0187*** (0.00220)
Married	0.457*** (0.0266)	0.385*** (0.0577)	0.498*** (0.0603)
Number of Children	0.0762*** (0.0112)	-0.106*** (0.0229)	-0.0312 (0.0239)
Disability	-0.683*** (0.0610)	-0.564*** (0.162)	-0.806*** (0.141)
Citizen	0.373*** (0.0966)	1.021*** (0.0605)	0.442*** (0.121)
State Poverty Rate	-0.00265 (0.00835)	-0.0108 (0.0213)	-0.0296** (0.0139)
State General Expenditures	0.00000 (0.00000)	-0.00000 (0.00000)	-0.00000 (0.00000)
TANF	0.00530 (0.0295)	-0.0224 (0.0780)	0.00886 (0.0545)
SNAP	0.0385* (0.0232)	0.0276 (0.0645)	0.00581 (0.0538)
WIC	0.0275 (0.111)	-0.323 (0.268)	0.121 (0.139)
Public Health Insurance	0.0274 (0.200)	0.430 (0.465)	0.187 (0.265)
EITC	0.791*** (0.253)	0.428 (0.738)	0.849* (0.476)
Minimum Wage	0.0855* (0.0498)	-0.0845 (0.132)	-0.104 (0.0982)
Prevailing Wage	-0.0674 (0.0502)	-0.0562 (0.142)	-0.0185 (0.0860)
Disability Insurance	0.0155 (0.117)	-0.00243 (0.296)	-0.233 (0.199)
Unemployment Compensation	0.000019 (0.000339)	0.000149 (0.000948)	-0.000192 (0.000546)
Level 1 N (Individual)	29,728	6,243	5,168
Level 2 N (State)	50	50	50

Note: Standard errors in parenthesis. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Source: United States Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement, available through IPUMS (Integrated Public-Use Microdata Series) and CPS (Current Population Survey), <https://ipums.org>.

Table 2
State Policies and Women's Economic Position in 2009 by Race (Unemployed)

	White	Latina	Black
Age	0.00118** (0.000502)	0.00004 (0.00109)	0.00240** (0.00115)
Married	0.538*** (0.0225)	0.457*** (0.0440)	0.582*** (0.0561)
Number of Children	0.0828*** (0.0100)	-0.0220 (0.0162)	0.0468** (0.0213)
Disability	-0.350*** (0.0269)	-0.286*** (0.0605)	-0.414*** (0.0584)
Citizen	0.329*** (0.0731)	0.533*** (0.0427)	0.313*** (0.102)
State Poverty Rate	-0.0217*** (0.00761)	-0.0342*** (0.00896)	-0.00813 (0.00938)
State General Expenditures	-0.00000 (0.00000)	-0.00000** (0.00000)	-0.00000 (0.00000)
TANF	0.0402 (0.0276)	0.0633* (0.0366)	0.0227 (0.0375)
SNAP	0.0186 (0.0219)	-0.000906 (0.0349)	0.0594 (0.0408)
WIC	0.201* (0.105)	0.0428 (0.0985)	0.338*** (0.0895)
Public Health Insurance	-0.0104 (0.187)	0.336** (0.160)	-0.0141 (0.169)
EITC	0.0402 (0.243)	0.366 (0.393)	1.076*** (0.339)
Minimum Wage	0.0936** (0.0471)	-0.0380 (0.0586)	-0.0146 (0.0687)
Prevailing Wage	-0.0881* (0.0473)	-0.0383 (0.0691)	0.0846 (0.0638)
Disability Insurance	0.124 (0.111)	0.138 (0.129)	-0.141 (0.144)
Unemployment Compensation	-0.00007 (0.000316)	-0.000884* (0.000458)	-0.000141 (0.000397)
Level 1 N (Individual)	22,406	22,406	4,942
Level 2 N (State)	50	50	49

Note: Standard errors in parenthesis. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Source: United States Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement, available through IPUMS (Integrated Public-Use Microdata Series) and CPS (Current Population Survey), <https://ipums.org>.

positive economic status for unemployed Latina women. A higher state EITC rate stands out as having positive associations with improved economic status for employed Black and White women, and even for unemployed Black women. However, the EITC is not correlated with Latina women's economic positioning. State minimum wage laws that are above the federal minimum wage are associated with economic improvements for both employed and unemployed White women, while prevailing wage laws are (marginally) negatively correlated with economic positioning for employed White women. State unemployment compensation is (marginally) negatively correlated with unemployed Latina women's economic status.

While we offer no easy takeaways, our central argument is that women's economic positioning and the policies that shape it are heterogeneous across racial and ethnic groups. We offer an index variable as a way of measuring the complex positionality of women in the economy. Our goal in doing so is not to determine a perfect measurement of economic standing, but to account for the multidimensionality of women's economic positionality in the United States. When we study the relationship between this positionality and public policies, we find considerable differences among women.

Indeed, we find that public policies have significant (positive and negative) relationships with women's economic position that differ by race and ethnicity. Although Latina and Black women share many similarities in terms of how they are disadvantaged by the labor market, their economic positions have very different relationships with social and economic policies. For Latina women, TANF and public health insurance are positively correlated with their economic position while for Black women, WIC and EITC are positively correlated. Meanwhile, though both White and Black unemployed women's economic positions are positively correlated with state WIC policy, no such correlation exists for Latina women. These outcomes are important because they illustrate that differences among women – their employment status, race, ethnicity – underlie variation in the relationships between their economic standing and policies that are facially neutral.

We do not attempt to determine the causal mechanisms driving these differences among women. Instead, we point to well-established mechanisms from previous literature to make sense of the observed inequities. Political institutions like federalism and partisanship both structure and incentivize unequal policy benefits, divergent policy experiences, and inequitable policy outcomes for people across states, localities, and demographic categories. These institutional parameters map onto state racial and ethnic composition. In this way, institutions and the forms of policy design and implementation that they enable shape the extent to which policy is either a buffer against inequality or a channel through which it operates. We provide state-level policy analyses to highlight some of these processes, not to

determine the specific mechanisms driving inequality among women, but to illustrate that state policy regimes have racialized consequences for women's economic standing.

One of our key contributions here is to underscore the policy implications of an intersectional approach to economic inequality. Women of Color are in a uniquely precarious economic position in the United States. Making significant progress with regard to poverty reduction and economic mobility hinges in significant part on their economic status and trajectory. More fully understanding that trajectory – and the policy avenues for altering it – requires attentiveness to how policy operates across racial groups. Moreover, the dual policy dimensions we concentrate on here (social policies and economic policies) are often considered separately, either with respect to individual policies or with respect to only one policy dimension. Though the correlations we highlight should not be taken at face value, they do provide prima facie evidence that in the realms of both social policy and economic policy, the choices that we make about how and where to invest have differential consequences for racial disparities among women. We hope to encourage scholars to ask why, to delve more deeply into specific mechanisms, and to more thoroughly identify the processes that account for heterogeneous policy effects across racial groups. Racial equitability is one important metric by which we can prioritize and assess policy. First, however, we must ask and answer many more questions about the contours of racially heterogeneous policy effects.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jamila Michener is an assistant professor in the Department of Government at Cornell University. She is the author of *Fragmented Democracy: Medicaid, Federalism, and Unequal Politics* (2018) and has published in such journals as *Political Behavior*, *Policy Studies Journal*, and the *Journal of Health, Politics, Policy and Law*.

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- ⁴¹ Marginal correlations indicate a significance level of $p < 0.1$.

Kinship Structure & Women: Evidence from Economics

Sara Lowes

Economists are increasingly interested in understanding how culture shapes outcomes for women and the origins of these cultural practices. I review recent work in economics on how culture affects the well-being of women in developing countries, much of which is motivated by work in anthropology. I present evidence on the role of kinship structure, particularly matrilineal relative to patrilineal systems, for shaping women's preferences, exposure to domestic violence, and the health and education of children. Additionally, I discuss research on the effects of cultural practices, such as bride-price, and how the organization of production affects gender norms. Economists, with a careful focus on causal identification, contribute to the evidence that culture is an important determinant of outcomes for women.

There has been growing interest in economics in how variation in cultural practices may explain variation in outcomes for women. Economists have often focused on more standard economic variables, such as policies that target women's labor force participation and educational attainment, access to technologies such as birth control, or divorce laws to explain gender disparities. Yet even in similar institutional contexts or at similar levels of development, women experience remarkable variation in their well-being.¹ Culture may be an important factor to explain this variation.²

Defining culture and institutions and delineating the distinction between them can be fraught. Institutions are frequently defined as external "rules" that shape individuals' expected payoffs for different actions. Culture is often defined as the collection of beliefs and internal views for individuals. These beliefs may be transmitted across generations or through peer socialization.³ While I focus on various cultural practices and refer to this as the effect of culture, these practices may also fall under the realm of institutions in the sense that the practices themselves shape the payoffs associated with different behavior.

This essay reviews the recent work in economics on culture and the well-being of women in the context of developing countries, focusing on the role of kinship systems. In particular, I review work on how the structure of kinship systems, cul-

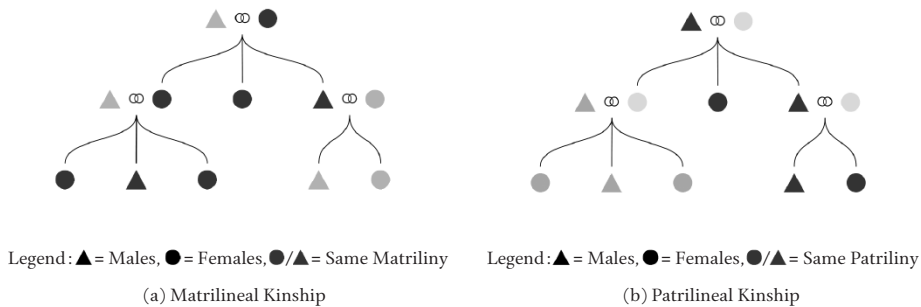
tural practices such as the payment of bride-price and dowry, and the organization of production may affect outcomes for women and children.

Kinship systems are an important social structure in many societies. They determine who is considered a group member and what obligations an individual has to other group members.⁴ There are various ways of organizing kinship groups. One key distinction is between matrilineal and patrilineal kinship systems, both of which are examples of *unilineal* descent systems. In a unilineal descent system, lineage and inheritance are traced through one of the two parents. Many Western societies practice *cognatic* descent, in which kinship ties are traced through both parents so that an individual considers people related through their mother and through their father to be kin. In *matrilineal* descent systems, lineage and inheritance are traced through female group members, while in *patrilineal* descent systems, lineage and inheritance are traced through male group members.⁵

Figure 1 illustrates the two different kinship structures. Men are represented as triangles and women as circles. Figure 1a presents a matrilineal kinship system, in which individuals related through a common female relative are denoted in black. Note that husbands and wives have different kinship affiliations and that children are in the same kin group as their mother. In matrilineal systems, uncles play an important role, since a child often inherits from his mother's brother. Figure 1b presents a patrilineal kinship system, with members of the same patrilineal kin group denoted in black. When a woman marries, she is effectively subsumed into the kin group of her husband; this is denoted by the daughter who is married and is now a light rather than black circle.

A key hypothesis in the work on kinship systems is that the structure of matrilineal kinship systems relative to patrilineal kinship systems has implications for the well-being of women. Kinship structure may affect outcomes for women for a variety of reasons. First, the practice of matrilineal kinship often corresponds with other cultural practices that may benefit women. Thus, the effects of matrilineal kinship may be more accurately interpreted as the effects of the broader set of cultural practices that tend to be bundled together. For example, of the eighty matrilineal societies in Africa in George Peter Murdock's *Ethnographic Atlas*,⁶ 65 percent practice matrilocal residence, in which a married couple resides with the family of the wife, while less than 1 percent of patrilineal societies practice matrilocal residence. Similarly, matrilineal societies traditionally are less likely to have the custom of bride-price payments: a transfer from the groom's family to the bride's family upon marriage. Second, in some matrilineal societies, women directly inherit land, rather than just pass land down to men who share a common female relative. Proximity to family members through matrilocal residence and increased asset ownership through land inheritance may enable women to bet-

Figure 1
Diagram of Kinship Systems



ter implement their preferences. In the language of household bargaining models, land ownership and living close to relatives may increase women's bargaining power by improving their outside options.

The matrilineal bundle is not homogenous and varies greatly even within Sub-Saharan Africa. In his 1934 book *Kinship and Marriage*, anthropologist Robin Fox outlines three types of matrilineal kinship systems with different implications for women's empowerment.⁷ The first type of matrilineal society emphasizes the mother-daughter-sister roles and has matrilineal residence. Women control the continuity of the matrilineage and resources, and therefore they tend to have relatively higher status. In the second type of matrilineal society, the emphasis is on the brother-sister-nephew roles. These societies often practice *avunculocal* residence, which is residence with the bride's uncle after marriage. In this case, political power is generally retained by men. This results in the relatively lower status of women. In the final type, all of these relationships are important. Thus, while men remain in control, the status of women is not as low as in the second type.

One approach to studying the effects of matrilineal kinship has been to document how preferences vary across matrilineal and patrilineal groups. Researchers have examined the effects of matrilineal kinship systems for women's preferences, including preference for competition, altruism, risk, and political participation.

It has been widely documented, particularly in Western cultural settings, that women prefer to compete less than men. If women prefer to compete less than men, this may have important implications for job market outcomes, promotions, and performance in school.⁸ Given that willingness to compete affects key economic outcomes, it is necessary to explore how these differences in willingness to compete arise.

To highlight how preference for competition varies across cultural settings, recent scholarship has examined how kinship structure affects women's preference for competition. Much of this work was motivated by a paper by Uri Gneezy, Kenneth L. Leonard, and John A. List examining preference for competition in the patrilineal Masai society of Tanzania and the matrilineal and matriarchal Khasi society of India.⁹ The authors evaluated preference for competition using a lab experiment in which individuals chose whether to compete. Broadly, the benefit of lab experiments is that one holds the payoffs associated with various actions – in other words, the rules of the game – constant. In the patrilineal society in Tanzania, the authors found the standard gender gap in preference for competition, in which women are significantly less likely to compete.¹⁰ This is consistent with work from the United States and Europe.¹¹ However, in the matrilineal society in India, they found that the gap in preference for competition is closed: women were just as likely to compete as men. The authors demonstrate that women do not always prefer to compete less than men and provide evidence that culture may shape women's preference for competition. Their paper also focuses on a sample of non-Western individuals, which is important given that so-called WEIRD societies (Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic), on which most research is based, may not be reflective of broader human psychology and behavior.¹²

Subsequent work has focused on the Khasi in India and a neighboring patrilineal group in India. Steffen Andersen and colleagues found that the gender gap in willingness to compete emerges after puberty.¹³ The benefit of this research design is that both societies under study are located in India, thus limiting the extent to which other factors – such as institutional quality, geography, or history – vary. Related work by Jeffrey Flory and colleagues compares preference for competition among individuals from matrilineal villages and patrilineal villages in Malawi.¹⁴ The results are consistent with the Gneezy paper, in which there is no gender gap in preference for competition among the matrilineal women.¹⁵ Additionally, Flory and coauthors found that patrilineal women's preference for competition is sensitive to having children: that is, only post-adolescent women without children are less competitive than their male counterparts. Finally, Jane Zhang has examined how kinship structure interacts with institutional changes in China.¹⁶ She found that institutions that encourage women's participation in the labor force reduce the gender gap in preference for competition for the patrilineal Han, while the gender gap in competition persists among a patrilineal ethnic minority group that was not subjected to these institutions. Her study suggests that institutions can shape culture.

In my paper “Kinship Structure, Stress, and the Gender Gap in Competition,” I build on past work by examining preference for competition among individuals from the matrilineal belt in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).¹⁷ The

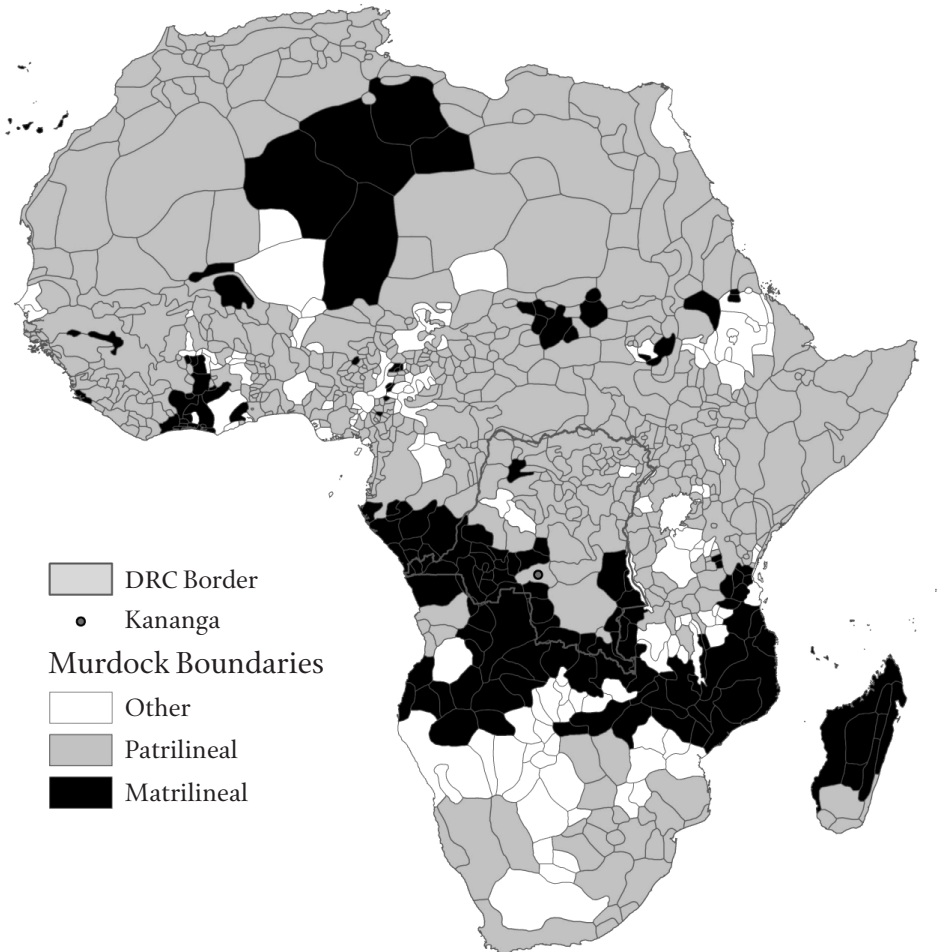
matrilineal belt describes the distribution of matrilineal ethnic groups in Central Africa. This is an ideal setting to study the effects of matrilineal kinship because there are many matrilineal and patrilineal ethnic groups located in a common setting. Additionally, Central Africa has the highest density of matrilineal kinship systems in the world.¹⁸ Figure 2 shows a map of the matrilineal belt in Sub-Saharan Africa. The matrilineal groups in the study region primarily fall into the second group described by Fox, the type of matrilineal kinship in which women are less empowered relative to the two other types.¹⁹

I collected data from 614 individuals in Kananga, Democratic Republic of Congo, a major urban area along the matrilineal belt (see Figure 2 for the field site location, which is denoted with a shaded circle). To measure preference for competition, individuals completed a version of the standard competition lab experiment developed by Muriel Niederle and Lise Vesterlund.²⁰ Participants complete three rounds of a matching game on a touch screen tablet.²¹ In the first round, they are paid under a piece-rate payment scheme, in which they receive 200 Congolese Francs (CDF) (approximately 20 cents USD) for every time they complete the matching game. In the second round, they are paid using a tournament scheme, in which they are randomly matched with another player and whoever has the highest performance (the most completed matching games) is paid 500 CDF for each time the task is completed, while the other player receives 0 CDF. Finally, in the third round, players are given a choice of compensation scheme, in which the choice of tournament compensation is interpreted as a preference for competition. For a subset of participants, I also collected physiological data during game play. Specifically, I measured electrodermal activity (EDA), the skin's ability to conduct electricity. Higher skin conductance levels (SCLs) are generally associated with higher levels of stress. Physiological data provide additional insight into how players experience competition.

I find several key results. First, in the setting of the DRC with multiple ethnic groups in a common geographic and institutional setting, I find no evidence that matrilineal kinship closes the gender gap in competition. Eighty percent of men and 60 percent of women choose to compete, with no differences across kinship systems. However, I do find that matrilineal kinship completely closes the gap in preference for risky gambles, as measured by a series of incentivized gambles in which one option is riskier than the other.²² This is related to work by Binglin Gong and Chun-Lei Yang, who found a smaller gender gap in risk preference for the matrilineal Mosuo relative to the patriarchal Yi in China.²³

Finally, I find that while matrilineal kinship does not explain preference for competition, changes in stress between the piece-rate round and the tournament round predict willingness to compete in the third round. Women who experienced more stress in the tournament round relative to the piece-rate round were less likely to choose to compete. Controlling for changes in SCL reduces the gender

Figure 2
Ethnic Group Boundaries and Matrilineal Belt



Source: Map created by author using GIS software and matching across the data sources. The underlying ethnic group boundary data come from George Peter Murdock, *Africa: Its Peoples and Their Culture History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959). The information on kinship practice (coding of matrilineal or patrilineal) comes from George Peter Murdock, *Ethnographic Atlas* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1967).

gap in preference competition by 25 percent. These results suggest that the physiological experience of competing affects women's willingness to compete, and that in this setting with many matrilineal and patrilineal groups, there is no evidence that matrilineal kinship affects preference for competition.

Subsequent work has examined how differences in kinship structure affect a variety of other preferences and outcomes. For example, in a 2011 paper, Mosche Hoffman, Uri Gneezy, and John A. List find no differences in spatial ability between men and women among the matrilineal Khasi in India, whereas they find that men performed better at a spatial task among the neighboring patrilineal Karbi.²⁴ In China, Gong, Yang, and Huibin Yan found that women in the Mosuo ethnic group are less generous relative to men, while there is no difference for the patriarchal Yi.²⁵

Together, these papers suggest that kinship structure has implications for women's preferences, but that it may be important to have many ethnic groups represented in a sample and to hold constant the institutional and geographic setting.

In another paper set in the matrilineal belt, I examine how matrilineal kinship affects spousal cooperation and outcomes for women and children.²⁶ Mid-twentieth-century anthropologists focused on the "matrilineal puzzle": if matrilineal kinship systems undermine spousal cooperation, then, from an evolutionary perspective, why would they persevere? In other words, why would a system that jeopardized an integral unit of cooperation prevail over alternative kinship structures that produced more cooperation, such as patrilineal kinship?²⁷

Anthropologists pointed to two structural features of matrilineal kinship systems that may affect spousal cooperation.²⁸ First, matrilineal kinship systems lead to split allegiances between spouses. Within a couple, each spouse maintains strong allegiances to their own kinship group, while in patrilineal systems, a wife is effectively incorporated into the broader kin group of her husband. Second, in matrilineal systems, men have less authority over their wives. Children are considered to belong to the kin group of the wife. Thus, if a husband mistreats his wife, it is relatively easier for her to return to her kin group. In particular, she may receive support from her brothers, whose inheritance passes to her children rather than to the brothers' own children. The structure of matrilineal kinship systems may have important implications for women and children if it affects the distribution of resources within the household and the support women receive from their broader kinship network. Note that the way anthropologists conceptualize spousal "cooperation" is not consistent with an understanding of cooperation free from coercion. In particular, the idea that men having less authority over their wife in matrilineal systems leads to less cooperation suggests that cooperation is better understood as coercion.

In “Matrilineal Kinship and Spousal Cooperation: Evidence from the Matrilineal Belt,” I test whether matrilineal kinship systems undermine spousal cooperation using lab-in-the-field experiments and survey data.²⁹ I collected data from 320 couples from the matrilineal belt. Thus, all couples are from a geographically similar area, but some are from matrilineal ethnic groups and others from patrilineal ethnic groups. More than twenty-eight ethnic groups are represented in the sample.

To measure cooperation, individuals in the sample completed a public goods game with their spouse. The public goods game is meant to capture the daily coordination problem couples often face: for instance, there is a benefit to cooperating with a spouse but also incentives to free-ride off the efforts of a spouse. The public goods game was structured as follows. First, husbands and wives were interviewed separately by an enumerator of the same sex to ensure privacy and comfort. They were next given an endowment of 1000 CDF, or approximately 1 USD. They then rolled a die with three white sides and three black sides; if they rolled a black, they received a “bonus” of 500 CDF in addition to the initial endowment. Significantly, the outcome of the die roll was private information, meaning that their spouse did not know their endowment size. The respondents were then given the opportunity to allocate their endowment across two envelopes: a personal envelope and a shared envelope. The respondent was told that contributions made to the shared envelope by both spouses would be combined, increased by 1.5, and then divided evenly between the husband and wife. After the allocation decisions were made privately in a tent concealed from the view of enumerators, both envelopes were collected by the enumerator. Payouts were calculated in the office, and individuals received the sum of money from their personal envelope and the amount earned in the shared envelope one week later. The respondents also completed the same game but with a stranger of the opposite sex.

The experimental results suggest that matrilineal individuals are less cooperative with their spouses. Both matrilineal men and women contributed less to the shared envelope. This was particularly the case when the respondent won the bonus, which was unobservable to the spouse. However, matrilineal individuals no longer behaved differentially when they won the bonus and were paired with a stranger of the opposite sex. Thus, their behavior was specific to being paired with a spouse. These results suggest that matrilineal kinship systems may indeed undermine spousal cooperation.

I also examine the implications of matrilineal kinship for the well-being of women and children by combining my own survey data with data from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) for the DRC.³⁰ I first examine whether matrilineal women fare better than patrilineal women in terms of autonomy in decision-making and beliefs on whether domestic violence is justified. I find that in my own survey data, matrilineal women have views more consistent with female autonomy, are less likely to believe domestic violence is justified in a variety of situations, and

report being happier. In the DHS, matrilineal women report greater autonomy in decision-making, are less supportive of domestic violence, and, crucially, experience less domestic violence. This is notable given that in the DRC, half of all women sampled in the DHS reported having experienced some form of physical violence from a spouse.

I also examine outcomes for children. In both my sample and in the DHS, children of matrilineal women are healthier and better educated. Specifically, in my sample, children of matrilineal women are 8 percentage points less likely to have been sick in the last month and have 0.4 more years of education. In the DHS, matrilineal women have 0.12 fewer children who have died, relative to a mean of 0.6, and children of matrilineal women have 0.15 more years of education.³¹

The paper has several important implications. First, broader social structures shape dynamics within the household. Economists often just focus on the nuclear household, particularly in their models of household bargaining. These results suggest that understanding broader social structures such as kinship systems is key to understanding household outcomes. Second, the result that matrilineal individuals are less cooperative with their spouses suggests that kinship systems that empower women need not lead to more cooperative outcomes. Collective models of the household often predict that greater empowerment is synonymous with larger contributions to a public good, because ex-post a greater share of the benefits are captured by women. However, in a setting with the threat of domestic violence, what is observed as greater “cooperation” may actually be a response to coercion. Finally, the results shed light on the “matrilineal puzzle.” Specifically, despite that matrilineal kinship systems undermine spousal cooperation, they seem to have important benefits for women and children.

A final strand of literature on matrilineal kinship examines how matrilineal relative to patrilineal kinship systems affect women’s political engagement and preferences. For example, political scientists Amanda Lea Robinson and Jessica Gottlieb have used data from the Afrobarometer for Sub-Saharan Africa to examine the relationship between matrilineal kinship and women’s political participation.³² They found that within matrilineal ethnic groups, there is a smaller gender gap in various measures of women’s participation and engagement in politics relative to men. The authors argue that matrilineal kinship improves outcomes for women through more progressive norms about the appropriate role of women in society. They find that the benefits of matrilineal systems are conferred in villages where there are a sufficient number of households practicing matrilineal kinship, and that there are no differential benefits of matrilineal kinship for women who have directly inherited land. The authors interpret this as evidence in favor of the role of norms for conferring the benefits of matrilineal kinship, rather than the role of resource endowments.

Related work by political scientists Rachel Brulé and Nikhar Gaikwad in India examines whether women's political participation and preferences on the size and scope of the welfare state differ in matrilineal relative to patrilineal societies.³³ The authors motivate the study by showing that there is a large gap in attitudes between men and women in participation and interest in politics, as well as the extent to which women believe social support is important. The authors find that in patrilineal societies, where men generally control wealth, men participate more than women in politics, are less supportive of the welfare state, and prefer lower levels of taxation. However, in the neighboring matrilineal societies where women have more control over wealth, the gender gap in political engagement and preferences over social policy closes.

Matrilineal kinship is a bundled treatment. In fact, it is historically associated with many other practices, such as the practice of matrilocal residence after marriage (living with the family of the bride) and dowry (money and goods transfers from the bride's family to the groom's family at the time of marriage).

Natalie Bau has examined the relationship between the practice of matrilocality and investment in the human capital of children.³⁴ Co-residence with adult children is a form of old-age insurance in many societies. Thus, parents may have additional incentive to invest in children if they expect these children to care for them in the future. In her paper, Bau uses data from Ghana and Indonesia, where there is variation in cultural practices. She finds that in Indonesia, there is greater investment in female siblings relative to male siblings in matrilocal groups. In Ghana, membership in a group that practices patrilocality is associated with greater investment in male siblings. She then examines responses to changes in formal policies that provide old-age insurance in the form of pension plans. These formal policies that provide insurance may change the incentives to invest in the children that formally provided old-age support for parents. Greater exposure to a pension program in Indonesia reduces the relative investment in daughters. Likewise, there is a decrease in the investment in the education of male children in patrilocal societies in Ghana. Bau's results provide evidence that cultural practices respond to the institutional and policy environment.

Historically, matrilineal groups were much less likely to pay bride-price. In fact, matrilineal groups were more likely to make transfers to the groom's family upon marriage. In one paper, a team of economists examines how groups that historically paid bride-price respond to increased educational opportunities for women.³⁵ Often, the size of the bride-price received by a woman's family is associated with her level of education.³⁶ Thus, groups that practice bride-price payments may have a greater incentive to invest in the education of their daughters. The authors take advantage of school-building programs in Indonesia and Zambia that

provide variation in access to schooling. They find that the school-building programs are more effective in improving outcomes for girls in places that practice bride-price. These results suggest that cultural practices may incentivize investment in education. However, Lucia Corno, Nicole Hildebrandt, and Alessandra Voena have elsewhere found that bride-price payments may be used to smooth consumption.³⁷ When families face income shocks, bride-price may incentivize them to have their daughters wed at a younger age.

A related literature in economics has examined how the organization of production has shaped the role of women in society and the beliefs about the appropriate role of women in society.

Alberto Alesina, Paola Giuliano, and Nathan Nunn, in “On the Origin of Gender Roles: Women and the Plough,” examine how historical suitability for the plough shapes present-day female labor force participation.³⁸ The hypothesis is motivated by insights from Ester Boserup, who suggested that the historical use of the plough favored men’s participation in agricultural production.³⁹ While both men and women can participate in hoe agriculture, the plough requires a lot of strength. Reliance on the plough thus led to differences in women’s engagement in agriculture and to a sharper division of labor. To test this hypothesis, Alesina and coauthors used data from George Peter Murdock’s *Ethnographic Atlas*, which has information on the use of the plough and on women’s participation in agricultural tasks historically.⁴⁰ They find that in places with historical plough use, women participated less in agricultural activities (such as clearing land, soil preparation, and planting). Looking next at present-day data on labor force participation, they find that historical reliance on the plough is associated with lower labor force participation by women and with norms less compatible with women’s participation in the labor force. These results suggest that how production is organized historically has shaped present-day beliefs about the appropriate role of women.

While there is limited work on the origins of matrilineal kinship, Ariel Ben-Yishay, Pauline Grosjean, and Joe Vecci have explored how reef density in the Solomon Islands predicts the practice of matrilineal kinship.⁴¹ They found that matrilineal kinship is associated with greater reliance on fishing. One potential mechanism is that reliance on fishing leads men to specialize in fishing, while women focus on horticulture. In these conditions, there may be a relatively greater benefit to women owning land.

More recent work by Anke Becker examines how historical reliance on pastoralism has shaped norms meant to constrain women’s sexuality.⁴² Pastoralism, the breeding and care of herd animals such as sheep, goats, and cattle, was characterized by frequent and long-term periods of male absence. Becker hypothesizes that these absences increased the benefits of norms that constrain women’s sexuality, such as female genital cutting (FGC). Combining data from thirty-four

countries on the historical practice of pastoralism with data from the DHS on the practice of FGC and views on domestic violence, Becker found that places that relied more on pastoralism were more likely to practice infibulation, the most invasive form of FGC; to restrict women's mobility; and to adhere to stricter norms on women's sexual behavior. Additionally, she found evidence of greater support for domestic violence when these norms are violated. This research provides evidence that the form of economic production shapes the cultural beliefs and practices that affect women.⁴³

Large gaps persist in outcomes for women relative to men across domains from education, health, emotional well-being, and labor market outcomes. Moreover, these gaps are often larger in developing countries. There has been growing interest in understanding how variation in cultural practices affects the well-being of women and what shapes the origins of these particular cultural practices.

I have presented recent research on the role of matrilineal kinship systems in shaping the preferences of women and outcomes for women and children. In my own work, I have found evidence that matrilineal kinship reduces spousal cooperation, but that it increases investment in children and decreases domestic violence.⁴⁴ Additionally, other cultural practices such as the payment of bride-price and the practice of matrilineal residence upon marriage affect investments in children. The origins of these cultural practices are often deeply rooted and tightly tied to the modes of production, as is demonstrated by work on the plough and women's labor force participation, and pastoralism and norms restricting women's sexuality.

One of the comparative advantages of work in economics is careful quantitative empirical work and a focus on identifying the causal effects of a particular cultural practice. Drawing on insights from anthropology, history, and political science, economists have been able to contribute important evidence on how culture shapes outcomes for women.

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Gender Lens to the Future of Work

Anita I. Jivani

Acquiring new skills will be foundational to surviving in and leading in the workplace of the future. Organizations must make concerted efforts in upskilling women to maintain high levels of productivity and growth. This acquisition of new skills will help women make the transition into new jobs that will be necessary due to automation and today's workplace realities. Without it, the workplace could become even more unbalanced than it is today. Further, today's gaps need to be filled in a holistic manner to ensure that not only are tomorrow's technologies created by a diverse group of people, but also that they are implemented in a human-centered manner that aligns with the original intention. The private sector has a vital role to play in preparing the workforce that it will need and should prototype holistic solutions to help respond to this critical need.

Revolutionary shifts in technology and ways of working over the past decade are changing how we achieve business and societal goals. Although these shifts are generally assessed in terms of how they will impact productivity and profits, it is critical that we assess how these technologies affect and are affected by humans, and how they have a unique bearing on women in the workplace.

Despite narratives in the media that highlight women's ongoing progress toward greater equality, the reality is disappointing. Variables such as leave policies, equality in leadership in the public and private sectors, and behavioral shifts in mindset tell us another story: there has been slim to no progress in actual results in the past ten years.

Women represent 44.7 percent of the total worker population, yet hold only 4.8 percent of CEO roles at S&P 500 companies and make up just 11 percent of top earners.¹ Although there have been positive changes over the last decade that have given more women more opportunities – including a concerted effort to diversify senior roles – the overall results from these changes continue to be less than acceptable, and necessitate a broader conversation about why so little progress has been made over such a long period of time, all while creating the false perception of significant progress.

Understanding the complex and fast-moving context in which we try to address the issue of gender equality is critical in attempting to dissect and influence

it. We need a new lens: one that marries today's and anticipates tomorrow's technological and workplace realities, such as increased automation and an ability to access work easily outside of the formal work campus, with lessons learned from decades of attempting to bring about a more balanced workforce. Experts estimate that these new shifts in technology and ways of working will require 40 to 160 million women to move into new positions and roles just to maintain the status quo gender balance. An inability to make this transition into new roles will leave women even further behind.²

Humans ultimately determine how new innovations are used and how effective they are; these same humans should proactively manage their intended and unintended consequences. The complexity of managing new technological innovations is commensurate with their power and influence.

New applications like Microsoft's PowerBI allow us to track and visualize data with ease, moving from previously opaque Excel sheets with thousands of lines of data to beautiful, user-friendly, and digestible visuals that everyone can understand. Technology has democratized and magnified communications by allowing anyone to vocalize their opinion in a public forum without much vetting required. Twitter and Facebook both opened to the public in 2006, but the ubiquitous use of them – Facebook has over 2.27 billion users globally despite being blocked in North Korea and China – was unanticipated and exponential beyond expectations.³ This power of informal influence that individuals have predominately used in nonwork settings through social networks is now even infiltrating the workplace through citizen development. Many new tools are crafted in user-friendly formats aimed at those with less digital dexterity to allow anyone, not just those in the technology department or the executive suite, to create a custom application that they think would add value to their ecosystem.

Technological tools have also brought objectivity to often subjective processes like hiring. Such innovations include augmented writing services that support organizations in becoming aware of how gendered their job postings are, helping them to eliminate skewed language and eventually bring a more balanced set of applicants into the talent pool. Companies leverage new platforms like Textio, which offers tools such as the “tone meter” to rate the language used in job descriptions on a scale from highly masculine to highly feminine, to improve their hiring practices.⁴ Another company, HireVue, uses artificial intelligence and video interviews to focus on skills that correlate to the needs of the job, helping to ensure consistency and objectivity in hiring while also improving efficiency.⁵

These start-ups have not only been well received in the tech community, but have also been growing fast at large businesses. Unilever leverages HireVue technology to decrease hiring time from months to weeks while attempting to control for bias and make better hiring decisions.⁶ Mya, an AI-based hiring tool fo-

cused on conversing with candidates over text and in multiple languages, was used at forty Fortune 500 companies within the first two years of the tech start-up's existence.⁷

Information like salary data has also become more transparent and available for the public to view, partially because of the country-specific regulations to disclose gender pay difference and partially because of the online availability of previously private data that has increased access to the general public. The overall push to transparency is nudging organizations to turn the spotlight internally, an exercise they may not have done previously, while also holding them accountable publicly to the gaps that exist.⁸

Yet these technologies are only facilitators of a desired human behavior, and understanding how these tools are crafted, deployed, and used in the everyday lives of humans is the more critical and often overlooked question. And it is even more important and complicated when it comes to understanding the effects of these tools when attempting to foster a more equal workplace.

Social media and the Internet have combined to create a powerful channel to elevate the voices of thousands of women, but the secondary consequences are still unfolding. For example, the term “Me Too” was conceived in 2007 by Tarana Burke, focused on women sharing experiences of sexual harassment and building a community of empathy.⁹ It was only ten years later when Alyssa Milano, an actress with over three million Twitter followers, encouraged women to retweet the phrase if they had been affected by sexual harassment or assault that it really got traction.¹⁰ The post led to a wider outpouring of responses across social media outlets, including Facebook, where more than twelve million expressions of the hashtag flooded in within the first day.¹¹ The social media community took a phrase that was coined over a decade ago and created an online movement with vast real-world consequences across the entertainment industry, the media, government, the office and boardroom, and individual relationships.

But the implications of the #MeToo movement are yet to be fully grasped and are potentially more complicated than they may appear. For example, firms have attempted to respond to the movement by creating policies and dialogue about sexual harassment that may inadvertently alienate men and discourage them from taking on female mentees: both because of a lack of awareness of how to manage opposite gender junior staff in an appropriate manner and confusion around the opaque formal and informal policies that are often instituted as a public-relations response to a senior-level executive scandal. Such hurried and often external-facing responses can have an indirect impact on the rest of the women in the organization who face the implications of this sort of policy.

The McKinsey report *Women in the Workplace 2018* highlights the fact that women already have less formal time and engagement with senior leaders to discuss

work than men and many women share limited or no engagement at a casual level with these leaders.¹² Because senior leaders sit in a unique position of influence with an ability to create opportunities that did not otherwise exist, this lack of formal and informal access likely prevents women from receiving opportunities offered to their male counterparts. Fear of ambiguous policies, warranted or unwarranted, could lead to even less exposure for women to executives, the majority of whom are men.

The shift to a more contingent workforce, although traditionally seen as beneficial to women, could lead to a similar challenge. Technology has made it unnecessary for people to be physically in the office, allowing employees to do their jobs equally well on the beach as in the cubicle. Organizations have embraced this shift for logical reasons: real-estate costs per head go down significantly with a shared workspace, the increasingly global environment may make “odd hours” preferable, and the adoption of these new work models will enable companies to attract the next generation of talent. The shift away from traditional workers will allow more flexibility, something that women with children increasingly crave, but will also increase the amount of risk not only for women, but also those that depend on them such as their children and aging parents.

The flexibility of the new work environment comes with trade-offs, such as unpredictable pay for those engaging in the gig economy; erratic schedules; lack of benefits including employer-sponsored health care, parental leave, or sick time; and ambiguity around the informal norms and perceptions of your role and ability to progress in the organization. How these impact women’s ability both to stay and grow in organizations will depend on how they are positioned in the larger working ecosystem.

The types and number of in-demand roles that will emerge over the next ten years will look different than today’s. According to *Women in the Workplace*, there will be a need for a different mix of skills within the workforce, primarily an increase in technical and social skills and a potential decrease in manual-labor skills due to automation.¹³ These skill growth areas could manifest themselves in technology-driven roles such as software developers; roles that draw from skills that are uniquely human, such as sales and customer service; and roles that are completely focused on new technologies that are yet to be well understood and integrated, such as robotics engineers and positions with subject matter experts working with big data.¹⁴ Each of these categories will affect women differently based on their current progress or lack thereof in these fields.

Technical roles will expand, with everyone needing to increase their tech fluency to be relevant in the new workforce, which will offer a unique opportunity for those who have these skills already and are able to use them in new and ambiguous contexts.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the academic basis of these skills, predominate-

ly engineering and computer science, has significantly fewer women engaging at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels.¹⁶ For both engineering and computer science, at the bachelor's level, women account for only about 18 percent of the degrees earned; at the master's and Ph.D. levels, women earn anywhere between 22.5 percent and 30.4 percent of degrees. Not surprisingly, this influences the number of women who hold STEM jobs. In 2016, just 25 percent of computer and mathematical jobs and 14 percent of architecture and engineering jobs were held by women.¹⁷

The lack of women in engineering and computer science fields is concerning because these competencies are becoming some of the most valued at the leadership levels. In fact, research has shown that this technical background links to women's ability to get on corporate boards, with women on boards twice as likely to have a technology-related background than their male counterparts.¹⁸ A study completed by Accenture with five thousand workers in thirty-one countries found that countries with higher tech fluency also have stronger gender equality.¹⁹ The trickle-down effect of increasing the technical skill set of a workforce is an even stronger reason to invest early and often in developing capabilities.

Regardless of whether employers acquire in-demand skills by training their existing workforce or by hiring emerging experts in those fields, upskilling – training employees in new skills like coding to meet the demands of a transforming economy – will be a foundational aspect of people who will be successful in the future. With shifts in technology moving faster than humanity's ability to adapt to them, the ability to learn quickly will be a major advantage to applicants and workers competing for a promotion.²⁰ The World Economic Forum predicts that 54 percent of the workforce will need significant upskilling, with 42 percent of the core skills needed in the workforce expected to shift between 2018 and 2022.²¹ The challenges of acquiring a new set of skills exist regardless of gender; however, women may be at a disadvantage in their ability to respond effectively.

If employers expect that training will occur off-hours and through workers' own financial investment, many employees will not engage due to their external work obligations, like child-rearing and caring for aging parents, societal responsibilities still overwhelmingly met by women. This will lead to a poorly skilled segment of the workforce, already at a disadvantage, that will be left behind. We already see some of this manifested today as women self-report learning new digital skills at a lower rate than men, 45 percent versus 52 percent; changing skills requirements may only widen this gap.²²

Employers can begin to address these issues by investing strategically in training and leveraging technology in universally accessible ways. In 2017, over \$90 billion was spent in total U.S. training expenditures.²³ Meanwhile, over 33 percent of workers in the United States reported not engaging in any training in the last year, which begs the question of where all the enterprise-training investment is going.²⁴ Using more cost-effective and user-friendly training solutions such as

mobile video tutorials and online microlearning platforms, along with other innovative training models leveraging technology such as virtual reality could allow organizations to utilize technology to both decrease cost and increase overall engagement. Nevertheless, it will be critical, especially for women who continue to be paid less than their male counterparts and have less free time outside of work, that organizations open both their wallets and employees' time during the workday to incorporate active upskilling on-the-job.

In addition to staying relevant in the workforce, a critical reason to invest further in the digital upskilling of women is to ensure that bias is not being built into technologies that will be used across populations during production stages. There are many examples of biased data going into systems, old and new, reflecting the prejudices and blind spots of their creators and often reinforcing damaging societal norms.

In the 1950s, Kodak used its Shirley color reference card to calibrate for skin tones, featuring a White model (Shirley) as the ideal subject, since they assumed most consumers fell into this category.²⁵ Because the film was designed to flatter lighter complexions, it created exposure issues for subjects with darker skin, at times making dark features invisible and thereby reproducing White standards of beauty. It was not until decades later that the industry embraced non-White skin tones in the creation of photography; in 1995, Kodak released a multiracial Shirley card, showing a White, a Black, and an Asian woman.²⁶ This mistake was not corrected in the modern age, when in 2009 Hewlett-Packard's face recognition application was shown to identify people with light skin tones but not those with dark skins tones.²⁷ This triggered online outrage, but after the dust had settled, no one addressed or resolved the core issue: the lack of diversity in developers that resulted in unconscious bias and an inability to test tools appropriately.

Today, emerging technologies are developed so quickly that they are regularly released in beta formats, often with the hope that testing can be open-sourced; however, this poses a tremendous risk that the tools will be mirrors of their creators. Upskilling women (and other underrepresented groups) in the field of technology can help prevent such biases from being created in the system.

The actual quality of the ecosystem and the relationships fostered within that space are also critical for the appropriate retention of women. Harvey Mudd College's focus on retaining women in engineering and computer science and Disney's CODE: Rosie are prime examples of how to put these theories into practice.

To retain and grow its number of female computer science graduates, Harvey Mudd made three key changes that made the field more relevant for women.²⁸ First, they tailored their introductory computer science course to different levels of learners and placed its applicability in the larger context of the world, making the experience both positive and relevant for women who may not have had

previous experience. Second, they provided early research opportunities to students before they declared a major to show the real-life application of these tools and build confidence in women interested in majoring in the field. Last, women at Harvey Mudd attended the Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing, an event that allowed them to see a new culture around the field that was not male-centric and to feel part of a community and network. These simple changes increased the percentage of women graduating from Harvey Mudd College's computing programs from 12 percent to 40 percent in five years, showing that remarkable progress can be made in a relatively short period of time.

The private sector can play a similar role, with Disney's CODE: Rosie being a prime example of how to transition women from nontechnical to technical roles in a curated and sustainable model. The program starts with basic technical training in computer science and coding followed by a twelve-month on-the-job training in two teams before participants transition into a full technical role after the fifteen months.²⁹ The ecosystem in which Disney implemented this program is as important as the program itself: they collaborated with external organizations such as the tech-training firm General Assembly, which has expertise in upskilling for adults, and provided systemic support to trainees, such as the security to return to their previous roles if desired.³⁰

The ability for organizations to customize experiences for women by providing real-life applications that build early confidence and exposing them to communities of like-minded people can be applied across university and organizational settings to overcome barriers. By providing women the skills to be part of the crafting process itself, we are instilling a systemic check in the process of developing new future-shaping technologies.

We have not made sufficient progress on the challenges of gender equality in the workplace, and accelerating shifts in technology and ways of working present greater risk of widening the gender gaps in employment, wages, and opportunities for advancement. Although addressing systemic and organizational issues is critical to tackling gender equality, it is individual workers who will face the harshest demands of a technologically changing workplace in the coming decades. What this change looks like is yet to be fully understood; nevertheless, its magnitude will require us to reframe how we interact with each other and the skills we will need to be successful. Investing strategically in teaching women the technical and nontechnical skills needed to be successful in this era and providing organizational reinforcement, such as mentors and apprenticeship opportunities, will give women greater opportunities at all levels, from entry-level coding to the boardroom.

The responsibility falls not only on the educational institutions that formally provide skills to our young people, but also on the organizations that will ben-

efit from a more skilled and attuned workforce. The first step may be difficult for many organizations to take, especially when the exact skills are unclear and the timeline of the return on this investment is difficult to measure. Across sectors, leaders who feel paralyzed by the speed of change could take a nudge from Silicon Valley, where prototyping rigorously and testing out ideas with limited information is the norm, to attempt to tackle the nebulous challenges that lie ahead.

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Anita I. Jivani is the Head of Innovation at Avanade Northeast and Director of the NYC Innovation Center, where she is focused on advising organizations on the Future of Work, Innovation, and Organizational Strategy and Design. She has spent time dissecting how shifts in our ecosystem are impacting how we live and reframing the way we work. She has counseled organizations on how these megatrends impact their strategy and how investing intentionally can prepare leaders for the future. Her interest in innovation and cross-sector collaboration stems from her work as a Fulbright Scholar, in which she examined the role of business in improving sociopolitical relations between the United States and Mexico.

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Fighting Violence Against Women: Laws, Norms & Challenges Ahead

Mala Htun & Francesca R. Jensenius

In the 1990s and 2000s, pressure from feminist movements and allies succeeded in pushing scores of states to reform their laws to prevent and punish violence against women (VAW). Even in states with progressive legislation, however, activists face challenges to induce citizens to comply with the law, compel state authorities to enforce the law, and ensure the adequate allocation of resources for social support services. In this essay, we take stock of legislative developments related to VAW around the world, with a focus on the variation in approaches toward intimate partner violence and sexual harassment. We analyze efforts to align behavior with progressive legislation, and end with a discussion of the balance activists must strike between fighting VAW aggressively with the carceral and social support dimensions of state power, while exercising some restraint to avoid the potentially counterproductive effects of state action.

Until quite recently, states took little action to combat violence against women (VAW), a comprehensive concept encompassing diverse phenomena including rape, intimate partner violence, trafficking, honor killings, and female genital mutilation. In fact, most states endorsed many types of violence, for example through laws stating that sex was a marital obligation, that rapists could escape charges by marrying victims, that parents could marry off their girl children, or that men who murdered adulterous wives were merely “defending honor.” The diverse phenomena we today call VAW was hardly recognized as a crime, let alone as a fundamental question of human rights.

Feminists began to use the VAW concept in the 1960s and 1970s as they probed how women’s unequal social position enables sexual and gender violence. In 1993, the global community framed VAW as a question of human rights and as a manifestation of gender subordination in the Vienna Declaration of the World Conference on Human Rights. Today, this connection between VAW, human rights, and women’s status is well established in international law and global discourses of democratic legitimacy. By signing on to international conventions and agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Vienna Declaration, the Inter-American Convention on Violence against Wom-

en, the Maputo Protocol, the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Istanbul Convention, most states have committed to adhere to these norms, at least rhetorically.

In the 1990s and 2000s, pressure from feminist movements and allies succeeded in pushing scores of states to reform their laws to ban violent practices against women and girls. Many states adopted specialized legislation, first to prevent and punish domestic violence, and then later to combat a broader range of violent and harassing practices. Often, however, laws look good on paper but violence and harassment remain common. The major challenge is to align behavior with the letter and spirit of progressive legislation.

In this essay, we take stock of legislative developments around the world and the variation in approaches toward intimate partner violence and sexual harassment. Dozens of states still resist the demands of feminist activists and refuse to conform to international standards on violence against women. However, even in states with progressive legislation, activists face challenges to induce citizens to comply with the law, compel state authorities to enforce the law, and ensure the adequate allocation of resources for social support services. We conclude with a discussion of how activists must strike a balance between fighting VAW aggressively with the carceral and social support dimensions of state power, while exercising restraint to avoid overreaching in ways that produce counterproductive effects, such as the revictimization of women and the violation of other rights.

Sexual and gender violence and harassment are widespread. Worldwide, the World Health Organization (WHO) reports that 35 percent of women have experienced sexual or domestic violence. In Mexico, the ENDIREH survey (National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships) of more than 140,000 households in 2016 found that some 16 percent of women in a relationship had experienced serious physical violence at the hands of their current partner. Over 80 percent of women parliamentarians surveyed in thirty-nine countries say they suffered harassment. In universities in the United States, between 11 percent and 25 percent of women students report experiences of sexual assault. Across the MENA region, 40 percent to 60 percent of women say they have been harassed on the street, while 30 percent to 65 percent of men report having perpetrated such acts.¹

The theoretical development of the VAW concept has enabled scholars, activists, and policy-makers around the world to develop policies and analyze behavior related to violence in multiple ways.

First, activists' elaboration of the mechanisms needed to fight VAW, ranging from specialized legislation to support services and administrative coordination, has enabled scholars to operationalize and measure multiple policy changes. We now have access to a large amount of data about efforts to combat VAW. The World Bank's *Women, Business, and the Law* (WBL) data set, which we use in this essay, contains four waves of data from across the world on laws in multiple areas

of legislation related to gender and sexual violence.² The OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index's physical integrity ranking orders countries according to the comprehensiveness of their approach toward intimate partner violence, rape, and sexual harassment.³ The Womanstats database has scales on the scope and depth of national legislation on domestic violence, rape (including marital rape and date rape), and honor killings, as well as indicators of social practice in all of these areas, up until 2017 and 2018.⁴ The Htun-Weldon data set contains four decades of comprehensive data on state approaches to VAW, encompassing domestic violence, rape, and sexual harassment legislation, services to victims and vulnerable groups of women, and policies such as training, public awareness campaigns, and administrative coordination.⁵

Such data sets make it easier to evaluate governments' approaches to VAW and to assess whether or not a state is attempting seriously to combat the problem. The fact that the data sets disaggregate types of VAW also allows insights into how changes may be taking place in some arenas but not in others. A challenge with these data, however, is that such large, cross-national databases usually do not include information on within-country differences in approaches and implementation, which may be significant in places with pronounced socioeconomic inequalities – driven, for example, by urban-rural divides – or the application of customary or religious laws.

Second, activists' expansion of the VAW concept to include multiple forms of violence has identified the range of behaviors – including not just rape and physical battery, but also stalking, psychological violence, female genital mutilation, harassment, forced pregnancy testing, and more – that need to be measured to assess the prevalence of VAW. However, it is difficult to gather statistics on these experiences. Episodes of violence and harassment are notoriously underreported, which makes official crime and police data a poor reflection of actual behavior. In fact, official data may be misleading, as more women tend to report violence as norms change and they feel more empowered.

Our best estimates of the incidence of VAW thus come from household surveys that probe respondents' experiences. The most sophisticated of these surveys ask about experiences across types of violence and in multiple spheres, such as at home and at work, on the street, with family members and with strangers, in the past year and over the course of a lifetime. Surveys with large sample sizes permit us to get a comprehensive overview of the experiences of differently situated women. Yet there are challenges with such data, too: they are often not comparable across studies and countries due to differences in definitions of violence, questions asked, and survey methodology. Even within the same study, scholars have found “interviewer effects,” with different response patterns according to the gender of the interviewer and whether or not another person is present during the interview.

Finally, activists and scholars have long argued that VAW is attributable not only to individual-level factors such as aggression, alcohol and drug use, or fam-

ily history, but also to cultural attitudes and social norms that legitimize violent behavior, and above all to the gender structure of society, which tends to subordinate women and render them vulnerable to men's economic and social power. Using opinion surveys and other tools, therefore, we can measure and evaluate social contexts that enable violence and impunity.

Evidence from around the world, for example, demonstrates a strong association between norms and attitudes condoning male authority and endorsing wife beating and the perpetration of violence. Analysis of Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) conducted by the U.S. Agency for International Development reveals that in thirty Sub-Saharan African countries, a majority of women respondents say that it is acceptable for a man to beat his wife for various reasons, including if she argues with him, refuses to have sex, or burns food. Geographic variation in attitudes closely corresponds to experiences of violence. In Nepal, perceptions that prevailing social norms endorse male dominance, value family honor, and accept violence are related to women's experiences of physical and sexual intimate partner violence. In Mexico, women who say that violence belongs in the family – more than one-quarter of a large national sample – are more likely to be victims of violence, and also less likely to report such incidents.⁶

In this essay, our empirical focus is primarily on domestic violence and sexual harassment. These issues do not exhaust the range of the VAW phenomenon, which is far broader, but are arguably the issues that activists have struggled hardest to change beliefs about. It is rare today to find people who defend forms of violence against women such as gang rape, honor killings, and female genital mutilation, though defenders do exist in some places. By contrast, as we mentioned earlier, large numbers of people hold on to attitudes that explicitly or implicitly condone intimate partner violence and sexual harassment.

Even as dysfunctional beliefs persist, feminist activists, often allied with women politicians and human rights movements, have compelled states to take action to combat violence. Progressive VAW laws, especially when adopted by authoritarian and otherwise conservative regimes, are subject to criticism as parchment institutions intended to look good abroad and placate critics at home. Still, even when not fully enforced or implemented, VAW laws uphold aspirational rights that signal consensus and state commitment. By codifying a plan for aggressive state action, the laws lend support and legitimacy to feminist efforts to change social norms and empower women.⁷

The World Bank's *Women, Business, and the Law* data show that most countries have taken some action on domestic violence.⁸ The most comprehensive laws specify that domestic violence is a crime, create mechanisms to investigate and punish perpetrators, and offer resources and protection to vic-

tims, such as restraining orders, shelters, hotlines, and legal assistance. Many laws also provide training for police, judges, social workers, and health care professionals, as well as social marketing campaigns to change norms and encourage women to report violence and seek help.

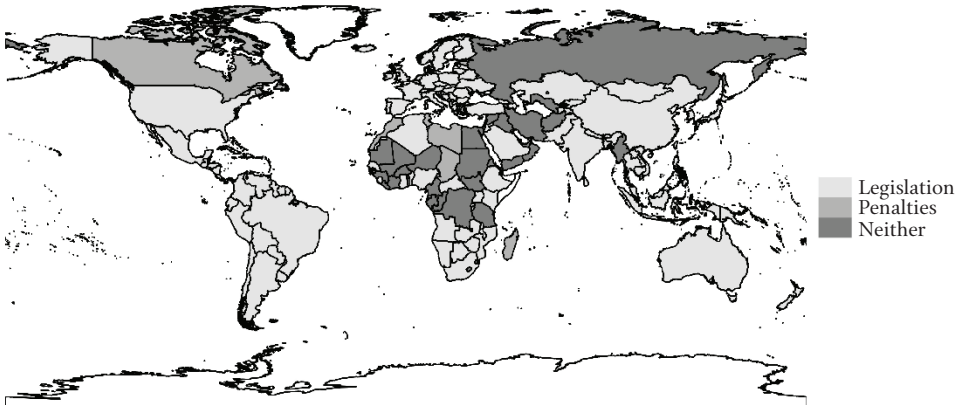
According to the WBL data from 2018, a large majority of countries (144 out of the 189 included) have adopted specialized laws on domestic violence.⁹ As we can see in Figure 1, this includes most countries in Europe and in the Americas, as well as a large number of countries in the southern parts of Africa and Asia. A smaller group of countries – Belgium, Canada, Chad, Djibouti, Estonia, Libya, Madagascar, Morocco, and Tunisia – lacks specialized legislation about domestic violence, but includes aggravated penalties in the criminal law for violence against spouses and other family members. A third group of thirty-six countries – mostly in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East – has no legal mechanisms that seriously address domestic violence.¹⁰

Domestic violence laws vary in their degree of comprehensiveness, depending on the timing of their adoption and national discourses on violence. For example, Figure 2 shows that almost all countries with domestic violence legislation recognize both physical violence and psychological violence.¹¹ In addition, many countries acknowledge sexual violence (119 countries, including 82.6 percent of the countries with specialized domestic violence legislation) and economic violence (95 countries, 66 percent of the countries with specialized legislation).

An important part of sexual domestic violence is marital rape. Feminists worldwide have struggled for decades to get the concept of marital rape recognized. Opposition to the marital rape concept derives from two patriarchal principles: that sex is an obligation of marriage and that women must do what their husbands say. Even in contexts in which there is broad agreement that domestic violence is wrong, some social actors reject the idea that nonconsensual sex in marriage is rape. In discussions over a violence against women law in Myanmar in the 2010s, for example, multiple groups reportedly opposed criminalizing marital rape, including women officials from the National Committee for Women's Affairs.¹²

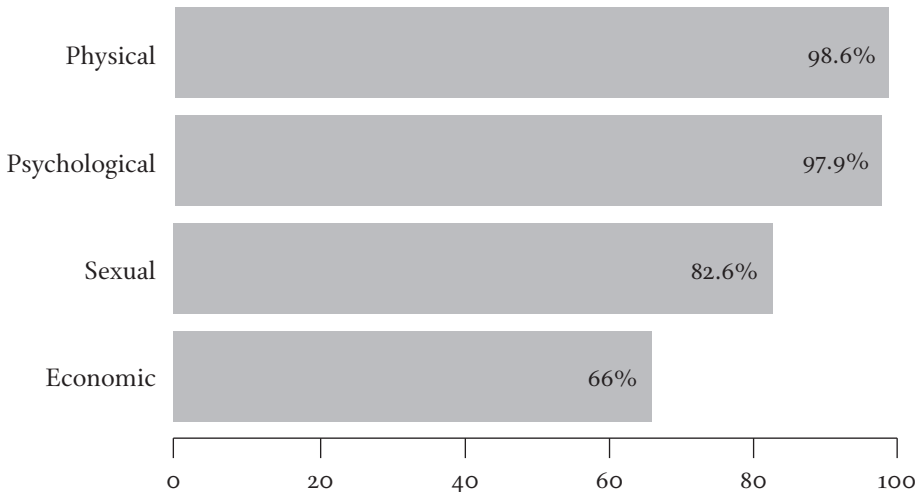
Marital rape is a widespread problem: in the United Kingdom, for instance, the National Health Service estimates that about 45 percent of all rape is committed by current partners. In a survey of 9,200 Indian men conducted by United Nations Population Fund, about one-third of the respondents said they had forced a sexual act on their wives. Without laws that explicitly criminalize marital rape, the practice is subject to legal interpretation and contestation, and it is easier for people to continue thinking it is not a serious crime. In Norway, for example, the criminal code does not explicitly mention marital rape, and, historically, rape within a marriage was not considered a crime. In fact, it was not until 1974 that a man was condemned for raping his wife.¹³

Figure 1
Countries with Legislation on Domestic Violence



Source: Figure created by the authors using data from World Bank Group, *Women, Business and the Law 2018* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2018).

Figure 2
Percentage of National Domestic Violence Laws Recognizing Different Types of Violence



Source: Figure created by the authors using data from World Bank Group, *Women, Business and the Law 2018* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2018).

Figure 3 shows that some seventy-eight of the 189 countries (41 percent) in the WBL dataset have legislation that explicitly criminalizes marital rape, including Australia, Canada, France, and Sweden, as well as most of the countries in Latin and Central America and some countries in the southern part of Africa. In another seventy-seven countries (41 percent) – including the United States, most European countries, as well as a large share of the countries in Africa and Asia – a woman can file criminal charges against her husband in the case of marital rape.

In the remaining thirty-four countries (18 percent) – mostly in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia – married women have no legal protection against marital rape and social actors continue to contest the concept. In India, for example, the 1860 Penal Code states explicitly that sexual coercion in marriage does *not* amount to rape. In 2013, parliament reformed the law to criminalize marital rape, but only if the wife is under fifteen years old. Then, the Supreme Court ruled in 2017 that it is unconstitutional to permit the marital rape of minors between the ages of fifteen and eighteen, thereby enabling wives younger than eighteen to allege marital rape. In 2018, a justice in the Gujarat High Court ruled that a man who had repeatedly raped his wife was guilty of sexual harassment and spousal cruelty, but not rape due to the spousal exception. In a move heralded by activists, the justice called for the nationwide criminalization of marital rape regardless of age.

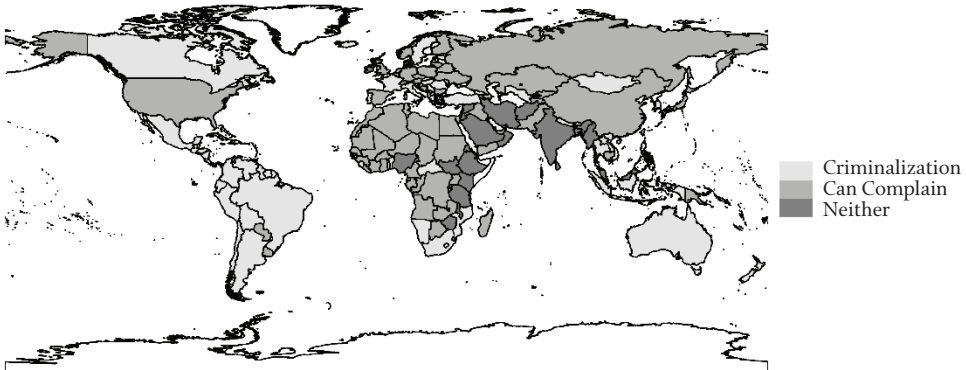
A different, though related, topic is whether countries exempt rapists from criminal penalties if they marry their victims. Though most societies have reformed laws to remove these marriage provisions, a stubborn group has not, including Angola, Bahrain, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, the Philippines, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, and the West Bank and Gaza.

Another major issue on the agenda for women’s rights activists is sexual harassment, which encompasses sexual coercion, unwanted sexual advances, and gender harassment. In the past few decades, feminist demands have compelled states to take action against sexual harassment in the workplace, schools, public institutions, and common spaces.

Some countries, such as the United States, expanded legal understandings of sex discrimination to encompass sexual harassment. Many European countries broadened labor protections to cover sexual coercion, gender harassment, and bullying in the workplace. In yet other contexts, laws intended to combat gender and sexual violence incorporated harassing behavior. For example, Mexico’s 2007 federal law, which guarantees women a “life free from violence,” purports to combat various forms of violence including psychological, physical, economic, patrimonial, sexual, and other violence intended to “harm women’s dignity, integrity, or liberty.”¹⁴

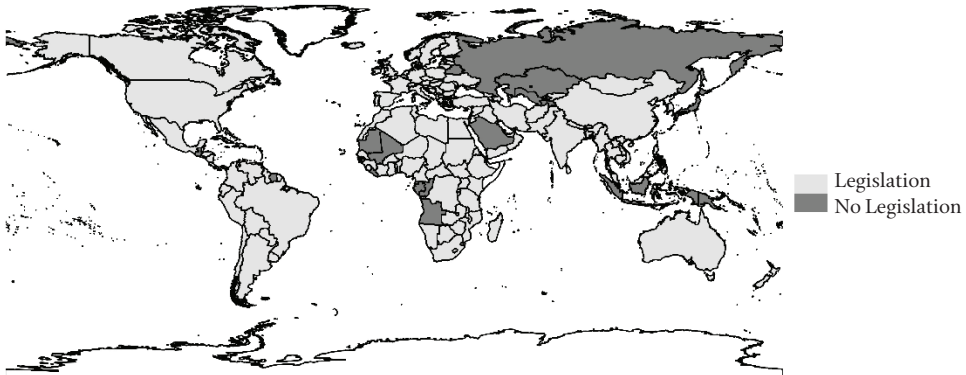
Figure 4 identifies the 154 countries in the world that have adopted legislation against some form of sexual harassment as of 2018.¹⁵ Only a minority of countries lacks any legislation, including large countries such as Russia, Japan, and Indone-

Figure 3
Countries that Criminalize Marital Rape



Source: Figure created by the authors using data from World Bank Group, *Women, Business and the Law 2018* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2018).

Figure 4
Countries that Have Legislation on Sexual Harassment

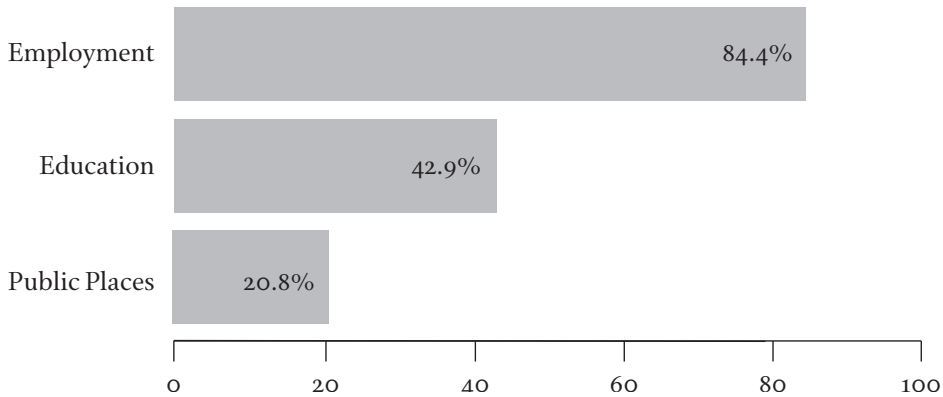


Source: Figure created by the authors using data from World Bank Group, *Women, Business and the Law 2018* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2018).

sia, as well as several countries in Africa and the Middle East, including Angola, Liberia, and Saudi Arabia.

However, laws vary considerably in the domains they apply to (see Figure 5). In 130 countries (84.4 percent), sexual harassment legislation covers harassment in employment, though criminal penalties are stipulated in only seventy-nine of

Figure 5
Percentage of Sexual Harassment Laws Addressing Different Types of Harassment



Source: Figure created by the authors using data from World Bank Group, *Women, Business and the Law 2018* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2018).

these countries. In sixty-six countries (42.9 percent), sexual harassment legislation addresses educational contexts. In only thirty-two countries (20.8 percent) does the law cover sexual harassment in public spaces.

Even when the law does not explicitly address a particular form of sexual harassment, it may still be possible to challenge harassing behavior in court. As in the case of domestic violence discussed earlier, however, the failure explicitly to typify proscribed behaviors may make it harder to get authorities, peers, colleagues, and family members to take women's grievances seriously and to respond appropriately. Gender harassment, for example, tends to be far more pervasive than sexualized advances and sexual coercion in U.S. workplaces, and frequently just as detrimental to women's health, their careers, and organizational climates. Yet gender harassment often skirts below the legal radar, and some evidence suggests that gender harassment, but not other forms of sexual harassment, has increased since the #MeToo movement.¹⁶

The existence of laws criminalizing domestic violence and sexual harassment does not mean that people comply or that state authorities enforce them. The letter of the law in many places is far more progressive than social norms and individual attitudes, which implies that behavioral alignment with the law is a primary challenge facing VAW activists today.

As we mentioned earlier, studies show that the problem of violence against women persists across social groups and contexts, even in countries where laws combatting VAW are decades old. What is more, only a small share of women who experience violence or harassment report this to the authorities. Analysis of DHS surveys in twenty-four countries finds that the average share of women victims who report gender-based violence to public institutions is 7 percent, though a larger share (40 percent) say they spoke with family or friends about their experiences.¹⁷

Reluctance to report is attributable partially to attitudes that see violence as normal, common, and a private or family matter. Underreporting may also be strategic, as women choose to avoid emotional, financial, and personal risks associated with police intervention and legal proceedings. Women who report incur costs, including disbelief and demeaning treatment by the authorities, retaliation, and ostracism by family and community. Forty-five percent of the approximately ninety thousand charges of discrimination made to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 2015 included a complaint of retaliation (and those are the reported incidents!).¹⁸

High attrition rates for VAW cases increase reporting risks faced by women. Across much of the world, legal authorities end up prosecuting very few allegations of domestic and sexual violence. Women often drop charges. In the rare event that a case of rape or domestic violence goes to court, judges and prosecutors often question victims about their morality and sexual practices. Convictions are rare. In fact, in most European countries, reporting rates have increased, but conviction rates have actually fallen.¹⁹

Governments, international organizations, and civil society groups around the world have adopted a range of interventions to change social norms, make it easier and safer for victims to report, and encourage bystanders to intervene to stop violence. Many groups focus on social norms marketing via the mass media, which are less costly and easier to implement than improvements in government services and infrastructure or person-to-person training. A large campaign in Uganda, for example, involves showing videos depicting the consequences of intimate partner violence and modeling bystander interventions during village film festivals. Follow-up studies find that, among people who had seen the videos, there was a greater tendency to report abuse and some reduction in experiences of violence, even as attitudes endorsing violence did not change.²⁰

Every normative intervention, however, runs the risk of producing unintended consequences. For example, it is common for gender violence campaigns to emphasize the prevalence of violations – for example, with billboards stating that half of women are victims of intimate partner violence – in order to elicit outrage and mobilize a commitment to change. Yet social psychologists' research implies that such campaigns may promote complicity with existing trends by increasing people's awareness of what is actually typical in their community.²¹

In the United States, a vast majority of companies and universities require that workers and students participate in trainings intended to prevent sexual misconduct. Trainings typically cover federal law, organizational policies, and reporting procedures; many also seek to communicate principles of equality and affirmative consent. Yet a growing body of evidence has shown that training, though well intentioned, frequently backfires. Studies show that some men have adverse reactions to training, growing more extreme in sexist views and in their proclivity to harass; that people's embrace of traditional gender stereotypes increases; and that women say they are less likely to report assault. In U.S. corporations, employee training programs have led to fewer women rising to management ranks.²²

More effective interventions against sexual assault and harassment involve leaders and influential social referents as change agents. Programs aiming to alter community norms and empower bystanders to intervene to stop assault and harassment have produced good results. Bystander intervention training, for example, has been linked to behavioral and attitudinal changes as well as a reduction in rates of assault on college campuses and in the U.S. military.²³

A key remaining challenge for women's rights activists and their supporters, particularly in the Global North where wide consensus exists about the most serious forms of VAW, is to find the right balance between using and restraining state power. Almost everyone wants violence and harassment to be taken more seriously, and we are far from a situation in which prisons are packed with rapists and harassers. Yet there is a risk that campaigns against sexual misconduct may strengthen the carceral state, produce unintended consequences such as reduced reporting and exclusion of women, and infringe on other important rights.

How hard should society punish acts of violence against women? Some studies show that tougher sentences and longer prison terms help to deter serial perpetrators, but many activists object to using the criminal justice system and mechanisms of policing, prosecution, and incarceration to fight gender and sexual violence. So-called carceral feminism and its instruments, such as mandatory arrest laws, may empower law enforcement authorities at the expense of individual women, particularly intersectionally disadvantaged groups of women. As a result, women may be more likely to suffer revictimization by police and prosecutors, and minority communities may experience biased treatment. In addition, carceral feminism runs the risk of diverting attention from structural conditions conducive to gender violence, such as social inequalities and the concentration of economic and political power in men's hands.²⁴

A related issue is how expansively violence, assault, and harassment should be defined. It is crucial to recognize the multiple ways that women are violated and to

enforce legislation that punishes serious crimes. But many human encounters are ambiguous. Laws that draw clear lines in these gray areas, and that authorize official scrutiny of intimate relations, may lead to unintended results.

For example, laws in several U.S. states, and policies in many hundreds of universities and colleges, apply the “affirmative consent” standard to define sexual assault. All participants in a sexual interaction must explicitly express their consent at each stage, or one or more have assaulted the other(s). In order to clarify misunderstandings, the standard classifies a great deal of behavior as assault, with potentially severe penalties for the perpetrator. Critics, including prominent feminists and legal scholars, have raised concerns that the affirmative consent standard is unenforceable, violates the presumption of innocence and due process rights of the accused, and fails to address the underlying causes of assault, which include gender hierarchies pervading the “hookup culture.”²⁵ Our own field experiments on the effects of mandatory sexual misconduct training on a university campus suggest that emphasizing affirmative consent may make women less likely to report an incident of sexual harassment or assault.²⁶

Enhanced surveillance of everyday behavior for patterns of sexual misconduct may lead some men simply to avoid interactions with women. Recent U.S. surveys show that around half of male managers are afraid to work with women colleagues, and that the number afraid to mentor women has tripled since the rise of the #MeToo movement. Afraid that casual comments and jokes will be misconstrued as harassment, more men endorse the “Mike Pence rule” of not having dinner with any woman except their own wife.²⁷ As a result, more women may end up excluded from professional networks.

Ultimately, the broad characterization of VAW has advantages and disadvantages. We have a more precise understanding of the range of phenomena that harm women’s dignity and limit their opportunities. But such an enhanced understanding does not imply that we are able to engineer precise interventions. Our legal categories and policy tools are still too blunt to eliminate VAW from the top down. Individual women and local communities, when they have access to resources and bargaining power, may be able to more consistently impose costs to deter perpetrators and generate new norms than the criminal justice hand of the state.

Many states have made dramatic progress to combat violence against women, at least on paper. Some countries remain stubborn, refusing to recognize the possibility of marital rape, sexual harassment, or resisting a comprehensive approach to domestic violence. Even in countries with progressive legislation, law-practice gaps remain. As some powerful men go down on allegations of harassment, millions of ordinary women endure it. Yet to a much greater extent than in the past, society is mobilized against extreme forms of violence and the problem of impunity, and international organizations and civil soci-

ety groups test interventions to change social norms and attitudes, encourage reporting, and reduce perpetration.

Global efforts to end VAW are impressive and important. The ongoing challenge, particularly in the Global North, is to strike a good balance between aggressive state action against violent behavior and state restraint to enable the unfolding of social processes that generate legitimate norms and empower women. The state enforces right and wrong, but many states are weak and state actors have conflicting motives. Even strong states cannot engineer social change completely. State-sponsored projects have the potential to produce unintended and unfortunate consequences, such as reducing women's autonomy.

Combating violence requires attention to beliefs and norms and above all to power asymmetries that render women vulnerable to abuse. Women need a firm structural foundation – resources, land, jobs, social support – to contest, and to exit from, violence and harassment in their daily lives. Many studies show that women with access to resources are better able to leave abusers and bargain for more equitable treatment in marriage. Reforming discriminatory family laws that subordinate women to male guardians, and limit their ability to work, manage, and inherit property, will contribute to reducing violence. Social policies that alleviate the financial penalties of divorce and single motherhood, combat discrimination in the workplace, and enable women to combine mothering and wage work are also essential.²⁸ Empowered women are the key to ending gender and sexual violence.

AUTHORS' NOTE

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The New Competition in Multilateral Norm-Setting: Transnational Feminists & the Illiberal Backlash

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Global norm-setting to advance women's rights has historically been a fertile area for feminist activism. These efforts in multilateral institutions have also, however, attracted a transnationally coordinated backlash. Initially spearheaded by the Vatican, the right-wing backlash has consolidated into a curious coalition that now includes authoritarian and right-wing populist regimes and bridges significant differences of religious belief, regime type, and ideology. Hostility to feminism has proven to be a valuable point of connection between interests that otherwise have little in common. Some tensions between feminist groups have been exploited by right-wing interests, in particular over sex workers' rights and the use of technology to alter the interpretation and experience of sexuality, reproduction, and gender (transgender issues, surrogacy, sex-selective abortion, and sexuality and disability). This essay reviews a recent instance of right-wing coordination, seen in the nearly successful effort to derail the 2019 meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. It examines the strategic responses of transnational feminist movements to this backlash in multilateral institutions, including their exploration of new transnational policy issues and experimentation with hybrid transnational spaces.

Global governance – understood not just as the work of multilateral institutions tackling transborder problems (climate change, migration, weapons of mass destruction) but as a regime of shared norms, such as universal human rights – has been a focus of feminist activism for at least a century. From the efforts of the International Congress of Women in 1915 to end World War I and support what eventually became the League of Nations, to the creation of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 1946, to the inclusion of gender-based violence in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in 2000, to the centrality of gender equality in the 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals, feminist activism has sought to make gender equality a core compo-

ment of global governance. In spite of the marked male dominance of multilateral institutions and disciplines (diplomacy, peace- and war-making, trade), global institutions also constitute a valuable “transnational opportunity structure” for feminist activism using normative and legal strategies to make gender equality norms persuasive in global goal-setting.¹ Global institutions, in turn, have stimulated transnational activism among feminists, providing opportunities for building common cause, providing a focus and location for advocacy (for instance, the UN World Conferences on Women series between 1975 and 1995), providing funding, and creating gender policy machinery that transnational feminists can hold accountable (for instance, UN Women, created in 2010). It is precisely because global institutions have provided a helpful normative and policy terrain for feminist movements that forces hostile to gender equality are seeking to dislodge the feminist foothold in global institutions, a process explored in this essay, which draws upon twenty-one interviews with transnational feminist activists conducted in March and April 2019 (see the methodological note at the end of the essay).

Examples of feminist normative triumphs in multilateral space include the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (and its increasingly progressive general recommendations to update provisions on violence against women, trafficking, reproductive rights, and rights within families), inclusion of conflict-related gender-based violence as war crimes in the 2000 Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court, and the UN Security Council’s ten resolutions on women, peace, and security that bring a gender perspective to global security work.² The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (from the UN’s Fourth World Conference on Women) is a progressive manifesto that makes unusual reading for an agreement between UN Member States, proposing structural changes to enable women to participate fully in economic life, support for women’s autonomy in sexual and reproductive decisions, elimination of gender stereotypes in the media, and recognition of the need to overcome attitudinal barriers to women in politics and to men in unpaid care work.

The 1995 Beijing conference was significant for another reason: it was a profoundly productive moment for transnational feminist activism. Two years of preparatory funding from donor governments in advance of the meeting supported significant organizational development in a wide range of women’s groups and networks, which accounted for over thirty thousand participants in the unprecedented NGO Forum (the companion event open to the public) beside the ten thousand state delegates. This intergovernmental process, hard on the heels of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, ended up being generative for feminist civil society around the world by creating an incentive for feminist organizations to professionalize, prioritize, and network transnationally to amplify impact. This effect, however, was strongest in the Global South. According

to a Bangladesh-based interviewee from the Asian Network of Women's Shelters: "We got a lot of funding from OECD countries for Beijing and when we got there we felt sorry for Northern feminists. We discovered they had not been funded that whole time, and grassroots women of the West were left out. From the West it was mainly professional bureaucrats who were represented."³ This funding supported intellectual work in the Global South to generate feminist critiques of neoliberalism and to insist upon attention to the race and class differences overlooked by Western feminists. These conceptual changes challenged the North-South gap in objectives and leadership that had made transnational feminism appear up to that point as the internationalization of American second-wave feminism.⁴

Feminist engagement with international institutions is held up by constructivist international relations theorists as a paradigmatic example of how a relatively power-deprived social group (women and feminists) can challenge the power of sovereign states and recruit them to promote justice. Constructivists Margaret Keck, Kathryn Sikkink, and Martha Finnemore have described how feminist "norm entrepreneurs" have built alliances with friendly states and insider champions ("femocrats"), reaching a "tipping point" after which a "norm cascade" triggers universal commitments to gender equality.⁵

This "cascade" has been interrupted. By the time the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were agreed on in 2015, while gender parity had been reached globally in some areas of health and education, progress remained stubbornly slow on women's political participation (still on average less than 25 percent of legislatures) and had started to reverse on women's labor force participation (dropping in most contexts after 2005 from high points above 50 percent).⁶ The SDGs include a stand-alone goal on gender equality as well as gender-specific targets across many of the other goals. But, signaling a shift in the international environment for women's rights, states could not agree on targets for encouraging men's involvement in domestic care work (SDG target 5.4), or for state responsibilities to use social policy to mitigate the costs borne by women for childbearing and -rearing (such as displacement from career ladders and discontinued pension contributions, SDG target 1.3). In both of these areas, feminist activism seems to have hit a wall: states cannot agree on their responsibility to change social norms and are therefore asked only to make efforts "as nationally appropriate."⁷ In the area of reproductive rights, the 2015 SDGs were forced to retreat to decades-old language that had been agreed on at the Cairo conference on population and development (SDG target 5.6).⁸

The cascade of global gender equality norms generated some cautious triumph among feminist observers in the period between 1995 and the end of the post-Cold War honeymoon around 2008. Feminist organizations working with a growing number of feminist policy-makers (femocrats) inside

states and multilateral institutions were forming increasingly effective “transnational advocacy networks” or “velvet triangles” of insider-outsider policy change champions.⁹ Writing in 2006, political scientist Aili Mari Tripp noted, “In the past two decades we have witnessed the evolution of an international consensus around particular norms regarding women’s rights” that has made a range of international institutions “intent on changing women’s status and removing key impediments to women’s advancement in almost every arena.”¹⁰ Reflecting on the creation of UN Women in 2010, which merged four marginal UN entities and elevated its new executive director to the same rank as leaders of other UN agencies, international relations and gender scholars Gulay Çağlar, Elisabeth Prugl, and Susanne Zwingel wrote: “Together, the UN and feminist activists have formed a unique apparatus of international governance that has made possible remarkable changes in gender regimes.”¹¹

This gender mainstreaming apparatus (of which UN Women is one expression) is not without its critics. Legal scholar Janet Halley has derided it as establishment-based “governance feminism.”¹² Her critique implies that not only does institutionalized feminism legitimate some of the global systems that create oppression (neoliberal growth strategies, militarization), but it risks reproducing some patriarchal gender and cultural essentialisms. Legal scholar Ratna Kapur has argued that this happens through the constant effort to make feminist objectives intelligible to policy-makers either by instrumentalizing women as useful to every policy objective, from poverty reduction to counterterrorism, or by focusing on women as victims, in what she labels “subordination feminism.”¹³ According to Halley: “Merging into the mainstream can efface the feminist fingerprints on important governance projects and preclude intrafeminist arguments about them. . . . It can respond to more general discursive or strategic demands making victimization and identity the prerequisites for legal intelligibility.”¹⁴ This means femocrats in international governance are either essentializing dupes or are corrupted by the “seductions of power,” drawn in particular to narrowing the focus of the gender equality project to those born anatomically female, and to what Halley has called the “siren call of victimization”: focusing on how women are objects of male venality. Some argue this depoliticizes the feminist project by converting public policy into a rescue mission for abused women that constructs a simplistic dichotomy between “progressive” Western liberal values and “barbaric” cultures in the Global South, and that misperceives or ignores women’s agency and intentions in practices such as sex work or veiling. This reductive victim focus is enormously productive for fundraising.¹⁵ However, it may contribute to the sluggish progress on feminist policy objectives to build women’s rights and participate in competitions for power, such as in the labor market and in politics.

The risks of co-optation and the impetus toward instrumental reduction inherent to most efforts to institutionalize women’s rights have long been obvious to

feminist activists who engage with international institutions, some of whom have maintained a productive insider-outsider tension to keep gender equality policy from deviating into paternalistic approaches. After the 1995 Beijing conference, there was a drift in feminist transnational activism away from UN-related activism and toward independent arenas such as the World Social Forum or regional, national, and local work.¹⁶ In part, this was because of frustration about the sidelining of the Beijing Platform for Action in international policy-making, which shifted wholesale to the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) framework just a few years later. Unlike the Beijing Platform for Action, the MDGs lack a critique of neoliberal growth strategies and were designed without consultation with transnational feminist groups. From a women's rights perspective, they were seen as reductive. Girls' participation in primary school was the only target to measure the gender equality goal (MDG 3), and the only direct goal for adult women (MDG 5) was focused on maternal mortality. Nationally, competition to perform well on the simple eight-point MDGs sidelined implementation of the complex and culturally challenging Beijing Platform for Action.

The partial retreat from multilateralism also stemmed from difficulties in connecting global developments to domestic challenges: as the U.S. activist Charlotte Bunch has pointed out, in the United States during this period, "there [was] a tendency not to see the international arena as adding anything to causes at home," unlike earlier suffrage movements and peace efforts that saw advances in other countries as likely to spur the same in the United States.¹⁷ The United States is of course a special case, since its nonratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the disdain of periodic Republican administrations for multilateralism means that the "boomerang" effect described by Keck and Sikkink, in which transnational norms can be used to advance domestic equality agendas, has not been deployed.¹⁸

In part, the retreat from multilateralism also stems from a significant drop in financing for autonomous feminist mobilization by official bilateral and multilateral aid donors after Beijing. A decade-long monitoring process conducted by the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) shows that after the Beijing moment, funding for autonomous feminist mobilization shrank dramatically and remains a problem today. While 2019 saw significant new gender equality commitments by governments and private foundations (such as the Gates Foundation's commitment of \$1 billion over ten years), so far only 1 percent of these new funds are committed to organizational strengthening of feminist associations.¹⁹ In regular OECD bilateral aid, about 4 percent (\$4.5 billion) has the promotion of gender equality as its principal objective, of which less than 10 percent supports women's organizations, with only a fraction of that amount dedicated to operational costs.²⁰

The Beijing high point for transnational feminism was also linked with the debut of a visceral conservative countermovement, triggered in particular by feminist theorizing about the distinctions between “sex” and “gender” (and the implication that gender identity and sexual orientation are social constructions), as well as by advances in recognition of women’s sexual and reproductive autonomy achieved in Cairo in 1994 and the decisive subjection of domestic gender-based violence to the principles of criminal law and justice in Vienna in 1993.²¹

While the Holy See initiated the backlash effort to discredit feminist thinking in multilateral forums – using its observer status at the UN – what is striking is the size and diversity of the antifeminist movement this fostered.²² As early as the Cairo conference on population and development, the Vatican experimented with unconventional alliances to support this agenda, courting Libya and Iran to object to assertions of women’s autonomy in making reproductive decisions.²³ The antifeminist movement has since become a core component of a very broad reaction against liberal norms that spans opposition to issues ranging from the tolerance of same-sex relationships, to prohibitions on torture, to affirmative action, to gun control. This illiberalism, according to analysts of the global right wing, unites normative and epistemic communities that are in fact usually antagonistic to each other. They tend to enjoy an advocacy advantage since they defend what are seen as familiar and accepted traditional social virtues.²⁴ As an interviewee from AWID noted: “The narrative strength is on the right. Even progressive states won’t challenge the idea of family values.”²⁵ Hostility to feminism, to feminist organizations, and to feminist women leaders seems to perform a useful bonding function between right-wing and authoritarian interests with otherwise next to nothing in common.

The antigender campaign has targeted the UN since the 1990s – particularly the Commission on the Status of Women, which initiated all four World Conferences on Women, and the Commission on Population and Development – but the feminist leaders interviewed for this essay note an intensification of efforts, a diversification of conservative alliances, and an increasing impact since 2012. That year saw illiberal forces score a significant “spoil” when they prevented the production of “agreed conclusions” at the fifty-ninth meeting of the CSW. A small group of conservative (mainly North African and Middle Eastern) states, marshalled by the Russian delegation to the CSW, blocked consensus because of a refusal to accept the notion of “comprehensive sexuality education,” caricatured as promoting promiscuity and homosexuality in adolescents.

That same year, feminist activists, according to a member of the European Women’s Lobby I interviewed, became aware that the Holy See had quietly been sponsoring pre-CSW retreats in spas in Arizona for members of UN missions considered to be amenable to their position – smaller African countries in particular. Consistency in language and negotiating strategies is ensured through use of

a ninety-page guide to recommended conservative positions on family-related matters in UN negotiations. This manual, which covers more than eighty topics from abortion to youth sexuality, is updated annually by the conservative NGO Family Watch International.²⁶ According to an interviewee from AWID, the Alliance Defending Freedom, identified by the Southern Poverty Law Center as a hate group because of its anti-LGBT positions, also provides documentation and training to support conservative positions on international law.²⁷ It was also after this point (in 2012), according to a European Women's Lobby member from Turkey, that important countries (Turkey, Egypt) started to eliminate feminist civil society participants from their CSW delegations.²⁸

Shortly after the impasse at the CSW in 2012, Ban Ki-moon, then UN secretary-general, asked the General Assembly if it would like to see a Fifth World Conference in 2015. The rancor of the preceding CSW debates contributed to the conviction of UN Women and feminist activists that a multilateral Fifth World Conference on women would trigger a catastrophic erosion of women's rights. The proposal to hold a Fifth World Conference quietly evaporated.

Capture of state power by conservative, often religious fundamentalist groups has amplified their power enormously. The "illiberal drift" – democratic swings in favor of right-wing populists – has caught many democracy analysts off-guard, and its extent is significant, with most of the world's most populous nations now under right-wing and sometimes authoritarian government control, and Freedom House counting the erosion of civil and political rights for thirteen straight years.²⁹

The Trump administration in the United States has brought a surprising boost to antifeminist voices in multilateral forums. Evangelical Christians have been appointed to some pivotal roles relevant to gender equality in the State Department, USAID, and Health and Human Services, where they have embarked on dismantling women's health and rights programs domestically and internationally as well, starting with the reinstatement and strengthening – on Trump's first day in office – of the global gag rule cutting funding for family planning services.³⁰ While a revival of the global gag rule had been expected, more surprising have been efforts to eliminate references to reproductive health services of any kind for women (for instance in an April 2019 Security Council resolution on support for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence), the promotion of abstinence instead of contraception, and attempts to eliminate the use of the word "gender" in UN documents.³¹

Antifeminists collaborate at the UN to oppose the use of feminist language in official documents, in particular opposing abortion and the free expression of nonheterosexual and nonbinary versions of sexual orientation and gender identity. There has been an increase in pressure to insert terms like "natural" and "fundamental" to describe "the family," and to celebrate women's roles and respon-

sibilities as mothers. Since 2015, a “Group of the Friends of the Family” (GoFF) has cooperated on this agenda. Depending on who is counting, this is a group of twenty-five countries (according to the GoFF website) or 112 (according to one anti-abortion website).³² The group is a mix of countries with Muslim-dominant populations (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Iran, Iraq), former Soviet countries (Belarus and the Russian Federation itself), several prominent African countries (Uganda, Sudan, Zimbabwe), very populous democracies (Nigeria, Indonesia, Bangladesh), and one Catholic-dominant country (Nicaragua). The Holy See is a consistent if informal presence. These are the countries that successfully coordinated, in the process mentioned earlier, to obstruct progressive targets on men’s engagement in unpaid care and on social protection in the SDG framework.³³

In response to these well-coordinated multilateral norm-spoiling efforts, transnational feminists are rebooting their UN advocacy. This has involved shifts in focus and tactics. Lobbying formerly friendly states – the United States, Brazil, the Philippines, even Turkey – is no longer an option in efforts to gain ground on substantive issues in UN negotiating documents. The “usual suspects” – Australia and New Zealand, the Nordic countries, Mexico, many of the EU states, and the EU bureaucracy itself – continue to be supportive, particularly those practicing “feminist foreign policy.”³⁴ But the credibility of feminist advocacy now relies on emerging (but not very powerful) feminist champions: Liberia, Namibia, Cape Verde, Tunisia and Lebanon, Uruguay. These advocates are important because their support contradicts the frequent charge that feminist policy ambitions are a Western women’s project.

Transnational feminists are facing extremely effective tactics by well-funded opponents. These include forum-shopping to set up antifeminist positions in policy debates underpopulated by feminist activists (discussed below), closing down access for civil society in multilateral forums, exploiting schisms in the feminist movement, parading “defectors” to demoralize opponents, and social media attacks. Some of these tactics were deployed to generate chaos and a near failure to reach agreement in the March 2019 CSW.

The forty-five members of the CSW produce an annual consensus outcome intended to guide policy at the national level. Social protection – pensions, social security, cash transfers – was the topic of the 2019 CSW.³⁵ Social conservatives tend to reject feminist demands on states to promote gender equality, which include efforts to encourage men to do care work (such as through paternity leave) or giving women survival alternatives to dependence on individual men (social security, pensions). Market fundamentalists have other concerns, mainly about the costs to taxpayers of universal pensions or universal basic income. They also prefer to minimize state responsibilities to step in when private income support systems fail. The 2019 CSW topic, therefore, invited a convergence between religious

and market fundamentalisms to reject the gender and class redistributive potential of social protection.

The original concise negotiating draft of policy conclusions – the six-page “zero draft” – was subject to so many textual inserts and nonnegotiable “red lines” in the March 2019 negotiations that it expanded to one hundred pages. This textual bloating happens every year, but UN Women insiders said they had never seen such extended or aggressive edits, and observed a coordinated strategy of creating chaos to make negotiating agreed text next to impossible in the two-week time frame.³⁶ Beyond objections to proposals for gender-equal social protection systems, the United States joined Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Malaysia, and the Russian Federation to demand removal of fairly standard provisions such as the use of the word “gender,” a reaffirmation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and references to sexual health and reproductive rights, to comprehensive adolescent sexuality education, and to portable social security benefits on migration.

The facilitator of the negotiations, Kenyan Ambassador Koki Muli Grignon, generated a compromise document at the end of the negotiations that did not jettison previously agreed commitments to sexual and reproductive health services and to comprehensive sexuality education for adolescents. On the final night of the CSW (March 23), Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, members of the Commission, registered a refusal to join consensus. Their identically worded statements listed the core elements of women’s rights to which they objected:

Specifically, multiple references to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. Promotion of sexual rights and related issues that had never garnered consensus. Refusal to recognize parental rights language. Refusal to recognize the family as the natural and fundamental group unit of society. Failure to fully reflect the role of the family in protecting women and girls. Promotion of sexuality education to children, despite its irrelevance to the theme. Focus on ambiguous terms, such as multiple and intersecting discrimination. Lack of language on national sovereignty. Lack of balance on addressing the issues of violence. Overall issues of transparency and failure to give sufficient time to controversial issues.³⁷

However, this repudiation of so many aspects of women’s rights was delivered at the wrong point in the negotiations, not at the point when the chair called for objections, which meant that Saudi Arabia and Bahrain failed to block the agreement, and so the agreed conclusions document was adopted. This procedural “save” meant that previously agreed normative language was preserved for another year, but it was a close call and the mistake will not be repeated. At the meeting, the United States’ final statement included rejection of past agreements at the UN on sexual and reproductive health and rights because of connotations of abortion.³⁸ When the U.S. representative reminded the assembly that the United States would be a member of the Commission in 2020, it sounded like a threat.

For transnational feminist activists, the CSW has now become a space in which women's rights are vulnerable to reversals. According to an activist in the transnational gay rights organization ARC International, "The outcome of CSW is almost a joke. It lags far behind other parts of the UN like the Human Rights Council (HRC) and even the General Assembly, which have stronger language and go much further than the CSW agreed conclusions."³⁹ An AWID activist noted the dilemma for feminists: "CSW is important for AWID and other organizations. It is a huge space and important annual forum for women's rights groups to come and lobby. But we have no scope for strategic asks."⁴⁰ An activist with OutRight International, a gay rights organization, explained: "We keep our expectations realistic. We don't try to push the envelope – there has never been inclusion of language on sexual orientation and gender identity in the agreed conclusions. We just try to encourage states to remove rigid gender binary language where we can."⁴¹ The conclusion reached by another AWID activist shows that conservatives have de facto repurposed the Commission: "The CSW is probably one of the most regressive spaces at the UN."⁴²

Outside the closed negotiations, conservative civil society groups were aggressively visible. A large blacked-out bus painted with fetuses pleading for their lives, funded by the Spain-based extremist group Citizen Go, patrolled the streets. The Holy See and conservative NGOs hosted side events with titles like: "Surrogacy: A Fresh Look at Women's Bodily Autonomy and the Rights of Children," "Biology Is Not Bigotry," and "Protecting Femininity and Human Dignity in Women's Empowerment." A number of panels boasted "defectors" – a former editor from *Cosmopolitan* magazine regretting connections made years ago between the feminist and sexual revolutions, a lesbian former staff member of a family planning clinic, and a victim of gender-based violence – all emphatically opposed to recognizing trans women as women. Menacingly, the chief facilitator was subject to a cyber assault during negotiations, her email account bombarded with hundreds of antichoice messages. Citizen Go eventually took responsibility for this.

These events demonstrated a capacity for creative adaptation of feminist discourse: for instance, praising the value of women's care work (but not seeking to redistribute it to men), or condemning the harm created by overly rigid gender stereotypes (but rejecting individuals who transition genders), or condemning the exploitation of poor women in surrogacy contracts (but not supporting their capacity to shape such contracts). In several areas, conservative groups have exploited important schisms between feminists. The Heritage Foundation, for instance, has exploited the unease expressed by some feminists about the transgender movement and has built alliances with activists labeled TERFs (trans-exclusionary radical feminists).⁴³ They have also made inroads with feminists with reservations on abortion issues, particularly where the pro-choice position has led to sex-selective abortion, or to abortion linked to potentially eugenic purposes, such as to eliminate fetuses deemed imperfect. This is a matter of enormous concern to disabled people.

The tumult and the uncomfortable outcome in the 2019 CSW was not unexpected, but has spurred urgent discussion on whether and how to exploit the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing World Conference on Women to renew global solidarities, refresh the membership of global women's movements, address deep divisions, and challenge the conservative backlash. A number of activists suggested that the sense of attacks on all fronts has forced them into a reactive mode. As a leader of CREA, a South Asian feminist organization, put it: "Strategic conversations are not happening because we are responding day to day to attacks. We don't have the resources or the security to do the same strategic thinking that the opposition is doing. We are being fractured. . . . They can see we are a divided house."⁴⁴ Transnational feminist organizations have been investing in strategic pushback. These efforts, discussed in turn below, include exploiting the full range of transnational spaces, inserting feminist conversations into new human rights discussions, critical engagement with UN Women to support resolution of differences between feminists, and monitoring the membership and financing of conservative groups.

Transnational feminists have successfully demanded space for gender equality issues in multilateral institutions that lack a gender mandate. An important example is the pursuit of the Women Peace and Security agenda since 2000 in the UN Security Council.⁴⁵ Successful feminist interventions have also been made at the International Criminal Court and the UN's International Law Commission. Feminist advocacy, for instance, influenced the new June 2019 draft Convention on Crimes against Humanity, which uses an updated definition of gender that prohibits persecution on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation, and identifies prohibitions on abortion as violating women's rights to life, health, and freedom from torture.⁴⁶ Like conservatives, feminists are exploiting every possible part of transnational space to make advances when they are blocked elsewhere.

The Human Rights Council, established in 2005, has become a vital focus. It has more meaningful structured access for civil society groups than any other part of the UN, with formal procedures for receiving civil society position papers. It meets in at least three annual regular sessions, providing frequent opportunities for activists to counter conservative mobilization on a wide range of topics, most notably the continuous efforts by Russia and allies to generate resolutions to protect traditional families. Its "universal periodic review" mechanism has since 2006 provided a new opportunity for critical civil society commentary on national deficits in women's rights. Finally, because the HRC takes decisions on the basis of votes and not consensus, it has been able to support the creation of special mandate positions even against conservative opposition, such as, in 2016, appointing an independent expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The twenty-three-member CEDAW committee has always been a focus for civil society activism, and the multiplication of general recommendations that expand the remit of the original treaty have provided useful entry points for addressing significant differences between feminists. A general recommendation on trafficking under negotiation in June 2019, for instance, provided for agreement about the need to defend the human rights of sex workers, in spite of differences between abolitionists who seek to outlaw sex work and those who seek legal protections for sex work. According to interviewees, the Sex-Worker Inclusive Feminist Alliance has found a more receptive environment in the CEDAW committee and the HRC than in the CSW. On the issue of sex workers' rights, an activist with the Asia-Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development cautioned: "There is a risk that we can intersect with the ultra-right when our thinking stresses protection, victimhood, and minimizes women's agency."⁴⁷ Awareness of this risk is growing among abolitionists. A member of the European Women's Lobby, which supports the Swedish model (criminalization of sex workers' clients), noted: "We are not going to get anywhere if we cannot find a compromise [with sex workers' rights groups]. I wish they would drop the word 'work.' We cannot budge on our position, but we all know this is not working."⁴⁸

Feminist successes in all of these forums have been supported by formal access opportunities for civil society input and the use of technical discourses (particularly legal argumentation) to support goals. Feminist advocacy has also benefited from the fact that these forums permit lobbying with a subset of member states (such as the limited membership of the HRC and, in particular, the Security Council), which allows for fostering alliances among them, as well as shaming and isolating resisters.

Both conservative groups and transnational feminists are adept at forum-shopping to seize advantage, and transnational feminists have learned to leave no vacuums in their monitoring of rights developments. A valuable source of intelligence on the "globalization of anti-gender campaigns" is analysis of funding patterns flowing from conservative Christian and Muslim interests and individuals to support misogynist projects.⁴⁹ The online liberal journal *Open Democracy* has tracked the "dark money" flowing from individuals and organizations in the United States to support the campaigns of populists in Europe and to support European initiatives to defend the traditional family.⁵⁰ A number of the transnational feminist organizations interviewed for this essay have joined forces to track the backlash, contrasting the mounting funding for conservative anti-abortion and pro-family groups with the cuts to funding for women's rights-based providers of family planning. AWID in particular has updated its important ten-year study of funding for women's organizations – "Where is the Money for Women's Rights?" – to collaborate with *Open Democracy* and the global abortion

rights advocate Ipas to improve forensic accounting techniques to track funding of antifeminist initiatives.⁵¹

Two new arenas in which feminists have engaged to combat conservative activists are disability rights and indigenous rights. Both pose important challenges for feminists. Feminists have faced troubling implications of their positions on abortion rights when abortion has been used sex-selectively, or for aborting disabled fetuses. CREA has engaged closely with the annual Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. A CREA activist notes: “Prenatal testing, technologies that enable us to see the fetus as so present and real... the right have used these to attack us.... The bulk of the disability movement is antichoice.” Unlike the right, however, CREA has engaged with disabled women on the question of their sexual and reproductive health and rights, and in October 2018 produced, in partnership with the International Campaign for Women’s Right to Safe Abortion, the “Nairobi Principles” recognizing the agency of disabled women in making sexual and reproductive choices.⁵²

Indigenous women’s rights are another area of conservative mobilization. This raises challenges for feminists because the emphasis on the rights of collectivities over individuals undercuts a powerful feminist tactic of insisting on women’s equal rights as individuals. Collective rights framings have been used by conservative groups at the HRC to defend culture and traditional values in ways that can subordinate women’s rights to the traditional family. In response, connections between transnational feminists and indigenous rights leaders have formed around global campaigns to protect women human rights defenders, including those, like indigenous activists, protesting the environmental damage caused by extractive industries.

Engagement on these issues is difficult but strategic because it denies conservatives opportunities to gain ground on issues that are off many feminists’ radar. Reflecting on her experience at the UN’s annual meeting on disability, the CREA activist observed: “We were one of the only feminist organizations there. There had been zero conversation up to then about disabled women’s sexuality. It was a highly male-dominated space. That is solidarity-building. That is alliance-building in the face of the right-wing co-optation of the disability movement.”⁵³

One of the biggest constraints on this type of strategic engagement on new issues is a lack of funding for feminist organizations to address and even mediate their differences. All the Global South-based transnational advocates I interviewed mentioned the significance of specific funding initiatives such as the Netherlands’ €77 million MDG 3 fund launched in 2008, at the time the largest single fund available to support strategic planning and networking between feminist organizations. Subsequent initiatives such as the 2016–2020 Dialogue and Dissent funding window and the related “Count Me In!” series of coalition-building strategic encounters are intended to enable feminists to address their differences on the issues used by conservatives to divide them.

UN Women is well-positioned as a transnational institutional mechanism to advance women's rights. Feminist civil society groups had advocated for its creation for years, such as through the Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) campaign, and upon their success, an advisory group composed mainly of GEAR members was formed to support UN Women's work. This is not, however, an independent observatory or monitoring group, nor is it a governing body. Like all UN entities, UN Women is accountable to an executive board made up of member states: indeed, it has one of the largest executive boards of any UN agency, with forty-one members, currently including Saudi Arabia. According to a member of AWID, "UN Women is very compromised. Antirights groups are laser-focused, unrelenting, and their approach includes pushing states to threaten, constrain or defund UN Women – above all, the states on UN Women's executive board."⁵⁴

Civil society observers are concerned about UN Women's caution on some of the hot-button issues within feminism, a caution partly explained by the constraints of its executive board and the interests of its funders. The dilemmas are clear on the issue of sex work. UN Women, for instance, has officially followed the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, World Health Organization, and International Labour Organization position that all consensual adult sex must be decriminalized as a means of combatting the marginalization of sex workers. But it suddenly declared itself neutral on the matter on receipt of a petition signed by 1,400 sex work abolitionists in mid-November 2019.⁵⁵ The fact that Sweden provides significant financial and diplomatic support for UN Women, and that Sweden is also promoting an abolition of sex work through the criminalization of clients of sex, may, critics worry, compromise the organization. While feminist groups are divided on the issue, a global survey of activists conducted in 2016, by the then head of policy at UN Women, Purna Sen, showed that a majority of respondents supported the full decriminalization of sex work.⁵⁶

A quarter-century has passed since the transformative Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. UN Women announced in March 2019 its intention to convene a global meeting on women's rights in 2020, but said that this would center on women's rights organizations, not states. This intention is animated by the conviction that the only sustained driver of progress on women's rights historically has been women's autonomous organizing. UN Women's intention is to provide feminist activists with a global platform. Mexico and France will, with UN Women, cohost what they have labeled "Generation Equality" forums (in May and July 2020, respectively), but these will not be multilateral negotiations to build on the 1995 Platform for Action. Consensus holds that this remains too precarious a moment for normative debate. What then could a global convening add that transnational feminists are not already accomplishing? The

June 2019 Women Deliver conference in Vancouver attracted some nine thousand attendees and spurred the commitment of \$650 million CAD by the Canadian government and private donors to support gender equality. In October 2020, AWID will hold one of its huge triennial global meetings. Massive global feminist gatherings take place without multilateral engagement, raising questions about the value-added of the “Generation Equality” events.

UN Women, France, and Mexico propose to use this global process to identify serious remaining gaps in the achievement of women’s rights and to form “action coalitions” with funding and five-year programs to close these gaps. These coalitions will build on the comparative advantage of specific private-sector actors, civil society organizations, state and multilateral institutions, and even private individuals such as celebrities to mobilize funds to address stubborn gap areas such as the gendered digital divide, or climate action, or the impact of corruption and tax evasion on resources for gender equality.

Behind these proposals is an acknowledgment of the extent of polarization globally on women’s rights. UN Women clearly feels it cannot rely on a liberal consensus between nations to advance state responsibilities to promote gender equality. The call for engagement of the private sector and even prominent individuals implies a shift in the understanding of the mechanics of policy change and in the power and cultural roles of state authorities. Global corporations and wealthy individuals command more resources than some states. Celebrities can recommend actions to fan bases that are bigger than some countries’ populations.

The “action coalition” proposal is an alternative to the paralysis in multilateral negotiations, but it has generated unease. According to an activist from Just Associates, which supports women human rights defenders: “There is pressure to work with companies, private foundations. These are nontransparent, nonaccountable actors with objectives very different from ours. If we find member states to be fickle partners, what can we expect from private actors?” However, she acknowledged that building alliances with unconventional partners is essential: “We’ve been cut off at the knees because we have been preaching to the choir. . . . We need to forge new relationships with actors that can push strategic issues.”⁵⁷

In the face of a ferocious backlash and the rapid reinstatement and acceptance of patriarchal norms in some states and communities, transnational feminists are confronting the issues that divide them more openly than ever before. Whether a global convening in 2020 can hold back this reactionary tide depends on the extent to which transnational feminists engage with it and the extent to which systems are developed to ensure that “action coalitions” are held accountable for meeting gender equality goals. As a representative of FEMNET (the African Women’s Development and Communication Network) argued: “Celebrating gains when space has shrunk for autonomous organizing is perverse and problematic. We cannot have bureaucratic elites in the UN or member states decide on

priorities. . . . We know the trends, we know what to fight for, what is strategic. When so many other forces are limiting us, we cannot be limited by UN Women.”⁵⁸

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

This essay is based on twenty-one interviews I conducted in March–April 2019 with activists from transnational feminist organizations. Most are members of even larger caucuses with a degree of institutional access to the deliberations of multilateral institutions, such as the Women’s Major Group, first created at the Rio Earth Summit of 1992 and currently monitoring implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (2012–2015); the Women’s Rights Caucus, a global coalition of over 250 organizations with shared positions on the debates of the UN Commission on the Status of Women and the Human Rights Council; and the EU-focused European Women’s Lobby, comprising seventeen European women’s rights coalitions.⁵⁹ This was a purposive but not comprehensive selection, based on the availability of interviewees who were attending the March 2019 meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York. The interviews were conducted on a nonattribution basis.

Interviewees were from the following organizations: Amnesty International; ARC International; Asian Network of Women’s Shelters; Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development; Association for Women’s Rights in Development; CREA; CSW NGO Forum; Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era; Diverse Voices and Action for Gender Equality; European Women’s Lobby; FEMNET; Just Associates; International Women’s Health Coalition; Mesoamerican Initiative of Human Rights Defenders; and OutRight Action International.

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Sexual Harassment of Women Leaders

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Sexual harassment is more prevalent for women supervisors than for women employees. This pattern holds in the three countries we studied – the United States, Japan, and Sweden – where women supervisors are between 30 to 100 percent more likely to have been sexually harassed in the last twelve months. Among supervisors, the risk is larger in lower- and mid-level positions of leadership and when subordinates are mostly male. We also find that harassment of women supervisors happens despite their greater likelihood of taking action against the abuser, and that supervisors face more professional and social retaliation after their harassment experience. We conclude that sexual harassment is a workplace hazard that raises the costs for women to pursue leadership ambitions and, in turn, reinforces gender gaps in income, status, and voice.

Picture an incident of sexual harassment. For many, this prompt brings up the image of the boss of a firm harassing his secretary. Pioneering research on sexual harassment in the 1970s was focused on exactly this type of scenario.¹ Women were harassed at the job while doing “womanly” things like cleaning up the office or assisting with meetings: essentially a wife’s tasks, but in the workplace.² The power component was also clear. Men with power harassed women without power.

Much has changed since the 1970s. Women are no longer relegated to the lowest positions in the corporate hierarchy. Nor are they restricted to administrative roles, but have moved into positions of leadership. A “silent revolution” has shaken the labor market, with large increases in women’s labor force participation and many women starting to see career ambition as part of their identity.³ More women have been advancing to positions of organizational leadership, reducing the power gap with men in the workplace.

Recent research has highlighted how women’s advancement may involve a “paradox of power”: rather than reducing exposure to sexual harassment, power in the workplace seems to put women at greater risk. In a pathbreaking study of three hundred U.S. women in their thirties, sociologists Heather McLaughlin, Christopher Uggen, and Amy Blackstone found higher rates of harassment

among women who had reached supervisory positions at this stage of their career.⁴

Our research in the United States, Japan, and Sweden lends support to the paradox of power hypothesis. We probe the mechanisms behind the paradox by comparing, first, if women supervisors are harassed by different types of perpetrators and, second, if supervisors take different types of action after they are harassed. We then consider the consequences of harassment and find that, in addition to the higher prevalence of harassment against them, women supervisors also seem to suffer more professional and social retaliation after their harassment experience.

Across the globe and across all sectors of society, women become scarcer on higher rungs of organizational hierarchies.⁵ Our study offers one reason for this baleful result: because women face increasing levels of sexual harassment as they gain workplace power. The workplace hazard of sexual harassment adds a burden for women who pursue supervisory positions, as evidenced by the hundreds of empirical studies showing that sexual harassment damages, among other things, the victim's psychological well-being, productivity at work, and sense of belongingness in the workplace.⁶

The costs of growing rates of harassment for women supervisors also extend beyond the individual victim to the organization as a whole. The paradox of power means that, because sexual harassment can potentially discourage women from seeking promotion, women's leadership talents are not realized at the same rate as men's. Organizations are losing women's skill and potential for these higher positions, while women are losing the wages, status, and voice in society that such jobs can bring.

We begin with a look at our data sources and measurements of sexual harassment. The Swedish data come from the Work Environment Survey, a biannual survey collected by the Swedish government.⁷ This survey uses a random sample of the employed population of permanent residents, stratified by sex at birth, age, occupation, industry, and social class. We use five waves of this survey (1999 – 2007), each one with roughly five thousand women respondents. These respondents were fully anonymous and their workplaces were not aware that they were being surveyed. The survey contains more than one hundred questions on various aspects of working environments, meaning that the ones on sexual harassment are unlikely to stand out to the respondent. There are 23,994 responses for women across five pooled surveys: 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, and 2007. Because the United States and Japan did not have comparable data, we collected original survey data in these two countries, which in turn allowed us to ask more detailed questions to understand the mechanisms of sexual harassment exposure and reporting.

For the United States, we surveyed a convenience sample from the online panel of the survey company Dynata in June 2019. We oversampled employed women

and women with management positions for a total final sample size of 1,261. We added a survey question to check the attentiveness of respondents, which was answered correctly by 848 persons. In what follows, we use the full sample. A description of the age, education, income, and marital status of the respondents can also be found in the Web Appendix for all three countries (Table W1) and for attentive and nonattentive respondents of Japan and the United States (Table W2) (accessible at https://www.amacad.org/daedalus/harassment_of_women_leaders).

We surveyed employed women Japanese citizens in early 2019. The sample was drawn by the Japanese survey firm Nikkei Research from their opt-in online panel and with an oversampling of women supervisors. The survey reached 1,573 respondents, whereof 720 were attentive. We also conducted a semistructured interview with six employees (four women and two men) at a Japanese firm in March 2019 to gain better understandings of the mechanisms of sexual harassment.

The Swedish Work Environment Survey contains three questions on respondents' experiences of sexual harassment at work over the last twelve months. These were translated from Swedish by the authors.⁸ We count a person as having experienced harassment if they answer affirmatively to any of these questions. Because the questions contain examples of harassing behaviors, but largely leave it to the respondent to recall things that happened to them, the resulting variable has elements of a list-based measurement, but is largely subjective.

The first two questions are formulated as follows: "In the following questions, sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome physical actions or offensive remarks or innuendos on subject matter that is commonly associated with sex." Respondents are then asked if, in the last twelve months, they experienced these behaviors 1) from supervisors or colleagues, or 2) from other people (for example, customers, patients, clients, passengers, or students). These questions contain examples of sexual hostility as well as unwanted sexual attention.

The third question is formulated as:

Have you been exposed to behaviors other than the ones above, which degraded you or violated your integrity, and were based on your gender? This could include condescending and ridiculing statements about women or men in general or in your occupation. It could also include that someone, because of your gender, ignored you or what you were saying. Have you experienced any such harassment from colleagues or supervisors in the last twelve months?

For this question we lack information about people other than colleagues or supervisors. The question includes a typical example of sexist hostility – condescending and ridiculing comments – but also includes an example of *selective incivility*.⁹ Having your person or opinion ignored because of your gender is closer

to this workplace misbehavior than to sexual harassment. The inclusion of this example (in the end of) the survey question is likely to inflate the rate of sexual harassment. There is, hence, upward bias from the inclusion of selective incivility, but downward bias from the subjectivity of the questions. Some downward bias might also stem from the lack of any example of sexual coercion in the survey questions.

For the United States and Japan, we measured sexual harassment in two ways. The first is a list-based survey question, the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire, a survey instrument that has evolved over time to capture both legal and psychological types of harassment.¹⁰ The survey presents respondents with a list of twenty-three types of behaviors and asks, “In the past 12 months, have you ever been in a work situation where one or more individuals [behaved in this way]?”¹¹ These twenty-three items are listed in Table 1. Our measurement of *list-based sexual harassment* takes the value one for women who experienced any one of the twenty-three behaviors in the last twelve months, and a zero otherwise.

The second measurement of sexual harassment in Japan and the United States is a subjective measure. The respondent is simply asked if they were “sexually harassed” in the last twelve months. Our measurement of *subjective sexual harassment* takes the value one for women who answer affirmatively to this question, and zero otherwise. It is well documented that such subjective questions generate lower reported rates of sexual harassment than list-based measures. This is because respondents fail to define less severe incidents at work as sexual harassment, and hence omit less severe or frequent incidents.¹²

We used the same definition of supervisors in all three countries. Respondents are defined as supervisors if they reported that at least some part of their job involved “leading or delegating work for other employees.” This includes all people who supervise others, from team leaders to CEOs. The proportion of women who were supervisors was 24 percent (N=5,802) in the Swedish data. In the U.S. and Japanese data, we oversampled supervisors to increase the precision of our statistical tests. Sixty-two percent of respondents were supervisors in our U.S. data (N=782) and 17 percent were supervisors in the Japanese data (N=263). We asked survey respondents to identify their precise type of leadership position, which we return to below.

Figure 1 compares the rates of sexual harassment in the last twelve months between employees and supervisors. Across all three countries, and for both the list-based and subjective measures, we find that supervisors face much more harassment. The smallest difference is found in the Swedish case. Still, supervisors report a 30 percent higher rate of harassment (20 percent of supervisors compared with 15 percent of employees report sexual harassment in the last twelve months). In the United States, we find a 50 percent higher rate for supervisors (57 versus 37

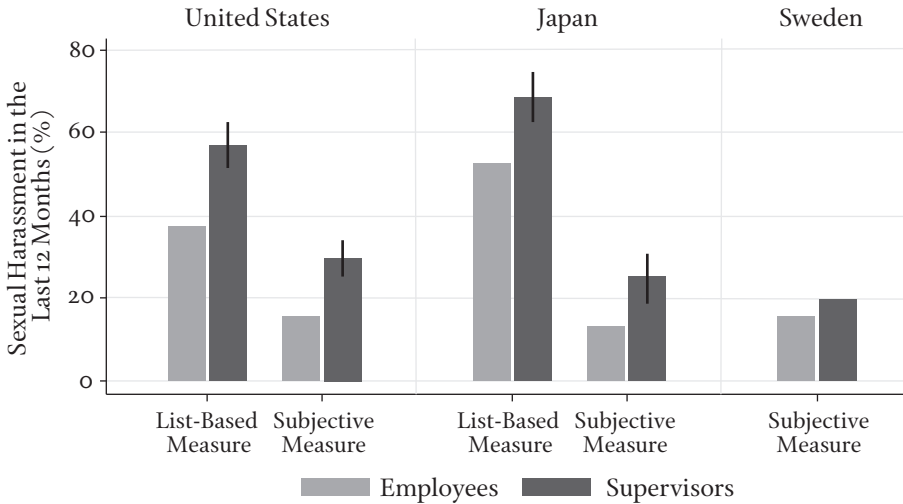
Table 1

List of Behaviors in the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire

<p>Sexist Hostility (insulting, degrading, or contemptuous attitudes about women)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treated you differently because of your sex? • Displayed, used, or distributed sexist or sexually suggestive materials? • Made offensive sexist remarks? • Put you down or was condescending to you because of your sex?
<p>Sexual Hostility (sexual and obviously hostile behaviors)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeatedly told sexual stories or jokes that were offensive to you? • Whistled, called, or hooted at you in a sexual way? • Made unwelcome attempts to draw you into a discussion of sexual matters? • Made crude and offensive sexual remarks, either publicly or to you privately? • Made offensive remarks about your appearance, body or sexual activities? • Made gestures or used body language of a sexual nature which embarrassed or offended you? • Exposed themselves physically in a way that embarrassed you or made you feel uncomfortable?
<p>Unwanted Sexual Attention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made attempts to establish a romantic sexual relationship with you despite your efforts to discourage it? • Stared, leered, or ogled you in a way that made you feel uncomfortable? • Continued to ask you for dates, drinks, dinner, etc., even though you said “No”? • Touched you in a way that made you feel uncomfortable? • Made unwanted attempts to stroke, fondle, or kiss you? • Attempted to have sex with you without your consent or against your will, but was unsuccessful? • Had sex with you without your consent or against your will?
<p>Sexual Coercion (unwanted sexual attention is combined with various job-related pressures)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made you feel like you were being bribed with some sort of reward or special treatment to engage in sexual behavior? • Made you feel threatened with some sort of retaliation for not being sexually cooperative? • Treated you badly for refusing to have sex? • Implied faster promotions or better treatment if you were sexually cooperative? • Made you afraid you would be treated poorly if you didn’t cooperate sexually?

Source: For more on the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire, see Louise F. Fitzgerald, Vicki J. Magley, Fritz Drasgow, and Craig R. Waldo, “Measuring Sexual Harassment in the Military: The Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ–DoD),” *Military Psychology* 11 (3) (1999): 243–263.

Figure 1
 Rates of Sexual Harassment among Employees and Supervisors
 in the Last Twelve Months



Note: The figure compares rates of self-reported sexual harassment in the last twelve months between women employees and supervisors. The list-based measurement of sexual harassment consists of a binary indicator for any affirmative response to the twenty-three items on the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (see Table 1). For the subjective measurement, the respondent was simply asked if they were “sexually harassed” in the last twelve months. As detailed above, the subjective measurements differ in Sweden compared with the two other countries. The whiskers show the 95 percent confidence interval calculated from a regression of the outcome on an indicator for being a supervisor using robust standard errors.

percent) for the list-based measure, and nearly 100 percent higher for the subjective measure (30 versus 16 percent). In Japan, supervisors report a 30 percent higher rate than employees using the list-based measure (68 versus 52 percent) and, similar to the United States, almost 100 percent higher for the subjective measure (25 versus 13 percent). Table W4 in the Web Appendix breaks down women’s experiences across the four types of sexual harassment (as defined in Table 1). In both the United States and Japan, where the data allow this breakdown, women supervisors are the subjects of more harassment across all four categories. Before turning to possible explanations of these results, we further disaggregate the results by looking at differences across higher and lower positions of leadership, and across variation in the sex-compositions of subordinates.

We first compare women supervisors by the sex-composition of their subordinates, divided into the three categories of “mostly male,” “mostly female,” or

“about half-half.” Figure 2 shows that in all three countries, women who supervise “mostly male” subordinates face about 30 percent more sexual harassment than those with “mostly female” subordinates. One explanation for this pattern could be mechanical, where a larger number of men in a woman’s proximity is associated with a greater likelihood that at least one of them will engage in harassment. This follows from the insight that “not all men” harass women, but that the behavior rather is concentrated to a small number of people with a latent tendency to harass.¹³ This latent tendency is also largely unrelated to traits like income or education levels.¹⁴ With a near-random but small risk that each male subordinate has a latent tendency to harass, having more men among the subordinates will imply a higher risk of sexual harassment, all else equal.

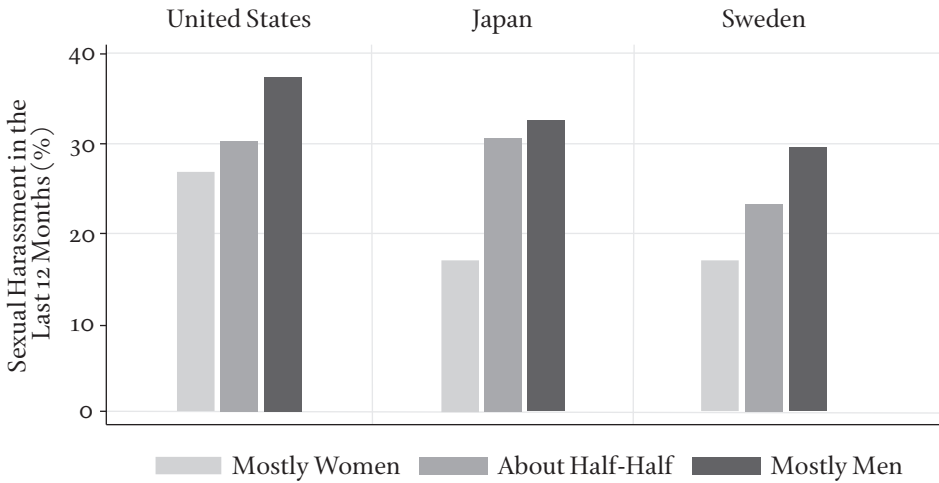
It is also possible that male subordinates are particularly sensitive to women’s leadership. In free-text responses in our Japanese survey, several respondents volunteered that women managers could be expected to experience sexual harassment out of jealousy. For example, one woman wrote that she “cannot escape from sexual harassment because male workers feel jealous about her supervisory position.” This mechanism of jealousy from employees toward women supervisors was also mentioned during the interviews at the Japanese firm.

Another way to interpret the result is that male-dominated workplaces are more likely in male-stereotyped industries such as information technology, construction, or finance. Women leaders in these sectors may trigger more hostile behavior from subordinates by being viewed, more or less consciously, as a threat to male identity.¹⁵ Sexual harassment may even become a way of gaining or equalizing power with those women.¹⁶ A telling example of a hostile dynamic appears in sociologist Heather McLaughlin and colleagues’ interviews with women supervisors. Marie, a project manager at a construction site, linked her experiences of sexual harassment to skepticism about her ability to supervise, being told that “this isn’t the job for a woman.” She concluded that in the construction business, “just being a female in management is difficult, and guys don’t like it – especially the guys that work in the field.”¹⁷

Our results suggest that power in the workplace does not protect women from sexual harassment. But how high up in the hierarchy does this problem go? In Figure 3, we subdivide women supervisors by their specific position, starting with team leaders and ending with the highest executive level. This hierarchy was defined with the same categories in the U.S. and Japanese surveys. The comparison of harassment rates is restricted to the list-based measure (Table 1), but the general pattern does not differ across the list-based and subjective measurements.

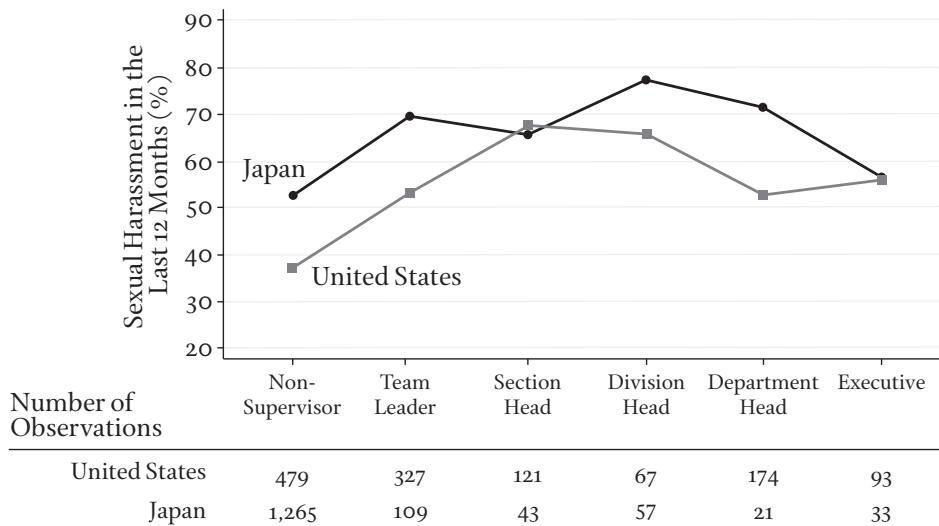
Compared with employees, sexual harassment is dramatically higher at lower levels of leadership, but the rate drops back down as we move up to the highest leadership levels. In Japan, the harassment rate for the highest executives is not higher than for employees without any supervisory role, although the extremely

Figure 2
 Subjective Sexual Harassment of Women Supervisors by the Sex-Composition of Subordinates



Note: The figure compares rates of sexual harassment in the last twelve months between women supervisors with subordinates who are 1) mostly women; 2) about half-half; or 3) mostly men.

Figure 3
 Sexual Harassment across Positions in the Organizational Hierarchy



small number of executives in the sample makes this comparison somewhat unreliable. In the United States, the harassment rate is lower for the top two positions than for the lower levels of leadership, but is still higher than for women employees. The reverse U-shapes for both countries show that women in low- and mid-level leadership positions face the highest harassment rates. These are, of course, the women who are on the career track to top positions in the future.

Several additional aspects of these patterns are worthy of discussion. First, we find that women supervisors are not subject to fewer episodes of harassment (see the Web Appendix Table W3). Reports of high-frequency harassment are rare, but are in fact more common among supervisors than nonsupervisors.

Second, we might wonder about the role that a woman's age plays in the relationship between leadership and harassment. Comparing supervisors and nonsupervisors of the same age shows a larger gap because younger women are more likely to be the target of harassment and, simultaneously, less likely to be supervisors. Controlling for age, the level of harassment of supervisors is striking.

Third, perhaps the most relevant critique of our analysis so far might be that supervisors are more likely than others to describe events that happened to them as "sexual harassment," and/or to recall such events. Supervisors could be more aware of harassment because of education or status, or because they themselves are responsible for workplace policies to eradicate harassment.¹⁸ If these differences exist, the gap in harassment exposure that we find between supervisors and employees could reflect perceptions rather than actual experiences.

In the United States, the nonsupervisors were, if anything, *more* likely to define behaviors as sexual harassment when we asked respondents whether or not they considered four of the items on the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire to be "sexual harassment." A slightly smaller proportion of supervisors said that they would "definitely" or "probably" define the behavior of "repeatedly telling sexual stories or offensive jokes" as harassment (76 versus 81 percent). Very similar rates were also recorded for "treating others differently because of their sex" (66 versus 64 percent) and for "staring, leering or ogling another person in a way that make them feel uncomfortable" (80 versus 83 percent). A high but slightly lower proportion of supervisors (80 versus 86 percent) said that "Making another person feel threatened with some sort of retaliation for not being sexually cooperative" was "probably" or "definitely" sexual harassment.

Why do women supervisors experience more sexual harassment? Sexual harassment is sometimes about sexual desire, but other times may be about status equalization. Consciously or subconsciously, the harasser may want to "put women in their place." For example, laboratory studies have shown that men are more likely to harass feminist than feminine women.¹⁹ Such negative treatment of women supervisors could be linked to a distaste for fe-

male supervision.²⁰ This distaste could also grow out of unconscious bias about appropriate behaviors and social roles for women and men. Leadership is generally considered a male activity, making a man the prototypical manager and a woman manager a deviation from the norm. Negative reactions that stem precisely from this type of norm deviation are a fundamental part of theory in sociology and economics about how social norms are maintained. Retaliation against people who break norms, such as women leaders, helps strengthen the perpetrator's sense of self and creates a cost for breaking social norms.²¹

Notably, women supervisors may also need to break gender norms to carry out their jobs. Assertive and dominant behaviors commonly associated with leadership may clash with the stereotypical perceptions of what women are or should be like. Numerous studies have found that women who act in such agentic ways are perceived as unlikeable.²² Animosity toward women who take charge and delegate work motivate higher rates of harassment against them.

Do supervisors have different exposure to groups of potential harassers? When a woman is promoted from employee to supervisor, her work environment is likely to change in ways that put her at greater risk of sexual harassment. Supervisors are the focal point of their subordinates, and often meet with them one-on-one. (One Japanese female senior manager mentioned that this kind of environment put her at risk of sexual harassment.) Low- or mid-level managers also tend to interface more with top-level managers of the organization. Those interactions with leaders might expose supervisors to higher-status men who can take advantage of their *relatively* junior position (following the intuition of Catharine MacKinnon).²³

Previous research on women supervisors also highlight the vulnerable situations with high-level men that can form outside of the office.²⁴ Holly, the manager of a manufacturing firm, described harassment at a company dinner. As a client grabbed her leg and tried to unhook her bra at the table, none of her (male) coworkers – who noticed the obvious harassment – acted to stop it. Holly held up the male-dominance among subordinates and clients as an underlying factor that allowed the harassment to take place and hindered intervention, pointing out that “I was the only girl there. There were no other girls.”²⁵ This type of sexualization of women who are alone in their workplace roles is known as sex-role spillover.²⁶ For women who are alone in male groups, their female sex risks becoming their most salient and distinctive feature. They are viewed as a woman first and a professional colleague second.²⁷ According to this logic, the power of a woman manager does not offer an escape, exposing her to harassment at male-dominated events.

Our data show that women employees and supervisors are harassed to some degree by different types of perpetrators, in ways that support our intuitions about the work environment. For respondents in the United States and Japan,

those who answered affirmatively to any item on the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire were asked, in turn, to recall which incidents formed part of the most “significant event” in the last year. For this significant event, they were asked to check boxes indicating the identity of the perpetrator(s), allowing multiple answers. These responses are summarized in the top panel (A) of Table 2. In the bottom panel, we further restrict the sample to include only women who were subjected to sexual harassment.

In both countries, supervisors stand out as being harassed more by “a person in a higher position than your direct boss.” This perpetrator group is 25 to 40 percent more common among supervisors than among employees in the United States, and 60 to 85 percent more common among supervisors than employees in Japan. Another difference, which can only be detected in the U.S. survey due to the structure of the survey, is harassment from subordinates. Supervisors were more likely to be harassed by subordinates, but less likely than employees to be harassed by colleagues at the same level. The difference in perpetrator groups – with supervisors being harassed more by subordinates and higher-up managers – supports the theory that moving into a position of leadership means exposure to different types of perpetrators in the workplace.

Women supervisors may, paradoxically, be *less* likely to formally complain about sexual harassment, which could embolden potential perpetrators. This follows the intuition that a person with a latent propensity to harass will do so if the risk of punishment is sufficiently small. Harassing a female supervisor would seem irrational if she can directly punish the assailant herself or readily access the internal complaint procedure within the firm. But using these tools may come at a greater cost for women supervisors. Women supervisors may have more to lose, both in workplace status and in the legitimacy of their leadership. Having already invested more time in climbing the career ladder in the organization, women leaders could risk more career and status losses from reporting an incident compared with women employees.

Our surveys in the United States and Japan asked women to report which actions they took after being sexually harassed. Female supervisors, we found, were slightly more likely to take action than female workers in Japan, and decidedly more likely to act in the U.S. case. Japanese women supervisors were as likely or less likely to report to their boss or to a consultancy service within the firm (6 versus 7 percent for list-based reporting, but 6 versus 14 percent using subjective reporting). They were, however, about twice as likely to report to an agency outside the firm, where options in the survey included a labor union, a bureau of labor, a company that dispatched the worker, the police, a lawyer, the municipality, or a nonprofit organization. Among supervisors, 27 percent reported the harassment to an entity outside the firm in the case of list-based sexual harassment, and 13 percent for subjective harassment.

Table 2
 Perpetrator Types for Employees and Supervisors
 (Multiple Responses Possible)

	Direct Boss	Person in a Higher Position than Your Direct Boss	Colleague	Person from Another Division	Customer, Patient, Student, etc.	Subordinate
A. List-Based						
A1. United States						
Employees	0.31	0.14	0.47		0.21	0.05
Supervisors	0.31	0.19	0.46		0.17	0.12
A2. Japan						
Employees	0.57	0.15	0.24	0.13	0.18	
Supervisors	0.53	0.24	0.22	0.18	0.24	
B. Subjective						
B1. United States						
Employees	0.39	0.15	0.47		0.23	0.05
Supervisors	0.34	0.21	0.47		0.21	0.13
B2. Japan						
Employees	0.70	0.15	0.20	0.18	0.17	
Supervisors	0.63	0.28	0.20	0.20	0.14	

Note: The table builds on data from the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire–Significant Event (SEQ-SE). Women who reported sexual harassment in the last twelve months were asked to recall the most significant of these events, if there were more than one. They were then asked to check boxes for which perpetrators were involved in this event, with multiple choices possible. The table reports the proportion of women who reported some significant event by selecting from a list of examples (panel A) and by also answering affirmatively to the subjective question of having been sexually harassed in the last twelve months (panel B).

U.S. supervisors were more likely than employees to take all three types of action: issue a personal protest, report within the organization, and report outside the organization. Eighteen to 20 percent of supervisors who reported harassment took personal action compared with approximately 14 percent of employees. Nearly one-third of the supervisors took action within the firm, compared with 12 to 20 percent of employees. Outside help was sought by 13 to 21 percent of

supervisors, compared with just 5 to 8 percent of employees. In sum, there is no evidence that women supervisors would be more attractive targets of harassment by being *less* likely to take action, either personally or using actors inside or outside the workplace.

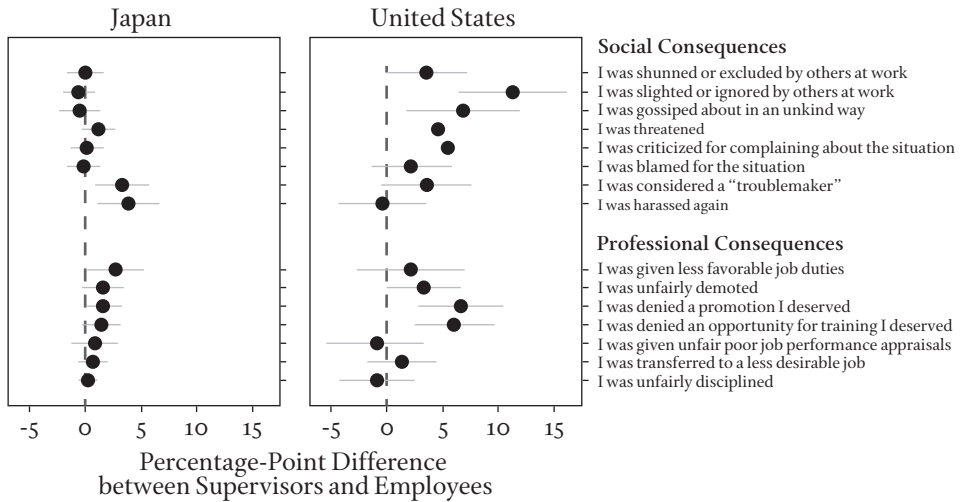
So far, we have shown that despite having more power in the workplace to take action when they face sexual harassment, Japanese supervisors are not more likely to do so than employees. We conducted a survey experiment to shed light on a possible reason for this. The experiment targeted third-party advice to report sexual harassment within organizations. By using conjoint experimental methods, respondents were asked if they would recommend that certain women, described by a list of traits, should seek organizational assistance. The methods allow us to causally isolate the impact of women's supervisory status relative to employee (nonsupervisory) status on third-party advice to report. Japanese respondents reacted to the trait of a woman victim's supervisory status by becoming 7.2 percentage points less likely to advise her to seek assistance (standard error = 0.02). U.S. respondents, in contrast, did not differentiate between supervisors and employees in this regard. These results are described in the Web Appendix section called Conjoint Analysis. They suggest that more negative attitudes among bystanders toward women supervisors' reporting of harassment in Japan could be a reason for the relative inaction of these women supervisors.

Japanese survey respondents explained in free-text answers why they recommended women supervisors not to seek organizational assistance. Among three hundred such answers, a common theme was that seeking assistance would be viewed as a managerial failure on the part of the victim. Responses included, for example, that "A female supervisor who reports an incident will be viewed as having low capabilities for being unable to avoid or manage the harassment" and, similarly, that "She could have avoided the harassment in advance if she is in a supervisor position."

In a final set of empirical results, we turn our attention to the consequences of sexual harassment and whether these consequences differ between supervisors and employees. Our surveys in the United States and Japan contain two questions on consequences. These were divided into two types – social and professional – following on the work of psychologists Vicki Magley and Lilia Cortina.²⁸ Professional consequences are tangible, formal, and possible to document in employment records, and might include discharge, involuntary transfers, demotions, poor performance appraisals, or deprivation of perquisites or overtime opportunities. Social consequences that often go undocumented may include name-calling, ostracism, blame, threats, the "silent treatment," or additional sexual harassment.

Respondents were given a list of professional and social consequences and asked to report which of the situations applied after their significant event of sex-

Figure 4
Differences across Supervisors and Employees in Professional and Social Consequences from Sexual Harassment in the Workplace



Note: The figure shows OLS (Ordinary Least Squares) estimates from a regression of a binary indicator for each social or professional consequence on a binary indicator for being a supervisor. The horizontal lines show 95 percent confidence interval for the coefficient on the supervisor variable.

ual harassment. We plot the difference in the proportion of supervisors and employees that reported each consequence in Figure 4. The whiskers around each difference denote a 95 percent confidence interval for the difference in proportions.

There are two main takeaways from the analysis. First, supervisors face *more*, not fewer, negative consequences of being sexually harassed. One reason for this could be the pattern we uncovered of who harasses: higher-level managers are more likely to be the perpetrators. Another reason might be that supervisors are more likely to take action against their harassers, which could trigger the retaliation against them. The fact that U.S. women, and U.S. supervisors in particular, were more likely to take action could perhaps explain the differences between the United States and Japan. In both countries, however, women who reported their harassment faced negative consequences.

In Japan, two consequences stand out: 1) more harassment, and 2) a greater risk of being labeled as “troublemakers” in the organization. Demotions and less favorable job duties are also more severe for supervisors, although the point estimates are not very large. In the United States, supervisors are more likely to be affected by the full range of social consequences, as well as denials of promotions

or training. These results suggest that in both countries, supervisors have more to lose from sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment is a severe workplace problem. Roughly half of all women can expect to experience it at some point in their work lives.²⁹ This prevalence of harassment has been highlighted by the large #MeToo movement and the numerous reports and convictions of sexual harassment that followed.³⁰

Our evidence refutes the idea that workplace power insulates women from sexual harassment. To the contrary, power is associated with *more* harassment, at least for women climbing the ladder toward higher positions of leadership. One reason for this pattern could be that workplace power exposes women to different groups of potential harassers. Supervisors are the focal point of subordinates and also have more interactions with higher-ups in the organization. We do not find, moreover, that supervisors are less likely to report harassment. Supervisors are at least as likely as employees to confront the harasser, to report within the organization, or to report to an outside actor. Perhaps it is precisely because they are more likely to report that supervisors face more negative professional and social consequences following incidents of harassment.

Women's continued advancement to leadership roles in the labor market is a necessary pathway to economic equality between men and women. It is also a prerequisite to make good use of human capital and to maximize economic efficiency.³¹ Our analysis strengthens the insight from previous research that sexual harassment is a serious impediment to increased gender equality.³² Sexual harassment disincentivizes women to take leadership positions in the workplace, on top of the many other impediments standing in women's way outlined in this volume: norms that prohibit long work hours, friction in family life, and perceptions of unlikability when women act in agentic ways.³³ It is vital that we grasp the extent to which sexual harassment deters women from seeking leadership roles.

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- ² Rosabeth Moss Kanter, "Some Effects of Proportions on Group Life," in *The Gender Gap in Psychotherapy*, ed. Patricia Perri Rieker and Elaine (Hilberman) Carmen (Boston: Springer, 1977), 53–78.
- ³ Claudia Goldin, "The Quiet Revolution that Transformed Women's Employment, Education, and Family," *American Economic Review* 96 (2) (2006): 1–21.
- ⁴ Heather McLaughlin, Christopher Uggen, and Amy Blackstone, "Sexual Harassment, Workplace Authority, and the Paradox of Power," *American Sociological Review* 77 (4) (2012): 625–647. Women supervisors may experience higher rates of harassment either because of the mechanical reason that they find themselves in settings with more men and therefore more potential perpetrators—however small a portion these perpetrators might be of the population—or, more insidiously, because some men use harassment as a way to bring women down. Not all studies point in the same direction: a 1994 survey of 13,200 U.S. federal employees did not show a differential rate of sexual harassment across pay grades. See U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *Sexual Harassment in the Federal Workplace: Trends, Progress, Continuing Challenges* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1994).
- ⁵ Maria Charles, "Deciphering Sex Segregation: Vertical and Horizontal Inequalities in Ten National Labor Markets," *Acta Sociologica* 46 (4) (2003): 267–287; Francine D. Blau and Lawrence M. Kahn, "The Gender-Wage Gap: Extent, Trends, and Explanations," *Journal of Economic Literature* 55 (3) (2017): 789–865; and Marianne Bertrand, "Coase Lecture: The Glass Ceiling," *Economica* 85 (338) (2018): 205–231.
- ⁶ Mental and physical health effects of sexual harassment range from irritation and anxiety to anger, powerlessness, humiliation, increased risk of alcohol abuse and eating disorders, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder. Job-related factors consistently linked with sexual harassment include absenteeism; lower job satisfaction, commitment, and productivity; damaged interpersonal work relationships; decreased perceptions of equal opportunity; and employment withdrawal. See Sandy Welsh, "Gender and Sexual Harassment," *Annual Review of Sociology* 25 (1) (1999): 169–190; Paula McDonald, "Workplace Sexual Harassment 30 Years On: A Review of the Literature," *International Journal of Management Reviews* 14 (1) (2012): 1–17; and Louise F. Fitzgerald and Lilia M. Cortina, "Sexual Harassment in Work Organizations: A View from the

- 21st Century,” in *APA Handbook of the Psychology of Women: Perspectives on Women’s Private and Public Lives*, ed. Cheryl B. Travis and Jacquelyn W. White (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2018), 215–234.
- ⁷ See Statistics Sweden, “The Work Environment Survey,” <https://www.scb.se/en/finding-statistics/statistics-by-subject-area/labour-market/work-environment/the-work-environment-survey/>.
- ⁸ In the original survey, these questions read as follows in Swedish: “Med sexuella trakasserier menas i följande två frågor ovälkomna närmanden eller kränkande anspelningar kring sådant man allmänt förknippar med sex. 1) Är du utsatt för sexuella trakasserier på din arbetsplats från chefer eller arbetskamrater? 2) Är du utsatt för sexuella trakasserier från andra personer på din arbetsplats (t ex patienter, kunder, klienter, passagerare)? // Nästa fråga gäller om du är utsatt för andra handlingar än ovan som grundas på ditt kön och som kränker din integritet eller är nedvärderande. Det kan t.ex. vara nedsättande och förlöjligande omdömen om kvinnor eller män i allmänhet eller inom ditt yrke. Det kan även innebära att man på grund av ditt kön inte tar notis om dig eller din mening. Är du utsatt för trakasserier av ovanstående slag på din arbetsplats från chefer eller arbetskamrater?”
- ⁹ Lynn Andersson and Christine Pearson have defined workplace incivility as “low intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Uncivil behaviors are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others.” Lynne M. Andersson and Christine M. Pearson, “Tit for Tat? The Spiraling Effect of Incivility in the Workplace,” *Academy of Management Review* 24 (3) (1999): 457.
- ¹⁰ Louise F. Fitzgerald, Vicki J. Magley, Fritz Drasgow, and Craig R. Waldo, “Measuring Sexual Harassment in the Military: The Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ-DoD),” *Military Psychology* 11 (3) (1999): 243–263.
- ¹¹ Following a recent survey by the Japanese Ministry of Labor, we added three additional items in the Japan survey. These are: “Forced you to pour alcohol, sing a duet or [assigned you] where to [sit] when drinking?”; “Brought [up the] subject of your appearance, age, and physical characteristics in a conversation?”; and “Excessively questioned or brought [up] your private life (marriage, whether or not you have children).” These items are not included in the analysis in this essay, but across all three, women supervisors face more harassment than employees.
- ¹² Margaret S. Stockdale, Alan Vaux, and Jeffrey Cashin, “Acknowledging Sexual Harassment: A Test of Alternative Models,” *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 17 (4) (1995): 469–496; and Remus Ilies, Nancy Hauserman, Susan Schwochau, and John Stibal, “Reported Incidence Rates of Work-Related Sexual Harassment in the United States: Using Meta-Analysis to Explain Reported Rate Disparities,” *Personnel Psychology* 56 (3) (2003): 607–631. We can get an idea of the size of the bias by comparing our variable to a list-based measure from the 2001 National Violence Against Women Survey. In our data, the victimization rate among women was 2.1 percent in that year, while it was 5.2 percent in the list-based measure. See Olle Folke and Johanna Rickne, “Sexual Harassment and Gender Inequality in the Labor Market,” mimeo, Stockholm University, 2019.
- ¹³ John B. Pryor, “Sexual Harassment Proclivities in Men,” *Sex Roles* 17 (5–6) (1987): 269–290.
- ¹⁴ Reviewed in Fitzgerald and Cortina, “Sexual Harassment in Work Organizations.”

- ¹⁵ George A. Akerlof and Rachel E. Kranton, "Economics and Identity," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 115 (3) (2000): 715–753.
- ¹⁶ Beth A. Quinn, "Sexual Harassment and Masculinity: The Power and Meaning of 'Girl Watching,'" *Gender & Society* 16 (3) (2002): 386–402.
- ¹⁷ McLaughlin et al., "Sexual Harassment, Workplace Authority, and the Paradox of Power."
- ¹⁸ As discussed in *ibid.*
- ¹⁹ Jennifer L. Berdahl, "The Sexual Harassment of Uppity Women," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 92 (2) (2007): 425–437.
- ²⁰ Gary S. Becker, *The Economics of Discrimination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).
- ²¹ Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman, "Doing Gender," *Gender & Society* 1 (2) (1987): 125–151; and Akerlof and Kranton, "Economics and Identity."
- ²² Laurie A. Rudman and Peter Glick, "Feminized Management and Backlash toward Agentic Women: The Hidden Costs to Women of a Kinder, Gentler Image of Middle Managers," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 77 (5) (1999): 1004.
- ²³ MacKinnon, *Sexual Harassment of Working Women*.
- ²⁴ McLaughlin et al., "Sexual Harassment, Workplace Authority, and the Paradox of Power."
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 636.
- ²⁶ Following, for example, Barbara A. Gutek and Bruce Morasch, "Sex-Ratios, Sex-Role Spillover, and Sexual Harassment of Women at Work," *Journal of Social Issues* 38 (4) (1982): 55–74; and Kanter, "Some Effects of Proportions on Group Life."
- ²⁷ Conceptualizing such women as "tokens," Rosabeth Moss Kanter discusses their greater risk of being sexually defined on the job, most notably by being ascribed the stereotype of the "seductress." Although this role is a perception, independent of the woman's actual behavior, "her perceived sexuality blotted out all other characteristics." See Kanter, "Some Effects of Proportions on Group Life."
- ²⁸ Lilia M. Cortina and Vicki J. Magley, "Raising Voice, Risking Retaliation: Events Following Interpersonal Mistreatment in the Workplace," *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 8 (4) (2003): 247.
- ²⁹ Fitzgerald and Cortina, "Sexual Harassment in Work Organizations."
- ³⁰ Ro'ee Levy and Martin Mattsson, "The Effects of Social Movements: Evidence from #MeToo," working paper (2019).
- ³¹ Chang-Tai Hsieh, Erik Hurst, Charles I. Jones, and Peter J. Klenow, "The Allocation of Talent and U.S. Economic Growth," *Econometrica* 87 (5) (2019): 1439–1474.
- ³² McLaughlin et al., "Sexual Harassment, Workplace Authority, and the Paradox of Power."
- ³³ Rudman and Glick, "Feminized Management and Backlash Toward Agentic Women," 1004; Arlie Russell Hochschild and Anne Machung, *The Second Shift* (London: Penguin Books, 2003); and Folke and Rickne, "Sexual Harassment and Gender Inequality in the Labor Market."

Cooperation & Conflict in the Patriarchal Labyrinth

Nancy Folbre

This essay offers a new way of visualizing structures of collective power based on gender, emphasizing the role of social institutions in shaping women's ability to bargain over the distribution of the gains from cooperation with men. It makes the case for an interdisciplinary conceptualization of bargaining power that emphasizes the role of imperfect information and inefficient outcomes, and explains important parallels between structures of collective power based on gender, age, and sexuality, and those based on other dimensions of socially assigned group membership such as race, ethnicity, citizenship, and class. Recognition of the importance of reproductive work helps advance the project of developing intersectional political economy.

Consider the term “power structure.” Social scientists often refer to hierarchical structures, sets of institutions, or economic arrangements that frame the environment in which people live and work. Both power and hierarchy imply a structure of pyramidal shape, with big groups at the bottom and small groups at the top. Yet the implied pyramids tend to be simple and two-dimensional drawings on a page. Their internal spaces as well as their relationships to one another remain largely unspecified, making it difficult to understand how people operate within them. In this essay, I develop a more complex visual metaphor: three-dimensional pyramids of power with internal paths that allow some opportunity for those within them to climb upward but put greater obstacles in the way of others.

A patriarchal labyrinth describes risks and hurdles that vary by gender, age, and sexuality. It helps explain why, as psychologists Alice Eagly and Linda Carli have put it, “women’s paths to power remain difficult to traverse.”¹ Such institutional structures vary considerably over time and space and are vulnerable to renegotiation and redesign. They typically overlay and intersect other labyrinthine hierarchies based on different dimensions of group inequality. Together, they create complex strategic environments in which both women and men try to defend or advance their position and, sometimes, to modify the institutional environment in their favor. Such efforts, however, are hampered by the unpredictability of the labyrinth itself and the shifting alliances that affect the success of collective efforts to traverse it.

This visual image illustrates the ways in which patriarchal institutions constrain the choices that women make, reducing their ability to negotiate obstacles. The word “negotiate” is key here, because progress toward power and economic security is not like some athletic contest in which outcomes are determined in large part by individual prowess, like slogging through mud or climbing a rope. Rather, it is a team sport in which individual performance matters, but team or group membership shapes bargaining power: the ability to influence the rules and outcomes of the game. Progress upward in the labyrinth requires cooperation with others, but the gains from cooperation are often unequally distributed. Women are assigned greater responsibilities for the creation and maintenance of human capabilities than men are, and these responsibilities tend to reduce their bargaining power. The path to gender equality requires the development of new institutions to ensure more equitable sharing of the costs of caring for dependents.

This theoretical argument contends that global gains in women’s legal rights over the last century have weakened but not demolished patriarchal institutional structures. Combining institutional analysis with bargaining logic, I explain how any group that is able to claim a disproportionate share of the gains from cooperation can develop social institutions to fortify their position. The balance of gendered power can shift for a variety of reasons, including changes in the division of labor wrought by economic development and change. However, structures of patriarchal power are reinforced by their intersections and overlaps with other labyrinthine hierarchies based on race, citizenship, and class.

Asymmetry in human rights represents asymmetry in paths to economic equality. Recent feminist discourse has successfully expanded a basic human rights framework to insist on its application to the realms of gender, the family, and sexuality.² This is no mean feat and it merits great appreciation. Research published by multilateral institutions such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank have helped expose laws and public policies that are inconsistent with liberal principles of equal opportunity.³ In the more academic realm, sociologist Goran Therborn has exhaustively documented the global retreat of patriarchal law (acknowledging that some enclaves remain almost untouched).⁴

Even from the vantage point of the United States and other affluent countries, however, this celebration seems premature. While women have long enjoyed legal rights largely commensurate with those of men, they remain economically and politically disadvantaged. Empirical research shows that women earn considerably less than men largely because they take more responsibility for the care of children and other dependents, incurring “motherhood penalties.”⁵ Women also remain concentrated in occupations and industries that provide care services, often incurring “care penalties” as a result.⁶

Some such research implies that women simply have different preferences than men do, choosing to sacrifice earnings in return for the emotional rewards of care.⁷ Many feminist scholars, however, advocate a more structural view, noting that individual preferences are shaped by social norms and economic circumstances that are, in turn, shaped by political and economic power.⁸ Some invoke patriarchy, or capitalism, or patriarchal capitalism; others point to complex forms of intersectional power.⁹ I believe that these approaches can be effectively synthesized by more attention to specific institutional structures that both reflect and advance collective interests.¹⁰

The vast literature on social institutions offers many important but diffuse insights. Institutions can be categorized in a variety of ways, according to sites (such as state, market, and family), functions (such as production, distribution, and socialization), and social science domains (such as political, economic, and cultural, corresponding roughly to legal governance, resource allocations, and cultural norms). All of these categorizations can serve useful purposes.

However, emphasis on collective conflict leads me to categorize institutional structures in terms of their distributional consequences: sets of institutions that shape access to gains from cooperation in unequal ways based on some dimension of socially assigned group identity, such as gender, sexual orientation, age, class, race, ethnicity, or citizenship. Rather than attributing gender inequality to a unique set of institutions and class inequality or race inequality to another unique set, I allow for the possibility that many types of institutions can separately or collectively reinforce many dimensions of group inequality.

Both obstacles and shortcuts in paths upward toward greater relative power and economic security can be labeled according to the way they filter and redirect members of specific groups, even though they can affect more than one group at a time. The important questions are who benefits, how, and how much? This approach departs from mainstream economic theory, which interprets social institutions as efficient solutions to coordination problems that cannot be easily resolved by decentralized individual choices (that is, markets).¹¹ Distributional conflict fades into the background.¹² Efficiency also implies transparency, or at least sufficient light in the corridors to be able to see the best path upward.

Some political scientists offer a more nuanced explanation of institutions, pointing to the impact of both distributional conflict and political power.¹³ Yet here, too, capacities for rational choice and cost-benefit analysis are often taken for granted. Popular game-theoretic models stipulate payoff matrices and/or fallback positions in advance, as though all the players clearly see the consequences of their actions. In a labyrinth, by contrast, players may be quite rational but nonetheless quite vulnerable to taking wrong turns; the possible paths are confusing and official signposts misleading. The resulting uncertainty reinforces a tenden-

cy to minimize risk and conform to precedent even when this does not lead to the best possible outcome.

The social institutions that constitute hierarchical structures reflect multilayered processes of bargaining over the level and distribution of gains from cooperation. Naming such structures by their distributional outcomes – who they most benefit – links the burgeoning literature on patriarchal institutions to structural concepts such as patriarchy, capitalism, racism, and nationalism. Yet it challenges the notion that such structures are independent or autonomous, defining them instead as structures of collective power constituted by social institutions: a jagged mountain range of hierarchical labyrinths.

Efforts to follow a convoluted path or climb an economic ladder are obviously affected by legal and political rights. However, they are also affected by social obligations. For instance, those who bear the burdens of financial support and direct care of dependents often find it difficult to compete with those who are unencumbered. Tensions between gender equality and recognition of gender difference – a manifestation of tensions between rights and obligations – are deeply embedded in the history of feminist activism in the United States, reflecting the complementary but distinct priorities of liberal and socialist feminisms.

Legal restrictions on women's rights leave a particularly clear historical trail, offering an evidentiary advantage over research on other types of institutions. Yet the distribution of social obligations is equally important. Even when women freely choose to devote more time and energy to the care of others than men do, they do not choose the economic consequences. Both patriarchal and capitalist institutional structures enable people in general and men in particular to free ride on caregivers.

Capitalist employers do not reward activities that do not generate a profit, whatever the public or social benefits such activities create. Within capitalist structures of collective power, those who devote less time and effort to unprofitable activities than others have commensurately greater access to earnings and wealth. This asymmetry means that partnerships with men offer women important economic benefits, even when these partnerships render them vulnerable to the threatened withdrawal of support. Economic dependence reduces women's ability to bargain over the distribution of care responsibilities in the home, the workplace, and the polity. It also reduces their ability to defy or modify patriarchal norms.

While patriarchal institutional structures have disempowered women, they have also imposed significant forms of social obligation on men. In many traditional patriarchal societies, strong community sanctions and informal rules – if not always specific laws – required that a man provide support for a woman he impregnated.

ed and take economic responsibility for his offspring. Likewise, support for aging parents, including widows, was often effectively enforced. As women have gained new rights, however, men have often offloaded some of their responsibilities. The breakdown of the “shotgun marriage” rule in the United States, for instance, contributed to an increase in the percentage of families maintained by women alone.¹⁴

The expansion of women’s access to paid employment has often been accompanied by poor specification of women’s rights to remuneration for family care from their children’s fathers, their adult children, and more broadly, from the state. Increased family instability offers women more scope for individual choice, but less reliable networks of support. The distribution of income and leisure within married couples often benefits men, but co-residence typically guarantees some commonality in living standards. Nonmarriage, separation, divorce, and long-distance migration in search of individual employment tend to reduce family income pooling, particularly costly to mothers of young children.

Access to market income sometimes comes at the expense of intrafamily transfers, which remain poorly measured and largely ignored by most standard measures of family welfare. The tally of patriarchal laws that have been – or need to be – stricken from the books should be accompanied by a list of new laws needed to encourage more equal distribution of the costs of caring for dependents and investing in the development of human capabilities.

The labyrinth metaphor leaves ample room for the role of individual and group agency: All enter the structure at different starting points, some more advantageous than others. Still, effort, skill, and teamwork affect their probability of avoiding the hazards and reaching the prizes within. Everyone may engage in efforts to clear their own path, or to close paths to others. The set of choices that individual and collective agents face, however, is far more complex than that implied by economic models of utility maximization that assumes perfect information, exogenously given preferences, and sovereign self-interest.

Individual agents are, from the outset, socially assigned to groups. As children they cannot choose their gender, age, sexual orientation, class background, race and ethnicity, citizenship, or a host of other collective identities that influence the preferences they form and the capabilities they develop as well as the opportunities available. As they mature, agents gain scope for self-awareness and rational choice, and their most important choices concern the strength of allegiances to the various groups to which they are assigned, which may be a source of intrinsic satisfaction as well as a determinant of their future economic success. The consequences of such choices, however, will always remain uncertain, because they are affected by the simultaneous choices of others.

In other words, the scope for rational decisions by individuals is limited not only by the constraints imposed by institutional structures, but also by the dif-

difficulty of coordinating enforceable decisions with other independent agents or forming stable alliances with them. This latter difficulty helps explain why institutional labyrinths are resistant to change: even the most disadvantaged participants derive some benefit from them if the only alternative is to exit to an even more dangerous, unpredictable, and unstructured environment. Nonetheless, the threat of an exit by the disadvantaged remains significant, exercising some influence on the actions of those who benefit from their cooperation.

The concept of cooperative conflict plays a central role in John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* and has been applied persuasively to gender bargaining in households by economist Amartya Sen and others.¹⁵ Distinct groups or individuals may have much to gain from cooperation with one another, but nonetheless struggle over the distribution of the gains from cooperation. Philosopher Charles Mills has correctly observed that the term "cooperative conflict," applied, for instance, to institutions such as slavery, is far too benign.¹⁶ As Catharine MacKinnon has pointed out in her discerning critique of the concept of "consent" to sex, hierarchical institutional structures can lead to something that could be more aptly described as coerced cooperation.¹⁷ What we call "freedom" depends largely on the existence of viable alternatives to subordination.

Within the economics discipline, attention to bargaining between men and women within households has now largely displaced microeconomic models that treat the household itself as a unitary decision-maker. Yet most bargaining models retain a focus on individuals operating in a social environment that is taken as a given, ignoring the incentives for joint efforts to challenge or to reinforce political, cultural, and economic institutions. A broader approach to bargaining that brings collective identity and action into the picture helps explain how it both shapes and is shaped by hierarchical structures. The complexities of bargaining in a dark labyrinthine environment also deserve explicit consideration.

Cooperation can take many different forms, ranging from agreement to participation in a market exchange to willingness to follow orders. The distribution of the gains from cooperation is not determined by each person's "value added," but by their fallback position: what happens to them if cooperation breaks down. A credible threat of physical violence weakens fallbacks, as does lack of independent access to income or withdrawal of economic support for the care of dependents.

One of the early pioneers of household bargaining models, Marjorie McElroy, has observed that social institutions, or what she calls "extra-environmental household parameters," could affect the fallback position of household members.¹⁸ For instance, divorce law, access to public assistance, and cultural norms influence the relative consequences of marital dissolution for husbands and

wives. Building on McElroy's observation, I have suggested a different nomenclature: "gender-specific environmental parameters."¹⁹

Empirical research substantiates this important linkage between social institutions and microeconomic outcomes. For instance, economists Shelly Lundberg and Robert Pollak have shown that a policy innovation in the United Kingdom that directed child allowances to mothers rather than fathers altered the allocation of household spending.²⁰ Applying a qualitative, rather than quantitative approach, economist Bina Agarwal has persuasively explained the impact of cultural norms on household bargaining outcomes in developed countries.²¹

Legal institutions have particularly clear implications for household bargaining. Until well into the twentieth century, for instance, U.S. law obligated a husband to meet the subsistence needs of his wife and children, but not to share family income equally with them.²² Today, family law in the United States enforces a responsibility for the mutual support of spouses, but does not require equal sharing (though in some states, community property laws dictate equal sharing of wealth acquired during marriage in the event of divorce). In many countries, men historically enjoyed the right to physically abuse their wives, as long as they caused no lasting injury. Even after these rules were reformed, protection against domestic violence within marriage remained largely ineffective until quite late in the twentieth century.

The threat of physical abuse of some women by some men exerts a disciplinary influence on all women, making them more appreciative of (and dependent on) nonabusive men. Likewise, the extreme physical abuse of many slaves in the American South, however costly to their owners, created an implicit threat that represented a kind of social externality for slaveowners who were less abusive, allowing them to don a mantle of benevolence. In both cases, members of powerful groups have an incentive to avert their eyes from abuses of power that they would never directly perpetrate.

Bargaining can, and often does, take more subtle forms. Fallback positions are not limited to exit options. Individuals who believe they are being treated unfairly are particularly likely to shirk or engage in sabotage, reducing the gains from cooperation in ways particularly costly to those who benefit the most from them. In the context of household bargaining, this strategy can be labeled "burnt toast." The extensive literature on efficiency wages in capitalist firms explains why employers may benefit from paying a higher-than-market clearing wage: the resulting cost of job loss creates an incentive for workers whose performance is difficult or costly to monitor to increase their effort.²³ Similarly, a man may offer a woman a higher-than-necessary share of the gains from cooperation, because this increases her effort in or fealty to the partnership. Altruistic sentiments and personal affections also soften bargaining. What economists refer to as "gift exchange" between some employers and their workers is far more likely to take place with-

in households than within capitalist firms.²⁴ Yet it cannot always be relied upon. Women's vulnerability to inequality within households governed by patriarchal rules results in part from the fragile quality of emotional attachments.

The effects of social institutions on household bargaining have been more thoroughly explored than the causal arrows that run the other direction, because these are more difficult to pin down. Yet the links between the micro- and macrolevels are obvious: if patriarchal institutions affect the relative bargaining position of men and women within households, then men and women have incentives to engage in collective efforts to modify those institutions in their favor.

This approach subsumes both the neoclassically influenced concept of rent-seeking and the Marxian theory of class conflict under a larger rubric.²⁵ Group success often leads to the consolidation of institutional power, which can, in turn, increase a group's share of gains from cooperation. A person or group in an initially strong fallback position can capture a large share of the gains, then invest those gains in efforts to improve their fallback position or weaken the fallback position of others. Once a group occupies the top of a hierarchical institutional structure, they can use their leverage to develop political, economic, and cultural institutions that preserve their advantage.

This dynamic helps explain a dialectic between power and efficiency that contributes to the persistence of social institutions that are inefficient as well as unfair. Sometimes, innovations that could increase the size of the "social pie" are blocked because they might reduce the share of powerful groups. A big slice of a small pie can be more desirable than a much smaller piece of a slightly larger pie.

Capitalist development sometimes delivers opportunities for women to earn wages outside the home that can potentially yield greater benefits to their households than their nonmarket work. However, husbands may be reluctant to let them take advantage of such opportunities because the potential reduction in their share of the total benefits may outweigh increases in the overall size of those benefits.²⁶ Similar reasoning explains why slaveholders in the United States prohibited the education of slaves, even though such education could have improved the productivity of the slave-based economy. In both of these examples, the structure of collective power impedes institutional changes that could potentially increase efficiency.

Emphasis on individual and collective bargaining does not imply rational choices informed by systematic cost-benefit analysis. There are no round oak tables in hierarchical labyrinths at which agents sit down to make offers and counteroffers. Still, most forms of collaboration are influenced to some degree by implicit bargaining. As advertisements for a prominent business train-

ing consultant put it, “You don’t get what you deserve. You get what you negotiate.”²⁷ Threats and promises, fakes and feints, persuasion and coercion, coalition and compromise often take implicit forms. Even market exchange is often contested.²⁸ Process may matter as much as payoffs: some people are trained to bargain harder than others. Payoffs are seldom perfectly clear and may often be misperceived or unknown (what military strategists refer to the “fog of war” also applies to the cloud of sex).

Explicit bargaining is not only costly and time-consuming, it can also create resentment and ill will. Economists typically assume that married partners will not try to block any move that improves their partner’s outcome, as long as it comes at no cost to them.²⁹ In the real world, however, spite often trumps reason, invites retaliation, and leaves both bargainers worse off than they were before. Some men kill their partners, then commit suicide.

Social norms can lubricate cooperation by offering implicit rules, and sometimes explicit solutions, to costly forms of disagreement. How best to divide a pie? “You slice, and I’ll choose.” Want to avoid a fight? “Let’s flip a coin.” If a husband and wife cannot agree on how to divide tasks they may simply fall back to social expectations.³⁰ Yet social expectations tend to favor those in already favored positions.³¹ Norms of appropriate femininity can reinforce gender inequality, just as patriotic norms can justify aggression against countries, racial pride can fuel White supremacy, and elitist values can legitimate class disparities.

Altruistic norms are often internalized in ways that affect individual preferences and perceptions. If one bargainer cares more about the other (or about third parties who may be affected), bargaining outcomes will be skewed in favor of the less altruistic or more assertive member, as suggested by the phrase “nice guys (and nice gals) finish last.” In a generalization of the “hidden injuries” of class, the subordination of women weakens their individual and group agency.³² Heteronormative values as well as homophobic attitudes can undermine the confidence of those labeled deviant. Oppression itself is often internalized.³³

Cooperative processes in which individuals cannot necessarily identify or claim their own value added characterize many aspects of economic life, but play a particularly important role in processes of reproduction (defined here as the creation and maintenance of human capabilities) and social reproduction (defined here as the creation and maintenance of social groups). Since women devote relatively more time and energy to these tasks than men do, this makes institutional bargaining particularly relevant to the analysis of gender inequality.

The specific demands of reproduction have direct implications for the bargaining power of those who specialize in it. Responsibility for the care of dependents often renders women dependent on men to meet their own subsistence needs. The emotional attachment to others that is intrinsic to caregiving also weakens

fallback positions.³⁴ As a result, declining specialization in reproductive tasks has contributed to women's empowerment. Two very long-run historical trends – fertility decline and technological changes favoring intellectual capabilities over physical strength – have increased women's collective bargaining power. Yet institutional resistance to gender equality remains significant, in part because such equality requires a redistribution of the costs of caring for others.

Reproduction creates and maintains human capabilities of enormous economic value. Care for children is sometimes referred to as investment, and care for the seriously disabled and elderly as consumption, because it is unlikely to generate future economic gains. In standard capital accounting, however, investment covers the costs of depreciation. Both financial support and direct care for the sick and elderly, like that devoted to children, should be considered a form of social investment. Their important insurance function should also be recognized: productive workers are more willing to support dependents when they anticipate reciprocal assistance when they become dependent themselves.

Care providers, however, are seldom able to capture fully a share of the social value they create. Whether unpaid or paid, their contributions are difficult to standardize. Care work typically requires collaboration with others, including family members and other care providers. It often requires cooperation from care recipients themselves: children must heed their parents, patients must follow their doctors' orders, and students must do their homework. The quality of care services often hinges on concern for the well-being of the care recipient. All of these characteristics limit the bargaining power of caregivers. Men, as well as women, can become "prisoners of love," but cultural norms make it easier for men to escape: fathers can ignore or abandon children in part because of their confidence that mothers will fill the breach; adult sons are more likely to provide direct care for their elderly parents if they lack a sister. Gender norms often make women dependent on other women, such as their own mothers or their daughters, for significant assistance with care; not surprisingly, this dependency can make them fearful of change (if women began to act as "carelessly" as men, what would happen to families?).

Many trends associated with processes of capitalist development have encouraged a reallocation of women's time and effort away from unpaid care activities in families toward paid employment. The global fertility rate now hovers between two and three children per woman, and in many affluent countries, including the United States, has dropped below the population replacement level of about 2.1 children per woman.³⁵ Rates of childlessness have also increased in the United States, particularly among highly educated women. On average, women have reduced the proportion of their life cycle they spend car-

ing for young children, improving their access to labor market earnings and enhancing their ability to mobilize for institutional change.

Economic changes on the demand side have also contributed to changes in women's roles. In the United States as in other affluent countries, the growth of the service sector created new labor market opportunities rewarding brains more than brawn. Once considered relatively poor pickings compared with manufacturing jobs, service jobs are now considered less vulnerable to the ups and downs of the business cycle, and they are often difficult to outsource or move offshore. Some economists argue that women have interpersonal or "people skills" that will be richly rewarded by current labor market trends.³⁶

This optimistic outlook ignores some significant countervailing trends. The decline in children per woman in the United States has been accompanied by an increase in the economic costs that children impose on mothers, driven by new preoccupations with "child quality" and cultural pressure for "intensive mothering" at the top end of the income distribution, and increases in the percentage of children supported by mothers alone at the low end. Further, women's access to high-paying professional and managerial jobs has been restricted by high temporal demands that such jobs impose: long work weeks, flexibility for late-night and weekend work, and availability for travel away from home. At the low end of the labor market, mothers face the opposite problem: part-time shift work and unpredictable hours often leave them with inadequate childcare and inadequate earnings. The growing demands of elder care exacerbate these pressures.

Furthermore, employed women are highly concentrated in the care sector of the U.S. market economy, in health, education, and social service jobs that pay significantly less than jobs in private business services and public administration, controlling for educational credentials.³⁷ While social skills relevant to management and marketing pay off in the private sector, skills directed at caring or helping people who lack much ability to pay are undervalued in the labor market. Because women in the United States are also disproportionately represented in public sector jobs, budgetary austerity has affected them even more than men.

Today, collective bargaining over the distribution of the costs of reproduction takes place largely within the arena of the welfare state. Women's role in care provision generally makes them more appreciative of social spending than men and helps account for the growing gap in gender voting preferences in the United States. Women would be a more unified and powerful voting bloc were it not for the way other collective interests shape incentives to offload the costs of social reproduction. Here, other labyrinthine institutional structures come into play.

Everyone belongs to more than one socially assigned group, and the paths available to them are shaped by many intersecting or overlapping collective identities. The institutional organization of reproduction impinges on

all groups who hope to persist over time and has implications that reach far beyond interests based on gender, age, and sexuality. Modern welfare states have socialized many of the costs of health, education, and insurance, and typically restrict access to such benefits through immigration controls. As a result, citizenship in a country such as the United States is a marker of significant economic privilege.

Perceived threats to the collective interests of groups based on citizenship and race and ethnicity are often related to social reproduction rather than more narrowly defined economic interests. Congressman Steven King (R-Iowa) has complained that “we can’t restore our civilization with other people’s babies” and “if we let our birthrate get below the replacement rate, we’re a dying civilization.”³⁸ Such complaints provide a rationale for denying women access to reproductive rights in the name of national and racial and ethnic interests: asking them to forgo “selfish” decisions for the sake of Christian civilization.

Class differences in access to care services are also consequential. Highly educated women living in metropolitan areas benefit economically from a large supply of low-wage immigrant women who provide childcare and elder care at a relatively low cost; less-educated women can seldom afford care services that are not publicly provided. Many public universities in the Midwest, starved of state support, have increased admissions from overseas students who can pay full tuition. For instance, at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the number of Chinese students has increased by a factor of five since 2008.³⁹ Such enrollments help subsidize the cost of educating state residents, but also reduce the spaces available to them.

The concept of patriarchal institutional structures offers a guide for tracing the effect of gender on the intersecting and overlapping paths created by multiple group interests. Rather than focusing on one overarching dimension of collective conflict, it emphasizes multiple, complex, and context-dependent interactions. It encourages more attention to institutional specifics – and to the organization of reproduction and social reproduction – than conventional economic frameworks. While it leaves room for individual agency, it also emphasizes the impact of the altruism and solidarity that can make groups effective economic actors.

The stylized model of cooperative conflict between women and men draws from the rational-choice tradition of game theory but emphasizes the complexity of a strategic environment that precludes any clear perception of payoffs. The insights that emerge from such models are best considered a guide for historical and comparative analysis, a spool of many different threads that can be used to explore possible escapes from the labyrinths of the past.

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ENDNOTES

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Equality

Catharine A. MacKinnon

The distinction between formal and substantive equality is theorized then illustrated by sexual harassment law in the United States and in international legal developments. The convergence of sexual harassment concepts with prostitution, hence of sex discrimination law with the Nordic/Equality Model, is explained and explored.

Equality is a concept frequently vaunted and purportedly applied but infrequently genuinely interrogated. Its usual approach, what is considered its common sense meaning, is the formal equality notion used in most U.S. law and in most other jurisdictions. This conception is uncritically predicated on Aristotle's formulation that equality means treating likes alike, unlikes unlike.¹

My observation and contention is that this approach cannot produce social equality under conditions of real social inequality.² Actually, it was never meant to produce equality under unequal conditions, but rather to eliminate destabilizing conflict among polis members who were already structurally a presumptively equal elite: prominent adult Greek male citizens. The failure of this model to produce equality among social unequals is therefore not, theoretically speaking, Aristotle's fault. Which is more than can be said for the theorists, societies, and legal systems that have failed to question it, while elaborating it, extending it, and applying it to real social inequalities for the past some two thousand years.

Women's inequality to men, half of humanity's inequality to the other half, with each group containing much variation and every inequality, provides a key illustration of the model's failure and of the impossibility of its success.³ Women, rendered "different" from men socially, because or to the degree we are not "the same" as men, axiomatically may not qualify for treating "likes alike": conventionally, first-class equality. That would require masculine privileges few women have or have had. As men's "unlikes," women can be treated "unlike," and this equality is satisfied. This can include better treatment, for instance through affirmative action or special labor protections or maternity benefits. Such instances are rare, dubious, paltry, sometimes downright injurious, and often allow men successfully to claim sex discrimination, since all men have to do to be sufficiently "the same" as women who qualify for such considerations is to become comparable for this purpose, specifically, to drop to women's social status, which, seldom having been biological, is not that difficult.⁴

More commonly, even systemically, so-called unlikes being treated unlike can mean women being treated worse than men. This is pervasive. It includes being paid less for doing work that is either different from or almost, but not exactly, the same as the work men do: that is, most work women are required or permitted to do, so-called women's work in sex-stratified and segregated labor markets.⁵ Or, women can be paid less than men for doing work that generates the same amount of value as work mainly men perform, but because it is seen as different work, corresponding to women's so-called differences from men, it is not seen as equally valuable.⁶ Treating unlikes unlike – again, considered equality in this approach – also includes not considering many things unequal that are almost entirely gender-defined. For instance, women are apparently considered so different from men sexually that sexual violation has not conventionally been considered an act of inequality at all, although the fact that 99 percent of documented sexual assaults against women are committed by men,⁷ with 90 percent of sexual assaults total being committed against women, could be seen as documenting a major inequality based on sex.⁸ Because this apparently is tacitly regarded as a sex difference, it is not generally legally seen as an inequality, for example, rape law not being subjected to constitutional sex equality standards except when facial sex discrimination occurs, most often against men.⁹ So women can be impoverished, stigmatized, violated with impunity, and otherwise disadvantaged and still be considered treated equally under the “unlikes unlike” formal equality rubric.

What are widely regarded as the aforementioned “differences” – considered ontological essences or natural statuses rather than epistemic and imposed ascribed attributions – actually are socially determined, largely by inequality itself. The idea that sex differences are natural, their consequences biologically inevitable, is a social idea. Apart from that, men are just as “different” from women as women are from men, yet are not treated as lesser beings on that basis. In other words, whatever their origins, such differences as exist between the sexes are equal. It is the attributed treatment, status, regard, worth, credibility, power that is unequal, meaning ranked more and less. Those consequences are indisputably socially determined. The standard for comparison – who or what one needs to be the same as in order to be considered an equal, hence potentially deprived of equality when disadvantaged – is the top of existing social hierarchies. Put another way, the conventional equality approach imposes and privileges elite, white, Western, upper-class masculinity by making them the standards that equality claimants must meet, thereby building male dominance and white supremacy, among other structural hierarchies, into formal equality's calculus.¹⁰

The Aristotelian approach thus obscures the fact that, within it, the opposite of equality, the essence of inequality, is not difference, but hierarchy. The true inequality calculus is not one of sameness and difference, but of dominance and subordination. Once sameness and difference is unmasked as a neutral cover for

dominance and subordination, and social inequality is grasped as a hierarchy rather than an expression of “difference” – actually a creator of what is called “difference” – imposing differences and their perception, the assumption that some groups are inherently inferior, others innately superior – essentialism or natural hierarchy – is revealed as built into formal equality. The supposed tool for dismantling inequality is exposed as constructing and reinforcing it.

Substantive equality, based on recognition of the human equality of groups historically kept socially unequal, has arisen as an alternative.¹¹ First recognized in Canadian law, now influencing much of the world, this analysis defines inequality not in terms of sameness and difference, but in terms of historic group disadvantage based on concrete grounds that include sex, race, religion, nationality, disability, and age. Its purpose is to produce social equality.¹² Hierarchy is its central dynamic. There is no magic in the word “hierarchy,” although it does seem to break through a lot of privileged ignorance and denial. A hierarchy has to be systemic, cumulative, and structural to function as the core dynamic of substantive inequality, grounded in concrete social bases. All this is relative to concrete evidence, which courts can assess. And, obviously, a hierarchy has to be vertical, a top-down arrangement, to be discriminatory in the substantive sense.

In this picture, sexual harassment law in the United States is notable for operating under the aegis of formal equality but building in substantive inequality awareness, carving itself out as something of an exception to some of formal equality’s more limiting legal doctrines. Instead of seeing sexual harassment – the imposition of unwanted sexual attention and pressure on a person who is not in a position to refuse it – as part of the natural order of things, sexual harassment law sees it as discrimination on the basis of sex, a civil and human rights violation. When women are sexually aggressed against, it exposes their position not as one of feminine “difference,” but as inequality based on sex and gender, persistently together with race and often age and disability in particular. Sexual harassment law, in which all the breakthrough cases were initiated by Black women plaintiffs, has always been intersectional on the level of its facts,¹³ and is moving increasingly to being intersectional on the level of its doctrine as well.¹⁴ The legal claim has proven capable of reaching social as well as institutional hierarchies. It implicitly grasps that the central impetus driving the practice is the imposition of a subordinate position within a sexualized social hierarchy of status, regard, reward, dignity, and power.

Sexual harassment law, for the first time in equality law (so far as I know, in law at all) addresses the core substance of the inequality of sex: hierarchically imposed sexuality.¹⁵ Unequal sexuality is the substance of the substantive inequality recognized in this area. If a behavior covered by sexual harassment law that is claimed as unwelcome and damaging is sexual, it is widely and increasingly un-

derstood by U.S. courts to be gendered, hence potentially discriminatory on the basis of sex.¹⁶ Before sexual harassment was recognized as a gender-based legal claim, gender harassment was understood as an expression of sex-based inequality, but sexually abusive acts had never been recognized as based on anything, far less as legally unequal. Sexual harassment law changed that.¹⁷

The hierarchy recognized in U.S. sexual harassment law can be in employment, as between boss and worker, or in education, as between teacher and student, because sexual harassment is statutorily prohibited in those contexts. Or, the hierarchy in those settings can be gender itself, as between coworkers in workplaces¹⁸ or students on campuses.¹⁹ Sometimes reverse formal but consistent social hierarchies, such as lower-level men workers harassing women managers or men students sexually harassing women teachers, are recognized as well. The understanding of sexual abuse as hierarchically based on sex is predicated upon, but not confined to, heterosexual interactions involving men over women, the dominant socially imposed sexual model. Same-sex sexual harassment, without regard to the sexual orientation of the parties, has been recognized as potentially sex-based discrimination as well.²⁰

What makes the law against sexual harassment transformative, apart from the extent to which it grasps inequality as hierarchy and imposed sexuality as based on gender often combined with race and ethnicity, is the fact that it provides a legal claim for the vicious social imperative to exchange sex for survival, or its possibility, whether or not the survival turns out to be real. This unchosen exchange characterizes much of the substance of women's inequality worldwide. In other words, in its fundamental dynamics, sexual harassment, which requires the delivery of sex as the price for women's material survival, turns otherwise real work into a form of prostitution, the floor of women's unequal condition. Women and girls enter prostitution as a consequence of options precluded or stolen, as a result of a lack of alternatives, making consent to it, or choice of it, fraudulent and illusory, just as sexual harassment is unchosen.²¹ Women who supposedly have human rights, including equality rights in employment and education, are reduced to this same floor of women's status when tolerance of sexual harassment with impunity – or sexual delivery in any form, from objectification to rape – becomes a requirement of participation in the paid labor force or material survival in any form. This includes paid housework, where it is widespread, and educational or career advancement, where it is rife.²²

If requiring sexual use as the price of survival violates equality rights when combined with a real job or other entitlement, they are certainly violated when it is the only thing for which a woman is valued. Yet buying a person for sexual use is not effectively illegal; certainly it is not seen as a violation of equality rights in most places. The only difference between sexually harassed women and prostituted women is the social class, or class image, of many of the women affected. A sub-

stantive equality approach to prostitution, as embodied in the abolitionist Nordic Model, extends the core sexual harassment concept to the decriminalization of anyone being bought and sold for sex, and penalizes sellers (pimps and sex traffickers) and, most importantly, buyers, disproportionately white and upper-class men, whose demand drives the sex industry. Because it lowers the status of the privileged and raises that of the disempowered, it is also termed the Equality Model.

Jurisdictions and authorities around the world are pioneering recognitions of substantive equality in various areas of violence against women. Under the European Convention on Human Rights, a new sex equality jurisprudence is developing with specific application to rape and, most stunningly, to domestic violence.²³ In international criminal law, substantive sex equality concepts are fielded in prosecutions for gender crime, including in the ad hoc tribunals for genocidal rape²⁴ and in the International Criminal Court's (ICC) statute²⁵ and in a case for recruitment and use of child soldiers,²⁶ bringing together equality concepts from human rights with the prohibitions of international criminal and humanitarian law. In the prostitution and sex trafficking field, one of the fastest and most promising areas of law moving toward equality around the globe, Sweden's criminalization of sex purchasers and pimps and decriminalization of prostituted people, is, in effect and in legislative introduction, a substantive sex equality law.²⁷ It has been adopted in various forms in Norway, Iceland, the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Canada, France, and Israel.

Perhaps the most striking illustration of the contrast between formal and substantive equality analysis in the constitutional domain can be found in South Africa's decision in *Jordan v. State*, in which the dissent argued that criminalizing prostituted people and not criminalizing their customers constituted unfair discrimination on the basis of sex.²⁸ The Palermo Protocol to the Transnational Organized Crime Convention, defining sex trafficking to include sexual exploitation through "abuse of power or position of vulnerability," as well as through force, fraud, and coercion, is also a de facto substantive equality law.²⁹ The UN Secretary-General's Report of 2006 recognized sexual violence explicitly as a form of gender-based inequality, as did the dual resolutions on the same day in 2013, one by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the other by the Security Council, converging human rights with humanitarian law, both recognizing gender-based violence as at once a substantive form of sex inequality and a threat to international peace and security.³⁰ Appropriately, it is principally in the law of sex-based abuse that the substantive equality action is.

Where sexual harassment law is recognized as an equality claim, where women are guaranteed equality rights, many social sectors and organizational entities are beginning to recognize an obligation to foster environments free from sexual objectification, pressure, or aggression, to welcome rather than punish reporting

of sexual abuse, to encourage accountability not impunity for individuals or institutions that engage in or enable it, and to operate on rules of excellence and inclusion rather than hierarchy and fear. These apprehensions and standards are driving the #MeToo movement, and with it women's (and some men's) rejection of prostitution's standards for their lives. Together they begin to embody what a real change toward equality for women could look like. An Equal Rights Amendment, interpreted to promote substantive equality, parallel to the vital international recognitions mentioned, is the one domestic legal change that could impel these advances on a scale that approaches the need and call for them.³¹

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ See Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Modern Library, 1943), 307 ("Equality consists in the same treatment of similar persons"); and Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. J. L. Ackrill and J. O. Urmson, trans. David Ross, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 1131a–1131b, 112–117.
- ² This analysis is fully presented in Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Sex Equality*, 3rd ed. (New York: Foundation Press, 2016).
- ³ It is also my view that the gender-based inequality described here characterizes much of some men's inequality over other men, making sexual politics politics unmodified.
- ⁴ A splendid example is *Weinberger v. Wiesenfeld*, 420 U.S. 636, 653 (1975), which held that a surviving husband of a working mother who died in childbirth was entitled to survivorship benefits previously reserved for surviving mothers married to decedent working men.
- ⁵ Crucially, "most employed women still do the work that mostly women have traditionally done; at least, they predominate in traditionally female occupations and remain minorities in other pursuits." For example, "service and caretaking occupations, such as nursing (90.1 percent of registered nurses and 91.8 percent of nurse practitioners), secretarial and administrative support (94.4 percent), teaching young children (97.8 percent of preschool and kindergarten teachers and 81 percent of elementary school and middle school teachers), and waiting tables (70.4 percent)" are predominantly female. "Men predominate everywhere else, including in the better paying professional and

blue-collar sectors” where, for instance, they constitute 80 percent of software developers and 69 percent of lawyers. MacKinnon, *Sex Equality*, 171.

⁶ See *Lemons v. City of Denver*, 17 Fair Empl. Prac. Cas. 906 (D. Colo. 1978), *affirmed* 620 F.2d 228 (10th Cir. 1980); and *AFSCME v. State of Washington*, 578 F. Supp. 846 (W.D. Wash. 1983), *reversed* 770 F.2d 1401 (9th Cir. 1985).

⁷ Matthew J. Breiding, Sharon G. Smith, Kathleen C. Basile, et al., “Prevalence and Characteristics of Sexual Violence, Stalking, and Intimate Partner Violence Victimization—National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, United States, 2011,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report Surveillance Summaries* 63 (SS08) (2014): 5. “For female rape victims, an estimated 99.0% had only male perpetrators. In addition, an estimated 94.7% of female victims of sexual violence other than rape had only male perpetrators. . . . The majority of male rape victims (an estimated 79.3%) had only male perpetrators.”

⁸ Howard N. Snyder, *Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement: Victim, Incident, and Offender Characteristics* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000), 4. “The female proportion of sexual assault victims reached 90% at age 13 and 95% at age 19. . . . In general, across all specific [sexual] offense categories, the proportion of female victims increased with the age of the victim.”

⁹ See, for instance, *Michael M. v. Superior Court*, 450 U.S. 464 (1981).

¹⁰ *Black* is capitalized in recognition of the authentic ethnicity and culture created by and imposed upon African Americans in the United States, as one term of pride and identity chosen by Black people. “White” is not capitalized as it is not an ethnicity but a garbage category of skin privilege that is really a designation of status and power, the only purpose of which is to elevate so-called white people over and at the expense of peoples not regarded as white.

¹¹ Substantive equality as such was first publicly proposed as a legal theory in a talk by that name delivered in Ottawa, Canada, in 1989, and published for the first time in a recent collection. See Catharine A. MacKinnon, “Substantive Equality,” in *Butterfly Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2017), 110–125. This equality theory originated in Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A Case of Sex Discrimination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 106–141; was further developed in Catharine A. MacKinnon, “Difference and Dominance: On Sex Discrimination,” in *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 32–45; and was presented in the aforementioned speech, on file with author, to the National Meeting of Equality-Seeking Groups in Ottawa, Canada, January 13–16, 1989 (“the alternate view that could change things is best pursued . . . through a substantive analysis of each particular inequality”). For an analysis of my legal work in Canada, see Sheila McIntyre, “Timely Interventions: MacKinnon’s Contribution to Canadian Equality Jurisprudence,” *Tulsa Law Review* 46 (1) (2010): 81–106.

¹² See Catharine A. MacKinnon, “Substantive Equality Past and Future: The Canadian Charter Experience,” in *Canada in the World: Comparative Perspectives on the Canadian Constitution*, ed. Richard Albert and David R. Cameron (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 227–244.

¹³ See *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson*, 477 U.S. 57 (1986); *Barnes v. Costle*, 561 F.2d 983 (D.C. Cir. 1977); *Bundy v. Jackson*, 641 F.2d 934 (D.C. Cir. 1981); and *Alexander v. Yale University*,

- 631 F.2d 178 (2d Cir. 1980). For discussion, see MacKinnon, *Sexual Harassment of Working Women*, 53–54.
- ¹⁴ See, for example, *Baloch v. Kempthorne*, 550 F.3d 1191 (D.C. Cir. 2008); *Rogers v. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*, 454 F.2d 234 (5th Cir. 1972); *Ferguson v. Pipefitters Association Local 597*, 334 F.3d 656 (7th Cir. 2005); *Hicks v. Gates Rubber Company*, 833 F.2d 1406 (10th Cir. 1987); *Walker v. Ford Motor Co.*, 684 F.2d 1355 (11th Cir. 1982); and *Anthony v. County of Sacramento*, 898 F. Supp. 1435 (E.D. Cal. 1995). See also *Lam v. University of Hawaii*, 40 F.3d 1551 (9th Cir. 1994). For further analysis, see Sumi K. Cho, “Converging Stereotypes in Racialized Sexual Harassment: Where the Model Minority Meets Suzie Wong,” *Journal of Gender, Race & Justice* 1 (1997): 177–212; and Antuan M. Johnson, “Title IX Narratives, Intersectionality, and Male-Biased Conceptions of Racism,” *Georgetown Journal of Law & Modern Critical Race Perspectives* 9 (57) (2018): 57–75.
- ¹⁵ This proposition is argued at length in Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).
- ¹⁶ This argument is made in MacKinnon, *Sexual Harassment of Working Women*. In considering what is “based on sex,” many courts have gone no further than Judge Reinhart’s observation that “sexual harassment is *ordinarily* based on sex. What else could it be based on?” *Nichols v. Frank*, 42 F.3d 503, 511 (9th Cir. 1994).
- ¹⁷ *McKinney v. Dole*, 765 F.2d 1129 (D.C. Cir. 1985).
- ¹⁸ See *Faragher v. City of Boca Raton*, 524 U.S. 775 (1998); *Landgraf v. USI Film Products*, 511 U.S. 244 (1994); and *Intlekofer v. Turnage*, 973 F.2d 773 (9th Cir. 1992).
- ¹⁹ Peer sexual harassment is the main content of “campus sexual assault” as widely reported and litigated in the last decade or so.
- ²⁰ *Oncale v. Sundowner Offshore Services, Inc.*, 523 U.S. 75 (1998); and *Rene v. MGM Grand Hotel, Inc.*, 305 F.3d 1061 (9th Cir. 2002). See also *Miles v. New York University*, 979 F. Supp. 248 (S.D.N.Y. 1997). Consolidating three appellate cases, the U.S. Supreme Court has accepted review on the question of whether same-sex and transgender discrimination are sex-based.
- ²¹ See Catharine A. MacKinnon, “Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality,” *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review* 46 (2011): 271–309. On consent, see Catharine A. MacKinnon, “Rape Redefined,” *Harvard Law & Policy Review* 10 (2016): 431–477.
- ²² A fuller analysis of sexual harassment in these terms may be found in MacKinnon, *Sexual Harassment of Working Women*, and in the preface to the 2019 paperback edition of *Butterfly Politics*.
- ²³ As applied to rape, see *M.C. v. Bulgaria*, App. No. 39272/98, European Court of Human Rights (2003); and *Vertido v. The Philippines*, views under art. 7, para. 3, of the Optional Protocol, CEDAW/C/46/D/18/2008 (September 1, 2010). On domestic violence, see *Opuz v. Turkey*, App. No. 33401/02 European Court of Human Rights, para. 153 (2009); and *Gonzales v. United States*, Case 12.626, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Report No. 80/11 (2011).
- ²⁴ The legal recognition of rape in a genocide originated in *Kadic v. Karadzic*, 70 F.3d 232 (2d Cir. 1995), and was first applied by an international authority in *Prosecutor v. Akayesu*, Case No. ICTR-96-4-T, para. 731–734 (1998).
- ²⁵ See Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, art. 7, para. 1(g), July 17, 1998, 2187 U.N.T.S. 3 (defining “crime against humanity” to include “[r]ape, sexual slavery,

enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity”); art. 7, para. 1(h) (recognizing persecution based on gender as a “crime against humanity”); art. 8, para. 2(b)(xxii) (defining “war crimes” perpetrated during international armed conflicts to include “rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, as defined in article 7, paragraph 2(f), enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence also constituting a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions”); art. 8, para. 2(e)(vi) (extending definition to encompass non-international armed conflicts); and art. 6(b) (defining “genocide” to include “causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of [a] group,” which has been interpreted to apply to sexual atrocities in genocides).

- ²⁶ Almost all the first cases prosecuted at the ICC include gender crimes in some form. A particularly useful example can be found in the prosecutor’s opening statement in *Lubanga*, gendering the claim for violating the prohibition on child soldiers. See the prosecutor’s opening statement in *Case of the Prosecutor v. Thomas Lubanga Dyilo*, ICC-01/04-01/06 (January 26, 2009), 8–9, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/NR/rdonlyres/89E8515B-DD8F-4251-AB08-6B60CB76017F/279630/ICCOTPSLMO20090126ENG2.pdf>.
- ²⁷ See Brottsbalken [BrB] (Criminal Code) 6:1 (Sweden); and Max Waltman, “The Politics of Legal Challenges to Pornography: Canada, Sweden, and the United States” (Ph.D. diss., University of Stockholm, 2014), 277–286, 294–298 (recounting sex equality dimensions surrounding the passage of Swedish law against prostitution).
- ²⁸ *Jordan v. State*, 2002 (6) SA 642 (CC) at para. 69 (South Africa).
- ²⁹ United Nations General Assembly, Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, art. 3(a), G.A. Res. 55/25, UN Doc. A/55/383 (November 15, 2000).
- ³⁰ See United Nations Secretary-General, *In-Depth Study on All Forms of Violence against Women*, UN Doc. A/61/122/Add. 1 (July 6, 2006); Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 30 on Women in Conflict Prevention, Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations, UN Doc. CEDAW/C/GC/30 (November 1, 2013); and United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2122, UN Doc. S/RES/2122 (October 18, 2013).
- ³¹ For further discussion of some animating notions of a substantive Equal Rights Amendment, see Catharine A. MacKinnon, “Toward a Renewed Equal Rights Amendment: Now More Than Ever,” *Harvard Journal of Law & Gender* 37 (2014): 569–579, collected in MacKinnon, *Butterfly Politics*, 295–304; and Catharine A. MacKinnon and Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, “Reconstituting the Future: The Equality Amendment,” *Yale Law Journal Forum* 129 (2019).

Good Fellows: Men's Role & Reason in the Fight for Gender Equality

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This essay attempts to make the case for including – even embracing – men in the fight for gender equality. I do not mean to argue that men should supplant women in this struggle, or that enlisting men implies dismissing or diminishing women. My aim instead is to make this fight less isolated and more practical, and to attack the so-called women's problem with a broader, blunter tool. If men believe in equality, then expanding that belief to explicitly include women is not a leap of logic or act of charity. It is instead a basic extension of a truth already deemed self-evident, and a channel through which men can begin to redefine their own identities and interests. Men have been an obstacle to women's equality for a very long time. Perhaps the moment has come to make them part of the solution as well.

In 1689, John Locke published his *First Treatise of Government*, positing, as part of a broader argument against patriarchal monarchy, that the rights of mothers should be taken as seriously as those of fathers.¹ “The Husband and Wife,” he noted, have “different understandings . . . [and] different wills.” But with regard “to the things of their common Interest and Property . . . the Wife [has] full and true possession of what by Contract is her peculiar Right, and . . . the Husband [has] no more power over her Life, than she has over his.” After an exhaustive summary of the Bible – his era’s source of all guidance – Locke concludes that, “far from Establishing the *Monarchical Power of the Father*,” the Scriptures instead “set up the *Mother* equal with him, and injoyn’d nothing but was due in common, to both Father and Mother.”²

Locke went on, of course, to write his better-known and more radical *Second Treatise*, entire passages of which were borrowed, almost verbatim, in the Declaration of Independence.³ His theories of governance inspired the American and French revolutions; his views on property rights carved the foundation for the modern capitalist state.⁴ But his views on women and gender equality slipped largely from public discourse over the succeeding centuries, as did his intellectual connection between the public reins of power and the private realms of home. When feminist scholarship settles on Locke, it tends to do so unfavorably, reading – and painting – him as a sexist, or misogynist, or worse.⁵

So, too, with Friedrich Engels. In his 1884 treatise on *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels lays out a vast and sweeping history of the family, arguing that “the first division of labour is that between man and woman for child breeding.”⁶ In pre-industrial times, he posited, this division was a gentle one, with men doing more of the hunting and women more of the gathering, trapping, and cooking.⁷ There was no private property in the ancient past; no marriage deals or feminine submission.⁸ As societies embraced industrialization, however, women’s prescribed role as breeders forced them back into the home, tethering them increasingly to the chores that their factory-bound husbands had now left behind. “[W]hen [a woman] fulfils her duties in the private service of her family,” he explained, “she remains excluded from public production and cannot earn anything; and when she wishes to take part in public industry and earn living independently, she is not in a position to fulfil her family duties.”⁹

Like Locke, Engels is primarily known for bigger and more influential texts. His theories, comingled with those of frequent coauthor, Karl Marx, provided the intellectual foundation for an entire school of thought, and an economic vision whose goals were diametrically opposed to those of John Locke. Yet ironically perhaps, on the subject of women, Engels resuscitated a piece of the connection that Locke had proposed nearly two centuries earlier. Like Locke, Engels saw an innate and important connection between the rights of women and those afforded “mankind” more generally. Like Locke (but going considerably further in his analysis), Engels saw the family as a crucial social structure, and one whose organization revealed broader patterns of power and privilege. “The modern family,” he wrote, “contains in miniature all the contradictions which later extend throughout society and its state.”¹⁰

Scholars can argue – and almost certainly will – about the extent of both Locke’s and Engel’s concern for gender equality.¹¹ Were they really interested in, much less perturbed by, the fate of wives and mothers? Or were women just bit players in their revolutionary views, the backdrop against which the more important battles were to be waged? The texts are too ambiguous to ever yield a definitive answer.

But what makes Locke and Engels so intriguing on the topic of equality is that they did at least mention women, and think about women, under the intellectual auspices of equality. They were (White, straight, cis, old, wealthy) male thinkers who nevertheless bridged the divide between the personal and the political, not because they were necessarily aiming to address women’s standing, but because they understood women’s standing as a necessary component of a just political order. They disagreed fundamentally on what this order would be and how it might be brought to fruition, but they understood that equality – of gender as well as class – was a crucial part of the process.¹²

Such inclusion is generally not part of the standard philosophical canon. On the contrary, the fight for gender equality has typically been waged outside the

mainstream of male-dominated thought; waged by women, overwhelmingly, and mostly from the margins of political discourse. While *equality's* supporters are legion, well-heeled, and well-positioned, advocates for gender equality – like those for racial equality – have been fewer and more segregated. Put bluntly, it has been mostly women fighting and writing for gender equality; mostly people of color advocating for racial justice. And to many in the trenches, it's better that way. Feminists, in particular, have been loath to let men into their fight, wary of ceding power, once again, in this most personal of struggles. And who can blame them? Men's voices have historically dominated every other fight, argument, and victory. Surely, women should own and dominate the pursuit of their own rights.

This essay, however, will take a different tack. I will try to make the case for including – even embracing – men in the fight for gender equality. I do not mean to argue that men should supplant women in this struggle, or that enlisting men implies dismissing or diminishing women. My aim instead is to make this fight less isolated and more practical, and to attack the so-called women's problem with a broader, blunter tool.

Men have been an obstacle to women's equality for a very long time. Perhaps the moment has come to make them part of the solution as well.

The first question a good feminist might pose on the topic of men is “why?” Why, after centuries of neglecting women's issues (at best) or deriding them (or worse), should men be given any voice or agency in the struggle for gender equality?

Let me begin with what I fundamentally believe to be the wrong answer. Men should not enter the fight for women's rights just because it's the right thing to do (even though it is). They shouldn't be cajoled or bullied into joining; they shouldn't be dragged kicking and screaming to the march. We've tried that and it doesn't work. Bullying rarely does. Guilt, as a prodder of political action, is even worse.¹³

Instead, the arguments for inclusion cluster into two broad categories: those that are focused on men's specific issues, and those that are focused more on women's. Both are crucial and relatively straightforward.

On the male side of the equation, it is useful to begin with the broadest proposition, one that men have been making, and agreeing with, since at least the time of Locke: that all people are created equal. Yes, Locke used the word “men.” Yes, he and his successors were almost certainly referring only to White men, and probably landed ones as well. But the *idea* of equality – the basic, primal preference for fairness; for a society that does not discriminate among its members; for opportunities that are widely distributed and open to all – is widespread and long-standing. If men believe in equality, then expanding that belief to explicitly include women is not a leap of logic or an act of charity. It is instead a basic extension of a truth already deemed self-evident.

Beyond the realm of theory, meanwhile, the pursuit of gender equality has measurable, tangible benefits, for men as well as women. As of 2018, women's paid labor accounted for 40 percent of total economic activity in the United States, and 37 percent in the world.¹⁴ In Japan, economists have estimated that expanding the number of women in the workplace could raise the country's GDP by up to 50 percent.¹⁵ In the corporate sector, recent studies demonstrate that firms with a greater representation of women on their boards significantly outperform the market.¹⁶ Ditto with women in the C-suite.¹⁷ On a purely economic basis, therefore, having greater economic opportunities for women creates greater prosperity for all. Equality works.

Equality is also crucial for that most basic of all human tasks: the labor of reproduction. Once upon a time, men could advance their procreative interests – and did so – by controlling women's fertility. They married virgins and demanded fidelity and ensured their genetic longevity through their offspring. Gender equality was not required; on the contrary, men furthered their reproductive interests by repressing women. But not any longer. Instead, in most parts of the world now, advances in reproductive technologies – contraception, *in vitro* fertilization, egg freezing, and the like – have freed the process of procreation from both the dictates of Mother Nature and the demands of men. Women have far greater control over their reproductive destinies than was ever the case in the past, and the once-iron bond between sex and procreation has been forever severed.¹⁸ As a result, the balance of power between the sexes has been subtly but powerfully altered. If men want children (and genetically speaking, they do), they have to offer a different bargain to women than that which prevailed in the past. They have to invest in women's happiness and prosperity, and share power with them.

We see elements of this shifting equilibrium already in China, where a generation of female infanticide has produced a skewed ratio of men to women, and thus a distinctly more competitive market for marriage. Men in China, and particularly those without financial resources, are being forced to import brides from abroad, are engaging in human trafficking, and, when all else fails, are simply forgoing sex and marriage.¹⁹ Taken to its extreme, women's inequality in a world of reproductive choice does not end well for men. Less dramatically, we see evidence too from Japan, where increasing numbers of young women are opting out of what have long been deeply unequal relationships. Given a choice between the country's traditional marriage compact – in which the wife stays home and the husband works – and a more independent lifestyle, women are electing to stay in their careers and out of relationships. Marriage rates are plummeting as a result and fertility has dropped well below the level of population replacement. In 2013, a survey by Japan's Family Planning Association found that 45 percent of women aged sixteen to twenty-four “were not interested in or despised sexual contact.”²⁰ “I have a great life,” reports one young working woman. “I go out with my girl-

friends – career women like me – to French and Italian restaurants. . . . I love my independence.”²¹ Increasingly, men are being cut out of women’s lives in Japan, a situation that presumably carries costs for them both.²²

Finally, and perhaps less cynically, the once-dominant White male ruling class is itself beginning to morph and evolve. Not quickly, to be sure, and not (in some quarters) without a massive fight. But evolving all the same. Twenty-three percent of men in the United States identified in 2017 as non-White.²³ Four percent were gay or queer or somewhere beyond the traditional gender binary. Thirty-one percent were disabled or unemployed.²⁴ One doesn’t have to accept the entire umbrella of intersectionality to see that some groups of men will eventually see themselves reflected in what once was the “other.” They will see their interests, not to mention their wives’ and sisters’ and mothers’ and daughters’ interests, as inextricably connected to and advanced by universal equal rights. Women’s rights really are human rights. They always have been. Only now, it may be increasingly in men’s interest to fight for those rights. Because they need them too.

Yes, I know. Letting men into the tent of gender equality just at the moment when it suits their self-interest risks obviating the struggle that women have fought, alone, for so long. It risks prioritizing their problems and preferences over women’s. I would suggest, however, that winning the war here is worth losing the battle. If men can truly embrace gender equality as human equality; if they can see the fight for human rights as a fight for *all* humans’ rights, then we should enlist them in the effort.

The final piece of the “why” is the most prosaic, and comes directly from women’s needs and interests. And unlike the arguments above, it is grounded directly in the mathematics of power. As of 2018, after more than a century of struggle; after the suffragettes and the feminists and the UN declarations and sisterhoods of all sorts and colors, women still only hold roughly 16 percent of our planet’s seats of power.²⁵ There were only twenty female heads of state in 2018, or 6.3 percent. Twenty-four Fortune 500 CEOs, just under 5 percent. Forty-eight of the past 892 Nobel Prize winners. We are, whether we like it or not, still struggling from the sidelines, marching and protesting and sighing collectively in well-meaning retreats. But we aren’t in a position to affect real change, because we don’t have the seats at the table. We can try to seize them, or squeeze our way in, but neither of those has yet proven effective. So we need to go, at least in part, to where the power lies. And that, still, is with men.

Over the past decade, I have spoken at dozens and dozens of women’s events: at corporate retreats, campus town halls, book signings, and think tank panels. I have spoken before government officials, college students, middle managers, medical residents, and law firm associates. Nearly all of these events were billed as conversations on gender in the workplace. Hardly any

were restricted to women. And yet, time and time again, there were only a tiny handful of men in the audience – usually from the organization’s human resources and audiovisual departments. I understand. These are scary rooms for the average male, full of potentially angry women talking about almost-certainly awkward topics. Harassment. Maternity leaves. Breastfeeding. But that, of course, is part of the problem. If men are ever to engage fully with the issues of gender equality, they need to be in the rooms where conversations about gender are happening. And women need to invite them in.

Once inside, men then need to understand that there are specific things they can do – particularly in the workplace – that will advance the cause of women’s rights, and of equality more generally.

First, they can and must put an end to bad behavior, both theirs and that of their colleagues and associates. Men need to learn what sexual harassment is and how to spot it. Particularly at the managerial level, they need to take responsibility for ensuring a safe and inclusive workplace, and for reporting and following up on violations that occur. Otherwise, the full burden of monitoring falls to the most vulnerable: to the people, usually women, who are being harassed or the few senior members of the group, usually women again, who are seen as innately sympathetic. Instead, the people who wield real authority in an organization must move against any form of harassment. They have to define it, speak out against it, put processes in place for both reporting and investigation, and punish those who are found to be in violation. Crucially, they can’t do these things after the fact, or when a colleague is publicly called out by the media. Instead, they need – at the very highest levels – to treat harassment as akin to embezzlement or business fraud; as behavior that must, and will, be stopped.

In doing so, they might borrow a page from the kind of bystander intervention that has been well-received and effective on many high school and college campuses.²⁶ The theory behind this approach is that it is men – often, the most popular and powerful men on campus – who know who the perpetrators of sexual violence are. And it is men who can most easily stop them. They have to feel empowered to do so, though; have to feel that traipsing into the always-fraught currents of sexual misbehavior is not an activity restricted to women. Everyone, meanwhile – women and men, victims and alleged perpetrators – must have processes and guidelines around them, so that the rules are clear and no one is thrust into the murky role of personal adjudication. What rules? These, too, will need to be defined and debated by the community at large. They will need to be spelled out and discussed, however painful that might be, and owned by the people at the very top. Most of whom, for the moment at least, are likely to be men.

Men in the workplace can also advance gender equality by sponsoring the women around them. “Sponsor” is a very specific term, coined by economist Sylvia Ann Hewlett in her 2013 book *Forget a Mentor, Find a Sponsor*, and it remains an

underused tool of influence.²⁷ Lots of organizations assign mentors; lots of young people think they have one. But study after study has demonstrated that mentorship, particularly for women and people of color, is weak.²⁸ What works instead, Hewlett has shown, is sponsorship: a relationship in which a senior person, male or female, takes an active role and interest in a junior person's career. Sponsors fight for their person; they give advice and honest feedback. They show up and go to bat on behalf of another person's career. Admittedly, sponsorship can get tricky across lines of sex and race and gender. It doesn't work if people sponsor only those who look like them. But some of the strongest cases I've ever seen involved men in positions of power taking a deep (nonsexual, nonromantic) interest in younger women's careers. When men invest in these colleagues, they can be a powerful force for change – not only for the women involved, but for equality of opportunity more generally. Lean In founder and Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg, for instance, frequently describes the role economist Larry Summers played in encouraging and supporting her career. Journalist Tina Brown credits publisher S. I. Newhouse for investing in her leadership. Condoleezza Rice credits Josef Korbel, a professor and former diplomat, as “one of the most central figures in my life.”²⁹ These are hugely accomplished women, of course, who have built extraordinary careers. But the practice of sponsorship applies across class, race, and industry. It's not enough for men at the top to care about equality, or laud it in theory. They must invest in the work of advancement itself, person by person and life by life.

Finally, men in the workplace can have tremendous impact by fighting on their own behalf for rights and privileges typically seen as women's. The most important of these is parental leave, a fraught and complicated situation whose history is worth briefly recounting. Prior to the 1970s, working women who gave birth either simply stopped working (if they could afford to) or found some way to arrange for infant and child care.³⁰ In the 1970s, though, as women started to enter managerial positions in larger numbers and to fight, accordingly, for workplace rights, maternity leaves became increasingly common. The specifics varied country by country, of course, but most followed a basic format. They gave *women* time off (either paid or unpaid) to engage in a distinctly medical event: the physical birth of a child. Only women could take maternity leave, therefore, and only women were left with their subsequent and lopsided effects: as study after study has now revealed, most women never fully recover, professionally speaking, from their maternity leaves.³¹ They lose momentum at their workplace; they are perceived as less eager contributors when they return; they never fully compensate for the lost wages and missed rungs of the promotional ladder.

In an effort to redress these inequities, many countries began in the 1990s to pass more gender-neutral policies, recasting birth (and including adoption) as family matters rather than medical conditions.³² Which was clearly a step in the right

direction. The problem, though, was that the policies didn't really work. More specifically, even when fathers received incredibly generous paternity leaves – Iceland, for example offered three months plus an additional three months of shared leave – most men didn't take them. In fact, in Sweden, heralded as having among the world's most gender-equal policies, men still accounted for less than one-quarter of all parental leaves in 2018.³³

This is a bigger problem than it might seem. Because if only women (or a handful of gay dads) take parental leave, then the role of parent will remain stubbornly fixed as female. Women will bear the burden, at both workplace and home, and men will perpetuate the stereotype of fatherhood as a second-order priority.

Thankfully, though, this is one problem that is almost laughably easy to fix. MEN: TAKE PATERNITY LEAVE! Take all you can, and then take some more. Fight for more generous leaves. Lobby your employer (or union, or political representative) for family care leaves and flexible hours and part-time situations that enable all parents – all *people* – to be present for their families without compromising their wage-earning work. By defining parenthood as gender-neutral and actively affirming their own commitments as parents, men can significantly move the needle for women in the workplace. More important, they can help nudge all of us toward a more equal society, one in which no one's work or identity is restricted to the dictates of their gender.

Meanwhile, of course, and aside from their behavior in the workplace, men have significant roles to play in advancing gender equality at home and in society. In the early days of feminism, it was enough, perhaps, for men to support their wives' causes; to "let" their wives work and suppress their own anger if the meatloaf was late to the table. Not any longer. Now, supporting true gender equality means enlisting men to reshape gender norms more generally: not just those of their wives, but of their daughters, their sons, their mothers, and themselves.

Historically, we know that every generation mimics the one before it, albeit with the twists of technology and teenage rebellion. Children absorb societal norms at a very young age, and replicate the world they see around them. Give a boy a truck and he will learn to love it. Tell him not to cry and he won't. If we want these norms to change at a societal level – and true gender equality demands they do – then men need to play a crucial role, along with women, in rethinking and reshaping their most basic forms of interaction. The words they use. The games they play. The way they raise their children. Women simply can't make these changes themselves. Instead, men need to be part of the process, adapting and embracing it as their own. What does this mean in practice? It means raising girl children to be as strong – intellectually, athletically, emotionally – as boys, and allowing boy children to escape from the traditional constraints of masculinity. It means redivvying chores along gender-neutral lines: let the women in town coach the soccer games, perhaps, and have the men bake brownies. Let dad remember to make the

dental appointments while mom works late. These things may sound trivial, but they are the patterns, writ large, that determine and divide our lives. If men want to advance women's equality, they need to adjust their own behavior, not simply rely on women to adjust theirs. Some of that adjustment, as mentioned above, will come from not doing the bad things: harassment, discrimination, catcalls, and mansplaining. And some will come from the harder but ultimately more important work of shifting roles and norms and responsibilities. Let a man brag about how much his wife earns or how hard she works. Let a boy cry.

Which leads to my final point. Ultimately, working for gender equality isn't only about helping women, or even addressing a centuries' old imbalance. It's much bigger, which is why men's inclusion is so vital. Too often, we see the gender struggle as just that: a zero-sum game in which any gains for women must come at the expense of men. Or even, more generously, as a pie in need of expanding before any set of players can grab a bigger slice. I am arguing for a more radical reformulation. Rather than rebalancing our current set of gender relations, we need to reconceive them, transforming not only women's roles, but men's as well. We need to understand, and then transform, masculinity as profoundly as feminists have already transformed traditional notions of femininity. And we can't do that without men.

If you walk through the hallways of just about any major university these days, you are bound to encounter a department of gender studies.³⁴ Or gender and sexuality studies. Or something with a vaguely similar name that didn't exist sixty years ago, back when anything related to gender or sexuality was either relegated to biology or not discussed at all.³⁵ As feminism entered the cultural mainstream in the 1970s, though, and young women across the world started streaming into universities that were once reserved for men, growing bands of scholars began to specialize in women's issues: women's history, women's literature, women in media or politics.³⁶ Over time, these disciplines grew larger and more robust, tackling female-focused topics that ranged across an interdisciplinary spectrum.

Beyond academia, meanwhile, feminism itself has gone mainstream – even if, occasionally, under less politically loaded labels like “women's leadership” or “girl power.” There are powerful advocates for what is (sometimes derisively) called “corporate feminism” and adamant, persistent cries for gender pay equity.³⁷ There are well-funded campaigns against female genital mutilation and forced marriages; mainstream energies devoted to increasing women's presence on corporate boards and in the media. Which isn't to say, of course, that the fight for gender equality is anywhere close to complete. But at least we now understand the challenges and constraints that women face. At least we recognize, both individually and as societies, that women's roles are changing, and that change is hard. We have put a name to Betty Friedan's “problem that has no name.” And we have started – slowly, painfully, in frustrating stops and starts – to solve it.

By contrast, we know comparatively little about the issues men face, and about how their identities and roles are changing as a result of both technological and social change. We don't know, because we haven't really probed yet, how men's work can adapt to a world of working women. We don't know how best to reconfigure both home and workplace for a postindustrial, gender-neutral age. These are serious questions and ones that can only be addressed through the prisms of both men's and women's lives. Or to put it more bluntly: we can't achieve gender equality for women without reconfiguring men's roles as well.

Feminism's grand project has been underway now for over a century. Its battles have been legendary and its victories instrumental in transforming many of society's most deeply held beliefs about women's rights, roles, and liberties. But completing the project for gender equality means rewriting the book on men as well. Not just forcing men to comply with women's demands, but freeing them to redefine what manhood means in a world of gender equity.

Some of this rethinking has already begun.³⁸ But, sadly, much of the emerging work on masculinity has been dominated by its angriest fringe: by men who are primarily responding to what they see as feminism's attack on their turf and identity.³⁹ We need to do better than this. To be sure, there will always be disagreements among the champions of each gender, and a wide spectrum of opinion and belief across the intimate landscapes of sex and change and power. Yet, clearly, there must be room in equality's tent to include people of all genders and sexes. Isn't that, in fact, precisely what an intellectual agenda of gender equality demands?

Writing in 1884, Engels predicted that "the necessity of creating real social equality" between men and women "will only be seen in the clear light of day when both possess legally complete equality of rights."⁴⁰ Human equality, in other words, depends upon gender equality, which makes men – whether they like it or not – both participants and victors in the fight for women's rights.

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ENDNOTES

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- ³ As noted in Corydon Ireland, "Locke: More Enlightened Than We Thought," *The Harvard Gazette*, April 30, 2009.
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- ⁶ See Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (Chicago: C. H. Kerr & Company, 1902), 79; and Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (New York: International Publishers, 1972), 51.
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- ⁹ Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, quoted in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), 744.
- ¹⁰ Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, 121–122.
- ¹¹ There is a voluminous literature on Engel's concern (or lack thereof) for women. See, for example, Stephanie Coontz and Peta Henderson, eds., *Women's Work, Men's Property: The Origins of Gender and Class* (London: Verso, 1986); Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989); and

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- ¹⁶ Nancy M. Carter and Harvey M. Wagner, "The Bottom Line: Corporate Performance and Women's Representation on Boards (2004–2008)," Catalyst, March 1, 2011, <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/bottom-line-corporate-performance-and-womens-representation-boards-20042008>; and Julia Dawson, Richard Kersley, and Stefano Natella, "The CS Gender 3000: The Rewards for Change," Credit Suisse, September 2016, <https://glg.it/assets/docs/csri-gender-3000.pdf>.
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- ¹⁸ I have written about this extensively elsewhere. See Debora L. Spar, *The Baby Business: How Money, Science, and Politics Drive the Commerce of Conception* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press 2006); and Debora L. Spar, *The Virgin and the Plow: How Technology Shapes How We Live and Love* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2019).
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- ³² The U.S. Congress passed the Family and Medical Leave Act in 1993, requiring employers to extend unpaid family leave to mothers and fathers of new babies, newly adopted children, and newly placed foster children. See National Partnership for Women & Families, *Guide to the Family and Medical Leave Act*, 8th ed. (Washington, D.C.: National Partnership for Women & Families, 2016), <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/fmla/guide-to-fmla.pdf>. Japan and Sweden similarly revised their policies in 1991 and 1995, respectively.
- ³³ See Sweden, “10 Things that Make Sweden Family-Friendly,” <https://sweden.se/society/10-things-that-make-sweden-family-friendly/>.
- ³⁴ The next few paragraphs borrow heavily from *The Virgin and the Plow*.
- ³⁵ For a history of the development of gender studies, see Cordelia Fine, *Delusions of Gender: How Our Minds, Society, and Neurosexism Create Difference* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010); and Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender, Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).
- ³⁶ While most public universities in the United States had been open to women since their inception, many of the most elite private universities only started admitting women to their undergraduate colleges after 1969. Prior to that point, women who sought to be educated at these schools were directed instead to their “sisters”: all-women’s colleges like Radcliffe, Smith, and Barnard. Similarly, Oxford and Cambridge had begun accepting women as early as 1920, but only to a handful of female colleges.
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Women, Power & Leadership

Nannerl O. Keohane

Many more women provide visible leadership today than ever before. Opening up higher education for women and winning the battle for suffrage brought new opportunities, along with widespread availability of labor-saving devices and the discovery and legalization of reliable, safe methods of birth control. Despite these developments, women ambitious for leadership still face formidable obstacles: primary if not sole responsibility for childcare and homemaking; the lack of family-friendly policies in most workplaces; gender stereotypes perpetuated in popular culture; and in some parts of the world, laws and practices that deny women education or opportunities outside the home. Some observers believe that only a few women want to hold significant, demanding leadership posts; but there is ample evidence on the other side of this debate, some of it documented in this volume. Historic tensions between feminism and power remain to be resolved by creative theorizing and shrewd, strategic activism. We cannot know whether women are “naturally” interested in top leadership posts until they can attain such positions without making personal and family sacrifices radically disproportionate to those faced by men.

One of the most dramatic changes in recent decades has been the increasing prominence of women in positions of leadership. Many more women are providing leadership in government, business, higher education, nonprofit ventures, and other areas of life, in many more countries of the world, than would ever have been true in the past. This essay addresses four aspects of this development.

I will note the kinds of leadership women have routinely provided, and list factors that help explain why this pattern has changed dramatically in the past half century. I will mention some of the obstacles that still block the path for women in leadership. Then I will ask how ambitious women generally are for leadership, and discuss the fraught relationship between feminism and power, before concluding with a brief look at the future that might lie ahead.

As we approach this subject, we need to understand what we mean by “leadership.” I use the following definition: “Leaders define or clarify goals for a group of individuals and bring together the energies of members of that group to pursue those goals.”¹ This conception is deliberately broad, designed to capture various

types of leadership, in various groups, not just the work of leaders who hold the most visible offices in a large society.

A leader can define or clarify goals by issuing a memo or an executive order, an edict or a fatwa or a tweet, by passing a law, barking a command, or presenting an interesting idea in a meeting of colleagues. Leaders can mobilize people's energies in ways that range from subtle, quiet persuasion to the coercive threat or the use of deadly force. Sometimes a charismatic leader such as Martin Luther King Jr. can define goals and mobilize energies through rhetoric and the power of example.

It is also helpful to distinguish leadership from two closely related concepts: *power* and *authority*.

All leaders have some measure of power, in the sense of influencing or determining priorities for other individuals. But leadership cannot be a synonym for holding power. Power is often defined in the straightforward way suggested by political scientist Robert Dahl: "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do."² A bully or an assailant with a gun wields power in this sense, but it would not be appropriate to call such a person a "leader."

Leadership often involves exercising authority with the formal legitimacy of a position in a governmental structure or high office in a large organization. Holding authority in these ways provides clear opportunities for leadership. Yet many men and women we would want to call leaders are not in positions of authority, and not everyone in a formal office provides leadership. As John Gardner, author of several valuable books on leadership, noted, "We have all occasionally encountered top persons who couldn't lead a squad of seven-year-olds to the ice cream counter."³

We can think of leadership as a spectrum, in terms of both visibility and the power the leader wields. On one end of the spectrum, we have the most visible: authoritative leaders like the president of the United States or the prime minister of the United Kingdom, or a dictator such as Hitler or Qaddafi. At the opposite end of the spectrum is casual, low-key leadership found in countless situations every day around the world, leadership that can make a significant difference to the individuals whose lives are touched by it.

Over the centuries, the first kind – the out-in-front, authoritative leadership – has generally been exhibited by men. Some men in positions of great authority, including Nelson Mandela, have chosen a strategy of "leading from behind"; more often, however, top leaders have been quite visible in their exercise of power. Women (as well as some men) have provided casual, low-key leadership behind the scenes. But this pattern has been changing, as more women have taken up opportunities for visible, authoritative leadership.

Across all the centuries of which we have any record, women have been largely absent from positions of formal authority. Such posts, with a few exceptions, were routinely held by men. Women have therefore

lacked opportunities to exercise leadership in the most visible public settings. And as both cause and consequence of this fact, leadership has been closely associated with masculinity. In some parts of the world this assumption is still dominant: even in what we think of as the most advanced countries, there are people who think that men are “natural leaders,” and women are meant to follow them.

Yet despite this stubborn linkage between leadership and maleness, some women in almost every society have proved themselves capable of providing strong, visible leadership. Women exercised formal public authority when dynasty or marriage-lines trumped gender, so that Elizabeth I of England or Catherine the Great of Russia could rule as monarch. There are cultures in which wise women are regularly consulted, either as individuals or as members of the council of the tribe. All-female institutions are especially auspicious for women as leaders, including convents, girls’ schools, and women’s colleges, where women have often held authoritative posts.

Women have led in situations where men are temporarily absent: in wartime when the men are away fighting, or in a community like Nantucket in the eighteenth or nineteenth century, where most of the men were whaling in distant seas for years at a time. Women have provided visible leadership in movements for social betterment, including the prohibition and settlement house campaigns of the late nineteenth century and the battle for women’s suffrage. “First ladies” have leveraged their access to power to promote important causes. The impressive accomplishments of Jane Addams and Eleanor Roosevelt stand as prime examples of female leadership. Women have been leaders in family businesses in many different settings. And countless women across history have provided leadership in education, religious activities, care for the sick and wounded, cultural affairs, and charity for the poor.

So that’s a rough, impressionistic survey of the leadership women have exercised in the past: a very few “out front,” as queens or abbesses or heads of school, with many providing more informal leadership in smaller communities or behind the scenes.

This picture has changed dramatically in the past half-century. Many more women today hold authoritative posts, as prime ministers, heads of universities, CEOs of corporations, presidents of nonprofit organizations, and bishops in Protestant denominations. Why has this happened in the past few decades, rather than sooner, or later, or never?

As we ponder this question, we must also note that the changes have proceeded unevenly. It is still unusual for a woman to be CEO of a major public corporation or the president of a country with direct elections for the head of government, as distinct from parliamentary systems. Women’s leadership in religious organizations depends on the doctrines of the religion or sect and the influences

of the surrounding society on how these doctrines are interpreted. We will look at some of the barriers blocking change in these and other areas.

And finally, are women as ambitious for leadership as men, or are there systematic differences between the two sexes in the appetite for gaining and using power? Can tensions between the core concepts of feminism and the wielding of power help us understand these issues?

In the past half-century, fifty-six women have served as president or prime minister of their countries.⁴ In the United States, women hold office as senators and congresswomen, governors and mayors, cabinet officers and university presidents, heads of foundations and social service agencies, rabbis, generals, and principal investigators. Women have been the CEOs of GM, IBM, Yahoo, and Pepsi-Cola. There are women judges sitting at all levels of the court system, and women leaders in several prominent international organizations.

In the United States, the unprecedented numbers of women candidates in the 2018 midterm elections and the 2019 Democratic presidential primaries are striking examples of women tackling the long-standing identification of leadership with masculinity. One hundred and seventeen women won office in 2018, including ninety-six members of the House of Representatives, twelve senators, and nine governors. Each of these was a record number, compared with any year in the past.⁵ Among Democrats, female candidates were more likely to win than their male counterparts.⁶ Hillary Clinton's candidacy for the presidency was a significant step in splintering, if not yet shattering, one of the hardest "glass ceilings" in the world. And Angela Merkel's deft leadership for Germany and the European Union has provided a model for women in politics worldwide.

We can multiply instances from many different fields, from many different contexts: women today are much more likely to provide visible leadership in major institutions than they have been at any time in history.

Yet why have these changes occurred precisely at this time? I'll suggest half a dozen factors that have made it possible for women to take these significant strides in leadership.

First is the establishment of institutions of higher education for women toward the end of the nineteenth century. Both men and women worked to open male institutions to women and to build schools and colleges specifically for women students. Careers and activities that had been beyond the reach of all women now for the first time became a plausible ambition. Higher education provided a new platform for leadership by women in many fields.

Virginia Woolf's powerful essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929) makes clear how crucial it was for women to be educated in a university setting. College degrees allowed women to enter professions previously barred to them and, as a result, become financially independent of their fathers and husbands and gain a mea-

sure of control over their own lives. Woolf's less well-known but equally powerful treatise from 1939, *Three Guineas*, considers the impact of this development on social institutions and practices, including the relations between women and men.

The second crucial development, beginning in the late nineteenth century, was the invention of labor-saving devices such as washing machines and dryers, dishwashers and vacuum cleaners, followed in the second half of the twentieth century by computers and, later still, electronic assistants capable of ordering goods online to be delivered to your door. The women (or men) in charge of running a household today have far more mechanical and electronic support than ever before.

Ironically, for middle-class Americans today, much of the time freed up by these labor-saving devices has been redirected into "super-parenting": parents are expected to spend much more time educating, protecting, and developing the skills of their children. Yet one might hope that these patterns could be more malleable than the punishing work required of our great-grandmothers to maintain a household.

Third is the success of the long struggle for women's suffrage in many countries early in the twentieth century. Even more than the efforts that opened colleges and universities for women, the suffrage movements were deliberate, well-organized campaigns in which women leaders used their sources of influence strategically to obtain their goals. Enfranchised women could vote for candidates who advocated policies with particular resonance for them, including family- and child-oriented regulations and laws that tackled discriminatory practices in the labor market. Many female citizens voted as their fathers and husbands did; but the possibility of using the ballot box to pursue their priority interests was for the first time available to them. Women could also stand for election and be appointed to government offices. It is important to note, however, that in the United States, the success of the movement was tarnished by the denial of the vote to many Black persons in the South until the Voting Rights Act of 1965.⁷

Fourth factor: the easy availability of reliable methods of birth control. Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* gives a vivid portrayal of women in earlier centuries who were hungry for knowledge or professional activity but bore and tended multiple children, making it impossible to find either the time or the opportunity to be educated. In the early twentieth century, there was for the first time widespread public discussion of the methods and moral dimensions of birth control. The opportunity to engage in family planning by controlling the number and timing of births gave women more freedom to engage in other tasks without worrying about unwanted pregnancies. By 1960, when "the pill" became the birth control device of choice for millions of women, the battle for legal contraception had largely been won in most of the world.

Next is women's liberation, the "second wave" of feminism from the late 1960s through the early 1980s. This multifaceted movement encouraged countless women to reenvision their options and led to important changes in attitudes, behavior, and legal systems. The ideas of the movement were originally developed by women in Western Europe and the United States, but the implications were felt worldwide, and women in many other countries provided examples of feminist ideas and activities.

Among the most important by-products of the feminist movement in the United States was Title IX, passed as part of the Education Amendments Act in 1972. New opportunities for women in athletics and in combatting job discrimination followed the passage of this bill. There is ample evidence that participating in sports strengthens a girl's self-confidence as well as her physical capacity.⁸ And although the Equal Rights Amendment has not passed, the broadened application of the Fourteenth Amendment by federal courts made a significant difference in opening up equal opportunities for women.

A fifth factor contributing to greater scope for women's activities is the change in economic patterns – contemporary capitalism – in which many families feel that they need two incomes to maintain themselves or achieve the lifestyle they covet. This puts more women in the workforce and thus on a potential ladder to leadership, despite remaining biases against women in jobs as varied as construction, teaching economics in a university, representing clients in major trials, and fighting forest fires.

Finally, the change in social expectations that is the cumulative result of all these developments, so that for the first time in history, in many parts of the world, it seems "natural" that a woman might be ambitious for a major leadership post and that with the right combination of talent, experience, and luck, she might actually get it. The more often it happens, the more likely it is that others will be inspired to follow that example, whereas in the past, it would never have occurred to a young girl that she might someday be CEO of a company, head of a major NGO, member of Congress, dean of a cathedral, or president of a university.

If you simply project forward the trajectory we have seen since the 1960s, you might assume that the future will be one in which all top leadership posts finally become gender-neutral, as often held by women as by men. The last bastions will fall, and it will be just as likely that the CEO of a company or the president of the country will be a woman as a man; the same will be true of other forms of leadership.

Sometimes we act as though this is the obvious path ahead, and the only question is how long it will take. On this point, the evidence is discouraging. The Gender Parity Project of the World Economic Forum predicted in 2015 that "if you were born today, you would be 118 years old when the economic gender gap is pre-

dicted to close in 2133.”⁹ The report also notes that although gender parity around the world has dramatically improved in the areas of health and education, “only about 60% of the economic participation gap and only 21% of the political empowerment gap have been closed.”

Yet however glacial the rate of change, we may think: “we’ll get there eventually, because that’s where things are moving.” You might call this path *convergence toward parity* between men and women as leaders. This is the scenario that appears to underlie much of our current thinking, even if we have not articulated it as such.

This scenario, however, ignores some formidable barriers that women ambitious for formal leadership still face. Several familiar images or metaphors have been coined to make this point: “glass ceiling” or “leaky pipeline.” In *Through the Labyrinth*, sociologists Alice Eagly and Linda Carli use the ancient female image of the “labyrinth” to describe the multiple obstacles women face on the path to top leadership. It’s surely *not* a straight path toward eventual convergence.¹⁰

The first and most fundamental obstacle to achieving top leadership in any field is that women in almost all societies still have primary (if not sole) responsibility for childcare and homemaking. Few organizations (or nation-states) have workplace policies that support family-friendly lifestyles, including high-quality, reliable, affordable childcare; flexible work schedules while children are young; and support for anyone caring for a sick child or aging parent. This makes things very hard for working parents, and especially for working mothers.

The unyielding expectation that one must show one’s seriousness about a job by being available to work nine- or ten-hour days, being on-call at any time of the week, and ready to move the family to wherever one’s services are needed is a tremendous obstacle to the advancement of women. Although hours worked are correlated with productivity in some jobs and professions, the situation is far more complicated than such a simple metric would indicate. Nonetheless, this measure is often used for promotion and job opportunities, explicitly or in a more subtle fashion. This expectation cuts heavily against a working mother, or a father who might want to spend significant time with his young children.

One of the most stubborn obstacles in the labyrinth is the lack of “on-ramps”: that is, pathways for women (or men) who have “stopped out” to manage a household and raise their children to rejoin their professions at a level commensurate with their talent and past experience.¹¹ Choices made when one’s children are born are likely to define the available options for a mother for the rest of her life, in terms of professional opportunities and salary level. We need more flexible pathways through the labyrinth so that women (or men) can – if they wish – spend more time with their kids in their earliest years and still get back on the fast track and catch up.

We need to work toward a world in which marriage with children more often involves parenting and homemaking by both partners, so that all the burden does

not fall on the mother. We urgently need more easily available high-quality child-care outside the home so that working parents can be assured that their kids are well cared for while they both work full time. Reaching this goal will require more deliberate action on the part of governments, businesses, and policy-makers to create family-friendly workplaces. Such policies are in place in several European countries but have not so far been implemented in the United States.¹²

Other labyrinthine obstacles include gender stereotypes that keep getting in the way of women being judged simply on their own accomplishment. Women are supposed to be nurturing, but if you are kind and sensitive, somebody will say you are not tough enough to make hard decisions; if you show that you are up to such challenges, you may be described as “shrill” or “bitchy.” This “catch-22” clearly plagued Hillary Rodham Clinton in her first campaign for the presidency and took an even more virulent form in her second campaign, when her opponent in the general election and his supporters regularly shouted profoundly misogynistic comments at her.

Women also have fewer opportunities to be mentored. Many (not all) senior women are happy to mentor other women; but if there aren't any senior women around, and the men aren't sympathetic, you don't get this support. Some senior male professors or corporate leaders do try specifically to advance the careers of young women, but many male bosses find it easier to mentor young men, seeing them as younger versions of themselves; they take them out for a beer or a round of golf, and find it hard to imagine doing this for young women.

The #MeToo movement has brought valuable support to many women unwilling to speak out about sexual assault and harassment in the workplace. This is surely a significant step in removing obstacles to women's advancement. However, this very visible effort has also made some male bosses nervous about reaching out to female subordinates in ways that might be misinterpreted. Men who are already deeply committed to advancing the cause of women do not usually react this way, but those who are less committed may use the #MeToo movement as an excuse not to support women employees, or more often, be genuinely uncertain about which boundaries are inappropriate to cross.

Another insidious obstacle for women on the path to top leadership is popular culture, a formidable force in shaping expectations for young people. Contemporary media rarely suggest a high-powered career as an appropriate ambition for a person of the female sex. The ambitions of girls and women are discouraged when they are taught to be deferential to males and not to compete with them for resources, including power and recognition. Women internalize these expectations, which leads us to question our own abilities. Women are much less likely to put themselves forward for a promotion, a fellowship, or a demanding assignment than men even when they are objectively more qualified in terms of their credentials.¹³

And finally, in terms of obstacles to women's out-front leadership, I have so far been describing the situation in Western democracies. As we know, women who might want to be involved in political activity or provide leadership in any institution face even more formidable obstacles in many parts of the world today. Think of Afghanistan, where the Taliban have denied women education or any opportunities outside the home. For young women in such settings, achieving professional status and leadership is a very distant dream.

For all of these reasons, therefore – expectations of primary responsibility for domestic duties, absence of “on-ramps” for returning to the workforce, gender stereotypes, absence of mentors, the power of popular culture, if not systematic exclusion from political activity – women ambitious for out-front leadership must deal with significant barriers that do not confront their male peers.

Addressing the topic of women's leadership in terms of the obstacles we face makes sense, however, only if significant numbers of women are ambitious for top leadership. In an essay entitled “You've Come a Long Way, Baby – and You've Got Miles to Go,” leadership scholar Barbara Kellerman asks us to consider the possibility that most women really do not *want* such jobs. As she put it, “Work at the top of the greasy pole takes time, saps energy, and is usually all-consuming.” So “maybe the trade-offs high positions entail are ones that many women do not want to make.” Maybe, in other words, there are fewer women senators or CEOs because women “do not want what men have.”¹⁴

If Kellerman is right, as women see what such positions entail, fewer will decide that high-profile leadership is where our ambitions lie, and the numbers of women in such posts will recede from the high-water mark of the late twentieth century toward something more like the world before 1950. Women have proved that we can do it, in terms of high-powered, visible leadership posts. We have seen the promised land, and many women will decide they are happier where most women traditionally have been.

We found something of this kind in a Princeton study on the fortieth anniversary of the university's decision to include women as undergraduates. President Shirley Tilghman charged a Steering Committee on Undergraduate Women's Leadership, which issued its report in March 2011, with determining “whether women undergraduates are realizing their academic potential and seeking opportunities for leadership at the same rate and in the same manner as their male colleagues.”¹⁵ In a nutshell, the answer was no: women were not seeking leadership opportunities at the same rate or in the same manner.

Many recent Princeton alumnae and current female students the committee surveyed or interviewed in 2010 were not interested in holding very visible leadership positions like student government president or editor of the *Princetonian*; they were more comfortable leading behind the scenes, as vice president or trea-

surer. There had not been a female president of the student government or of the first-year class at Princeton in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Other young women told us that they were not interested in the traditional student government organizations and instead wanted to lead in an organization that would focus on something they cared about, working for a cause: the environment, education reform, tutoring at Princeton, or a dance club or an a cappella group.

When we asked young women about this, they told us that they preferred to put their efforts where they could have an impact, in places where they could actually get the work of the organization done, rather than advancing their own résumés or having a big title. In this, they gave different answers than many of their male peers. Their attitudes also differed markedly from those of the alumnae who first made Princeton coeducational forty years before. Those women in the 1970s or 1980s were feisty pioneers determined to prove that they belonged at Princeton against considerable skepticism and opposition. They showed very different aspirations than the female students of the first decade of the twentieth century and occupied all the major leadership posts on campus on a regular basis.

Thus, our committee discovered (to quote our first general finding): “There are differences – subtle but real – between the ways most Princeton female undergraduates and most male undergraduates approach their college years, and in the ways they navigate Princeton when they arrive.” We found statistically significant differences between the ambitions and comfort-levels of undergraduate men and women at Princeton in 2010, in terms of the types of leadership that appealed to them and the ways they thought about power.

If you project forward our Princeton findings, and if Barbara Kellerman and others who share her assumptions are correct, there is no reason to believe that women and men will converge in terms of types of leadership. You might instead predict that these *differential ambitions* will mean that women will always choose and occupy less prominent leadership posts than men, even as they make a significant difference behind the scenes.

However, this conclusion is at odds with the way things are changing today, at Princeton and elsewhere. In addition to hearing from women who preferred low-key posts, our committee learned that women who *did* consider running for an office like president of college government often got the message from their peers (mostly their male peers) that such posts are more appropriately sought by men. As the discussion of women’s leadership intensifies on campus, more women stand for offices they might not have considered relevant before. Quite a few women have held top positions on campus in the past decade.

The Princeton women tell us that mentoring is very important and being encouraged to compete for a post makes a big difference. When someone – an older student, a friend or colleague, a faculty or staff member – says to a young woman: “You really ought to run for this office, you’d be really good at this,” she is much

more likely to decide to be a candidate. There is a good deal of evidence that this is true far beyond the Princeton campus, including the experiences of women who decide to run for political office or state their interest in a top corporate post.¹⁶

Therefore, to those who assert that there is a “natural” difference in motivation that explains the disparities between men and women in leadership, I would respond that we cannot know whether this is true until more women are encouraged to take on positions of leadership. We cannot determine, also, whether women are “naturally” interested in top leadership posts until women everywhere can attain such positions without making personal and family sacrifices radically disproportionate to those faced by men.

In asking what drove the dramatic change in women’s opportunities for leadership over the past half-century, I mentioned as one factor the strength of second-wave feminism. From the point of view of women and leadership, it is ironic that this movement was firmly and explicitly opposed to having any individual speak for and make decisions for other members. The cherished practice was “consciousness-raising,” with a focus on group-enabled insights. The search for consensus and common views was a significant feature of any activity projected by feminist groups in this period.

Second-wave feminism led to some significant advances for women, but the rejection of any out-front leadership meant that the gains were more limited than some members of the movement had envisioned. As was the case with Occupy Wall Street in the twenty-first century, the rejection of visible public leadership constrained the development and implementation of policy, despite the passion and commitment displayed by thousands of participants. The antipathy of second-wave feminists to power, authority, and leadership also means that it is hard to envision a feminist conception of leadership without coming to terms with this legacy.

This tension between “feminism” and “power” long predates the second wave. As women from Mary Wollstonecraft onward have attempted to understand disparities between the situation of women and men, the power held by men – in the state, the economy, and the household – has been a central part of the explanation. Feminists have often identified power with patriarchy, and therefore seen power as antipathetic to their interests as women striving to flourish as independent, creative human beings, rather than as a possible tool for change.

As a result of this age-old linkage of power with patriarchy, one further step in the decades-long progression of women from subordinate positions to positions of authority and leadership is a reconstruction of what it means to provide leadership and hold power. These activities must be detached from their fundamental connection to patriarchy, to make them more compatible with womanhood. There is evidence that this is happening today, as more and more women see pow-

er as relevant for accomplishing their goals and are increasingly willing to be seen wielding it with determination and even relish.

Many women today, in multiple contexts and in different parts of the world, are becoming more comfortable with exercising authority and holding power, and are openly ambitious to do so. These leaders see no need to deny or worry about their femininity, but instead concentrate on gaining power and getting things done. For these women, to a large extent, their sex/gender is not a relevant variable.

However, the other side of the equation – men and other women *becoming comfortable with women in power* and seeing their sex/gender as irrelevant – is lagging behind. Women are ready to take on significant public leadership positions in ways that have never been true before. But what about their potential followers? Large numbers of citizens in many countries and employees in many organizations – men and women – may still be reluctant to accept women as leaders who hold significant power over their lives.

This fluid situation calls both for creative feminist theorizing and for consolidating steps that are already being taken in practice. One of the most effective ways to provide the groundwork for this next stage of development is for more and more women to step forward for leadership posts. As with other profound social changes, including a broader acceptance of homosexuality and support for gay marriage, observing numerous instances of the phenomenon that initially appears “unnatural” can lead, over a remarkably short period of time, to changes in values and beliefs.

People who discover that valued friends, coworkers, or family members are gay are often likely to change their views on homosexuality. The same, one might hypothesize, will be true with women in power, as powerful women become a “normal” part of governments and corporations. The more women we see in positions of power and authority, the more “natural” it will seem for women to hold such posts.

In the final section of the Princeton report, we spoke of a world in which both women and men take on all kinds of leadership posts, out front and behind the scenes, high profile and supportive. This is neither convergence toward parity nor differential ambitions: it is a change in patterns of leadership and in the understanding of what posts are worth striving for, for both women and men.

Some of the Princeton students who argued for the importance of working for a cause saw themselves as carving out a new model of leadership. They rejected the unspoken assumption behind our study that the (only) form of leadership that really counts is being head of student government or president of your class. In doing this, they were reflecting some of the values of second-wave feminism, even when they were not aware of this influence. Believing that a visible leader-

ship post, with a big title and a corner office, is the only type of leadership worth aspiring to is the kind of conception that second-wave feminism was determined to undermine.

Nonetheless, it remains true – and important – that the out-front, high-profile offices in the major organizations and institutions of a society come with exceptional opportunities to influence the course of events and the directions taken by large communities. Even as we value work done behind the scenes and in support of a worthy cause, we should not forget that the leaders who have the most power and the greatest degree of authority in any society are the ones who can make the most substantial difference in the world. Such posts should no longer be disproportionately held by men.

In the conclusion of her feminist classic *The Second Sex*, published in 1949, Simone de Beauvoir reminds us that it is very hard to anticipate clearly things we have not yet seen, and that in trying to do this, we often impoverish the world ahead. As she puts it, “Let us not forget that our lack of imagination always depopulates the future.”¹⁷ In her chapter on “The Independent Woman,” she writes:

The free woman is just being born. . . . Her “worlds of ideas” are not necessarily different from men’s, because she will free herself by assimilating them; to know how singular she will remain and how important these singularities will be, one would have to make some foolhardy predictions. What is beyond doubt is that until now women’s possibilities have been stifled and lost to humanity, and in her and everyone’s interest it is high time she be left to take her own chances.¹⁸

Because several generations of women and men have worked hard since 1949 to make the path easier for women, our possibilities as leaders are no longer “lost to humanity.” But these gifts are still stifled to some extent, and we are still operating with models of leadership designed primarily by and for men. It is surely high time we as women – with support from our partners, our families, our colleagues, from the political system, and from society as a whole – take our own chances.

AUTHOR’S NOTE

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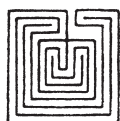
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