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CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER AND POLITICS

Moving to a Comparative Politics of Gender?

The subfield of women and politics research, established two decades ago, has followed a developmental trajectory of empirical research, original feminist theorizing, and new concept formation and evaluation. An early emphasis on women and politics—concern with political behavior, with voting patterns and gender gaps, with political institutional presence and women as political elites—involved crucial foundational work for the subfield. Empirical research focused on finding where women were politically located, what political power they had, and what "politics" meant for women; the availability of survey research data that included a "sex" variable, and the identification of specific female political elites channeled early work into questions that could be answered by—or that permitted the contestation of—these data. The earliest research grappled with comparisons of women and men in politics; subsequent research focused primarily upon women, and upon women across politically relevant differences (in the U.S. case, particularly in regard to race). Feminist theory began to contest, to deconstruct, and to reconstruct gendered concepts of power, of equality and difference, of justice, and of democracy, some of which empirical scholars began to import into their research.

Comparative women and politics scholars began to publish studies of women and politics in countries other than the United States in the mid-1970s and early 1980s. Women and politics comparativists were constrained by the lack of available data (particularly survey research data) and by the difficulties of obtaining funding for cross-national research and for foreign travel. Perhaps more importantly, they were constricted by concepts that were as yet underdeveloped for cross-national comparison. The difficulties of comparative political research generally, in terms of comparative political systems, meanings of democracy, and political stability, were compounded by difficulties with the meanings of politics for women. Where did women do

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politics? In marketplaces? In schools? In communities? In legislatures? The publication of Barbara J. Nelson and Nadja Chowdhury's *Women and Politics Worldwide* (1994) was both the culmination of early comparative women and politics scholarship and the foundation upon which future scholarship could build.

If, however, the early work helped to clarify the possibilities of women and politics research in comparative terms, it is not yet clear that it has provided the tools with which the subfield can move to a comparative politics of gender. The problematics of the concepts of women and men (in short, a variable of "sex") diminish in comparison to the problematics of a cross-national concept of gender.

The inauguration of *Politics & Gender* signals an initiative in the subfield to move to a gendered analysis of politics, already established perhaps more clearly in feminist theory and in the gendered analysis of international relations. Is this shift possible for comparative politics? What analytical advantages/leverage would a comparative politics of gender provide that women and politics in comparative perspective does not? What do we mean by a comparative politics of gender?

We invited several well-known comparative political scientists to write to these specific questions. Louise Chappell, Laurel Weldon, and Aili Mari Tripp responded by writing the following three essays, staking out positions on the comparative politics of gender and institutions, on comparative gendered intersectional analytical strategies, and on the likelihood of disciplinary transformations regarding the regendering of comparative politics. We envision these essays as foundational for the ambitious and necessary project of articulating and establishing what we assert as a comparative politics of gender.

Comparing Political Institutions: Revealing the Gendered "Logic of Appropriateness"

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Why develop a comparative politics of gender? As the critical perspectives in this section demonstrate, there are many answers to this question. I would like to focus here on two reasons: first, for gaining a deeper understanding of the operations of political institutions, and second, for explaining the relationship between these institutions and social actors, including those pursuing a gender equality agenda. To be specific, this essay argues not just for a comparative politics of gender but for a *comparative politics of gender and institutions*. The discussion focuses on the possibility of using neo-institutionalist theory, especially in relation to its normative and dynamic understanding of institutions, to gain a deeper understanding of the way that gender shapes political institutions and also, through interaction with social actors, including feminists, the way gender norms can be disrupted to open new spaces for these actors.

Despite the "normative turn" in institutional comparative theory, the mainstream literature has given very little attention to the way in which the norms and assumptions of political institutions are gendered. In this literature, little reference is made to the findings in foundational feminist research of the way that gender shapes political institutions (see, for instance, Acker 1992; Savage and Witz 1992; Stivers 1993). An objective of a comprehensive comparative research agenda on gender and institutions is to "gender" these mainstream debates: to develop a more nuanced understanding of the "logic of appropriateness" underpinning political institutions. Such an understanding will contribute not only to knowledge about the internal operation and effect of institutions but also about how institutional gender patterns shape external social relations.

A comparative politics of gender and institutions is important for understanding institutions qua institutions. However, it could also provide an additional tool for studying the engagement of gender equality activists, including women's movement actors, with political institutions. An understanding of the operation of gender within institutions across time and place can be employed as an additional independent variable to test the relationship between feminists and the state. Further, exploring the

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way gender is imprinted upon and embedded within institutions helps in the assessment of the political opportunities and constraints facing feminist actors: It can assist in determining when and which institutions will be more open (or closed) to gender equality demands. A comparative politics of gender and institutions does not seek to replace comparative studies of women's movements and politics. There exist many excellent examples of such work (for detailed summaries, see Beckwith 2000; RNGS 2005) that remind us that women remain an important political category—especially inasmuch as they continue to suffer discrimination and lower levels of representation because of their sex (see Vickers 2006). Rather, it aims to develop clearer explanations about institutional gender processes and outcomes, at the same time offering strategic pointers to feminist activists looking for the most advantageous settings in which to pursue their claims.

Those interested in working toward a comparative politics of gender and institutions need to be alert to the methodological issues confronting us. We would do well to learn from (and indeed draw on the data produced by) the Research Network on Gender Politics and the State (RNGS). In devising its ambitious research project—the study of women's policy agencies in the democratization process in 16 postindustrialized countries—the network has been forced to think carefully about case selection and how to conceptualize and measure the concept of women's movements and feminism (see RNGS 2005).

To pick up on the issue of conceptualization, it is necessary for a comparative study of gender and institutions to commence with a clear definition of gender. Recent contributors to *Politics & Gender* (2005) have made important contributions in this regard. Karen Beckwith's division between gender as a category, on the one hand, and gender as a process, on the other, is particularly useful. For the purposes of the following discussion, the notion of gender as a *process* is especially appropriate. For Beckwith, "gender as a process is manifested as the differential effects of apparently gender-neutral structures and policies upon women and men, and upon masculine and/or feminine actors." It also suggests "not only that institutions and politics are gendered but also that they *can be* gendered; that is, that activist feminists . . . can work to instate practices and rules that recast the gendered nature of the political" (2005, 132–33). The following discussion uses this two-pronged concept—of gender shaping and being shaped by institutions and actors—in considering the ways in which the study of the intersection between gender and political institutions might be advanced.

Comparative Institutions and Gender

Throughout the late 1980s and into the 1990s, institutionalism re-emerged in response to dominant behaviorist approaches to politics with new and interesting concepts with which to compare political developments, policies, and interest formation across states (see Hall 1986; Peters 1999; Skocpol 1985; Steinmo, Thelen, and Longstreth 1992). Neo-institutionalism differs from earlier institutional approaches in a number of respects but is most relevant to the discussion here, in terms of emphasizing the *normative* and *dynamic* characteristics of institutions (see Thelen and Steinmo 1992). Although the concept of gender is left unexamined in this literature, these two aspects of the theory are nevertheless useful in opening up new avenues for exploring its operation in ways that can contribute to a comparative gender analysis of institutions.

Gender and Institutional Norms

One of the key features of neo-institutionalism is the emphasis on the centrality of norms in influencing the nature of institutions (Thelen and Steinmo 1992; Peters 1999). This perspective is well described in the work of James March and Johan Olsen (1989, 161), who view political institutions as

> collections of interrelated rules and routines that define appropriate actions in terms of relations between roles and situations. . . . When individuals enter an institution, they try to discover, and are taught, the rules. When they encounter a new situation, they try to associate it with a situation for which rules already exist. Through rules and a logic of appropriateness, political institutions realize both order, stability and predictability, on the one hand, and flexibility and adaptiveness, on the other.

A logic of appropriateness suggests that institutions constrain certain types of behavior while encouraging others. Although this logic is not impermeable, it is difficult to unsettle as it is perpetuated by institutional actors who "embody and reflect existing norms and beliefs" (McAdam and Scott 2005, 15) and who seek to maintain the rules.

There has been a plethora of comparative research into the role played by institutional norms in shaping political and policy outcomes in areas that include the economy, health, transport, and welfare, among others (for example, see Davis et al. 2005; Steinmo et al. 1992). However, the mainstream literature has given surprisingly little attention to the gen-

dered underpinnings of many of these norms. What this literature has failed to recognize is that institutional norms prescribe (as well as proscribe) "acceptable" masculine and feminine forms of behavior, rules, and values for men and women within institutions. Moreover, political institutions also produce outcomes—polices, legislation, rulings—that are shaped by gender norms: outcomes which, in turn, help to re/produce broader social and political gender expectations. In other words, what the mainstream institutional literature has failed to do is develop an account of the operation of gender processes (Beckwith 2005, 132–33) within and through political institutions.

While mainstream studies of institutions have failed to take gender into account, feminist scholars have been alert to its importance (Acker 1992; Savage and Witz 1992; Stivers 1993). In a review of research on gender and institutions, Joni Lovenduski (1998, 348) points to four areas of knowledge essential to the study of gender and institutions. It is necessary to have an awareness that 1) everyone in an institution has a sex and performs gender; 2) the experience of individuals in institutions varies by both sex and gender; 3) sex and gender interact with other components of identity—for example, race, ethnicity—that also have implications for models of femininity and masculinity; and 4) institutions have distinctively gendered cultures and are involved in processes of producing and reproducing gender. This last point, in particular, links to the importance of uncovering the gendered nature of the logic of appropriateness within institutions across time and place. Space does not permit a thorough treatment of the operation of this logic across a range of political institutions. Nevertheless, a brief exploration of the operation of gender norms in the bureaucratic sphere will help to illustrate the point.

In many Western liberal states, but especially those with Westminster parliamentary systems such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, the bureaucracy has developed, over time, a strong underlying commitment to the norm of bureaucratic neutrality. As it is applied in Westminster systems, neutrality creates a set of "rules" for public servants that stipulates what they may and may not do. Public servants understand that they may not engage in partisan political activities or express their personal views on government policies or administration. It is made equally clear that their principal duty is to execute policy decisions loyally and impartially, irrespective of the party in power and regardless of their personal opinions (Kernaghan 1985).

Though largely unrecognized by nonfeminist scholars, the norm of neutrality is profoundly gendered. It suggests that "administrators can

rise above their own beliefs and the political fray to fix their sights on the public interest, broadly conceived" (Stivers 1993, 38) and that there is a set of universal norms that can be used as a reliable prism through which to view the world. The emphasis on the importance of individuals being able to detach themselves from situations and act with "dispassionate objectivity" reflects an emphasis on traditional masculine traits (Stivers 1993, 40). Meanwhile, values such as emotion, sensibility, or passion, in other words those that have been identified as "feminine" values, are regarded as excessive and laden with bias (Stivers 1993, 41).

Understanding the gender foundations of this norm is important for anyone interested in the operations of state bureaucracies. It demonstrates that despite their neutral appearance, embedded assumptions about appropriate forms of behavior in the public service are, in fact, masculine. Understanding the operation of gender through norms such as neutrality is also helpful for social movement actors, especially feminist activists who seek to use state institutions—including the bureaucracy—to advance their equality claims. The gender assumptions underlying bureaucratic neutrality would suggest that the stronger the enforcement of these norms, the less chance there is for feminists to work from within or without the bureaucracy to advance what could only be considered under these conditions as a "biased" policy position of gender equality. Comparative institutional research across three Westminster-style bureaucracies—in Australia, Canada, and the UK—bears out this assumption.

Historically, the norm of neutrality has always been in operation within the Australian public sector, but it has been weakened by a tolerance for advocates of sectional interests to work within the bureaucracy to advance their aims. Throughout the twentieth century, internal advocacy was especially prominent among producer and industry groups, including trade unions, manufacturers, and farmers, who encouraged government to establish public sector bodies—described as "organs of syndical satisfaction" (Miller 1964, 65)—and staff them with members of the "outsider" groups who could then push their policy agenda from within. Australian feminists were profoundly influenced by the tradition of sectional interests looking toward the administrative arm of the state, and the state responding by providing them with institutional structures through which they could advance their claims. Most importantly, it encouraged feminists to look to this arena to have their demands met. Feminists, especially in the period 1975–95, successfully agitated for state and federal governments to create women's policy agencies in which they could work

as "femocrats": senior women's policy officers whose feminism was a criterion for the job. Once "inside," femocrats were able to develop policies to address women's inequality in areas that include the budget, child care, pensions, superannuation, and violence against women (see Chappell 2002a; Eisenstein 1996; Sawer 1990).

By contrast, in both Canada and the United Kingdom, feminists wanting to engage with the civil service have been confronted with the operation of stronger neutrality norms. Compared to Canberra, Ottawa and Whitehall have remained wedded to notions of anonymity and nonpartisan neutrality. The continuing potency of neutrality has represented a major obstacle to a "femocrat project" in both countries. The prejudice against internal "feminist agitators" in Ottawa has been noted by former Canadian feminist bureaucrats. They talk of initiatives being stonewalled and trivialized, treated with indifference and impatience by senior managers, or met with a "wilful misunderstanding" (Findlay 1987). According to Linda Geller-Schwartz, in Canada, "the idea that civil servants should adopt the role of internal lobbyists for women as a definable group was an anathema" (1995, 49). Similarly in the UK, the ongoing strength of neutrality has made it difficult for feminists to operate within the bureaucracy for fear that they were "biased." For those who do, it is difficult to form networks with external feminist groups. According to staff in the UK Women's Unit, women committed to feminist principles working in the unit tend to keep their views to themselves. Moreover, any sign of advocacy on behalf of "women" has not been welcome (Chappell 2002b).

Bureaucratic neutrality is but one gendered institutional norm that shapes the logic of appropriateness for actors engaging with and through the bureaucracy. Other norms within Westminster-style bureaucracies, such as merit and career service, also operate along masculinist lines. The meritorious ideal public servant is a rational, detached, calculating individual, while the desired attributes for appointment to the career service include a full-time unbroken work record, as well as the assumption of full-time domestic support (Burton 1991, 3). The assumptions underpinning both concepts are highly gendered. While women are considered less deserving of promotion because of their purported irrational nature, their historic absence at senior levels of the bureaucracy has had a further gendering effect: Without women's input, policy decisions that are made at the highest level have tended to disregard (and thereby reinforce) the unequal political, economic, and social position of the two sexes, as well as make stereotypical assumptions about male and female behavior (on this point, also see Acker 1992, 567).

A gendered logic of appropriateness is not confined to the bureaucracy. In recent years, feminist scholars also working within a Western liberal comparative framework have pointed to the gendered normative basis of other political institutions, including legislatures (Childs 2001; Hawkesworth 2003; Phillips 1998), federal structures (Banaszak 1996; Chappell 2002a; Vickers 1994), and constitutional and legal systems (Dobrowolsky and Hart 2003). When combined, these analyses show that gender norms are an important variable to consider when analyzing the political opportunity structures facing social actors. At the same time, they also warn against making assumptions about the operation of gender norms, even within similar institutions. As Lovenduski (1998, 350) points out: "The successful application of the concept of gender to the investigation of political institutions must acknowledge not only the complexity of gender but also the nature of the particular institution and the kinds of masculinities and femininities that are performed." This point is borne out in my own research (Chappell 2002a; 2002b) on feminist engagement with a range of institutions and political structures (the bureaucracy, the legal system, parliament, and federalism) in two comparable states (Australia and Canada). This research highlights the fact that assumptions about appropriate masculine and feminine behavior can vary both between different institutions within a single state (e.g., the parliament, the courts, and the bureaucracy of Australia) and between similar institutions across states (e.g., constitutional and legal structures in Canada and Australia).

These differences are important for shaping political opportunities and, as a consequence, the strategic choices of feminists in each country. Whereas Canadian feminists have found it fruitful to make use of constitutional arrangements and develop litigation strategies to pursue equality claims, their Australian counterparts have (at least until recently) found the bureaucracy more open and have used a strategy of bureaucratic "entrism." The research undertaken to date on the gendered logic of appropriateness suggests that many questions remain about the way the process operates within institutions in similar and different polities, as well as the ways in which this gendering process shapes the available political opportunity structure. These are important questions to be addressed through future comparative politics of gender and institutions research.

Gender and Institutional Dynamism

If institutions are gendered, then what is the point of encouraging social actors, especially feminists who aim to challenge the gender status

quo, to engage with them? The answer lies in another aspect of neo-institutionalism: *institutional dynamism*. This notion relates to the proposition that although institutions tend toward stability and "path dependency," they are not fixed, permanent, or completely stable entities (see Thelen and Steinmo 1992, 16–17). This does not contradict the argument made above about the existence of a logic of appropriateness within political institutions, but qualifies it to suggest that what is considered appropriate can alter over time (Katzenstein 1998, 35). Crises or shocks, such as a natural disaster, a terrorist attack, or an economic recession, can induce an acceptance of different or new norms. But more commonly, institutional change comes about through an incremental or evolutionary process (Campbell 2005, 58). As John Kingdon (2003), among others, has argued, such a process is often driven by "policy entrepreneurs" or innovators working from within or outside institutions to change the rules.

A comparative politics of gender and institutions can help in the understanding of normative institutional change through analyzing the engagement of "gender equity entrepreneurs" within institutions. Already, feminist scholars have begun to highlight examples of feminist agency in relation to institutions. Mary Fainsod Katzenstein's excellent comparison of feminists working through the Catholic Church and the military in the United States to bring about equality is a case in point. As she argues:

> "Less lawbreaking than norm-breaking, these feminists have challenged, discomforted, and provoked, unleashing a wholesale disturbance of long-settled assumptions, norms and practices" (1998, 7).

Katzenstein's analysis is similar to the aforementioned work on Australian femocrats, which also highlights the ability of gender equality activists to disrupt existing norms once they avail themselves of the opportunity to work from within.

Equally, as Joyce Gelb's (2003) comparison between the United States and Japan demonstrates, and the chapters in the book by Lee Ann Banaszak, Karen Beckwith, and Dieter Rucht (2003) on women's movements in Western Europe and North America show, feminist actors working outside of institutions have, under certain conditions, also enjoyed a degree of agency, enabling them to unsettle expectations about the role of men and women within institutions and to bring about shifts in policy, as well as legislative and legal outcomes. A good example of this dynamic can be found in the case of feminists working within the Canadian legal and constitutional system. By means of lobbying tactics, feminists were able to influence the direction of debates over the

Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and eventually ensured the entrenchment of sex-based equality clauses within it (see Dobrowolsky 2003). Having achieved this much, they were then able to engage in Charter litigation and introduce a gender perspective to Charter jurisprudence (see Chappell 2002a).

Accepting the dynamism of political institutions and the ability for activists to "reinscribe" their gender foundations is not to suggest that feminists will always be successful or are on an unswerving trajectory toward "progress" (however that may be interpreted). Positive advances can only come about at those times when there is an alignment of political opportunities—for instance, a responsive government, a "liberal" court, and a social reform–focused public service—but as activists know too well, such alignments are not only rare but rarely permanent. The election of a different government, the appointment of new members of the judiciary, or changes in personnel in the public sector can lead to a retreat to an earlier logic of appropriateness or the creation of a new but equally restrictive one from the point of view of relaxing gender codes. For instance, as Australian femocrats have discovered in recent years, the election of a conservative federal government opposed to special interest groups, and with little regard for women's rights, has led to the downgrading of their institutional status and position such that—for those willing to remain in the bureaucracy—their ability to shape policy is negligible (see Sawer 2004).

These studies of insider and outsider activism demonstrate that the interaction between activists and institutions not only operates in a top-down direction (although this can occur) but also as a two-way street: that the relationship can be constitutive. In engaging with institutions, feminists have had some success in being able to "regender" them and thereby create openings for further engagement. However, a note of caution should be sounded here as there is no guarantee that shifts within institutions are ever permanent. The task, then, for those undertaking a comparative politics of gender and institutions is to clarify the conditions under which gender norms can be disrupted and to enable equality seekers to target when and where there are institutions that are most likely to be open to their demands.

The usefulness of neo-institutionalist theory for understanding gender and institutions need not be confined only to the level of the nation-state. International institutions also have their own logic of appropriateness that is shaped by and shapes gender norms. Scholars have already begun to undertake research that reveals this logic. For example,

studies of the United Nations demonstrate that despite a commitment to the principle of gender equality, most UN bodies, including human rights treaty bodies, have failed to make gender a policy priority (see Freeman 1999; Gallagher 1997). Efforts to introduce notions of gender equality and gender mainstreaming into the treaty bodies have been met with, at best, misunderstanding and a lack of support and, at worst, outright hostility (Charlesworth 2005). As a result, transnational women's rights activists have found it difficult to engage with or influence these bodies. On the other hand, these activists have found other UN arenas, especially the series of international world conferences on women, including the 1995 Beijing Conference, much more dynamic and open to their demands (Friedman 2003). It is no surprise then that the locus of transnational women's rights lobbying in the past 20 years has been these conferences, rather than the committee overseeing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) or other such treaty bodies. The new International Criminal Court, with its commitment to principles of gender justice, has also proven to be a useful target for women's rights activism (Chappell 2006). Whether it represents a new shift toward greater sensitivity regarding gender concerns in international institutions will need to be carefully monitored.

Understanding the logic of appropriateness within institutions of global governance is important for explaining the choice of strategies used by transnational actors. It is also necessary for understanding the operation of domestic-level institutions. Diffused from the international level to the nation-state, new norms can challenge and replace existing ones within institutions. For these reasons, it is essential to look both across states and to the suprastate level in order to develop a comprehensive politics of gender and institutions.

Research that reveals the gendered logic of appropriateness within political institutions has already begun. Drawing on the neo-institutionalist approach to institutions, it can go further still. What we know already is that the process of gender is complex, playing out differently in similar institutions in different polities and different institutions within the same polity. A future comparative politics and gender research agenda can build on this knowledge both through further cross-national studies and by linking our knowledge of domestic institutions to those in the international arena. In doing so, we give back to the study of institutions a more comprehensive and complete understanding of their dynamic nature, as well as of their normative foundations.

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The Structure of Intersectionality: A Comparative Politics of Gender

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> *Feminists do not argue that it means the same to women to be on the bottom in a feudal regime, a capitalist regime, and a socialist regime; the commonality argued is that, despite real changes, bottom is bottom.*
>
> —Catharine MacKinnon (1982)

> *[A]s long as feminists, like all theorists in the dominant culture, continue to search for gender and racial essences, black women will never be anything more than a crossroads between two kinds of domination, or at the bottom of a hierarchy of oppression; we will always be required to choose pieces of ourselves to present as wholeness.*
>
> —Angela P. Harris (1990)

> *Each oppressed group in the United States is positioned in a particular and distinct relationship to white men, and each form of subordination is shaped by the relational position. Men of Color and white men maintain power over women, particularly within their respective groups. However, gender alone does not determine either a superordinate or subordinate position.*
>
> —Aida Hurtado (1989)

> *Feminist theory—even the work of white, upper-class, heterosexual women—is not located at the* center *of cultural power. The axes whose intersections form the cultural locations of feminist authors give some of us positions of privilege, certainly, but* all *women,* as *women, also occupy subordinate positions, positions in which they feel ignored or denigrated.*
>
> —Susan Bordo (1993)

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A comparative analysis of gender relations incorporates and goes beyond a "women and politics" approach by focusing on the organization of political life, illuminating the *systematic* way that social norms, laws, practices, and institutions advantage certain groups and forms of life and disadvantage others. In order to illuminate the various ways that women and men are advantaged and disadvantaged *as women and men*, gender analysis must incorporate analysis of race, class, sexuality, and other axes of disadvantage, and explore interactions among them. These axes are defined differently in different national contexts, and so examining variation across national borders illuminates the variety of social arrangements that are consistent with human biology: This type of analysis thereby denaturalizes and politicizes gender, racial/ethnic, and class relations (among others). The wide variety of modes and degrees of resistance to these forms of social organization, and success in challenging them, illuminate and inspire new strategies of resistance for people in other countries.

Gender Structures and Women and Politics

A women and politics approach has generally been understood to mean a recovering of women's perspectives and experiences.[1] Such perspectives and experiences are generally neglected in comparative political science, even now when excellent scholarship on women abounds (Mazur 2003). Gender analysis includes—and even requires—efforts to identify and revalue women's political activity, but it goes beyond such efforts in that it places them in a broader social context. Gender relations, by definition, shape the lives of women *and* men. Conversely, the cumulation of everyday actions of women and men of all races and classes constitutes social structures of gender.[2] The pervasive character of gender norms and roles is what makes gender such a valuable category of political analysis. Any complete analysis of gender relations, then, must consider the many different ways that gender norms and practices shape and are shaped by the actions of all people, including women and men of all races and classes. So studying gender is not just about studying

1. For further discussion of a women and politics approach, see Beckwith (2005).

2. Social theorists have made important advances in theorizing the relationship between agents and structures. See, for example, Giddens (1982) and Wendt (2000). For a discussion of issues of agency and structure in welfare state research, see Misra and Akins (1998).

or revaluing women and the feminine. It is also about, for example, understanding how ideas about masculinity shape male behavior, about how gender norms construct relations between and within the sexes, and how our institutions and social practices privilege or value forms of behavior associated with privileged groups of men over forms of behavior associated with women, or people of color, or the poor.

Gender Structure and Structural Inequalities among Women

Some have argued that a focus on gender unmodified is obsolete in the context of the burgeoning theoretical critiques and empirical research documenting differences among women.[3] In some cases, extant research shows, women acting *as women* dominate or exclude other women; women have conflicting interests as women; women do not mutually identify as women.[4] How can we talk about gender when women do not share interests or identities? What is this thing that women have in common called "gender" if not an interest or an identity? This problem seems especially complex for comparative political research. If women in *one* national context do not share interests or identities, what grounds is there for comparing women *across* national borders? Are women "beyond compare" (Beckwith 2000; see also Butler 1990; Lugones 1994; Spelman 1988)?

In reviewing comparative literature on women and the welfare state, Joy Misra and Frances Akins (1998, 260) argue that a focus on gender relations "may privilege the structural constraints facing women and undermine important insights about *women's* agency." Although gender as a structure does form an important part of the context for women's action, they argue, researchers ought to focus more on the agency of diverse groups of women in local contexts, and devote less attention to generalizations about the impact of gender structures. So doing, they contend, will show "that structure is a complex phenomenon that has had varying effects on women and their agency based on a variety of statuses, including class and race/ethnicity" (p. 260).

This argument assumes that generalizations about gender structures imply an assumption of a shared experience or impact of particular institutions (say, the state, or marriage) on women. Exploring difference

3. For examples, see Collins 1990; Hurtado 1989; Moi 2001; Nicholson 1999; Spelman 1988.
4. See, for example, Collins 1990; Crenshaw 1993; Hooks 1981, 2000; Hurtado 1989; Roth 2004.

here is equated with exploring agency, while structure is equated with constraint and homogeneity. But arguing that we need to retain gender as a structure suggests nothing about the specific effects of that structure on particular groups of women (Young 2005; see also Young 1994). Indeed, much comparative analysis of gender delineates the ways that gender norms and practices vary across groups of women and men as well as across nations, regions, generations, and cultural groups (Duncan 1995, 1996; Inglehart and Norris 2003; Lewis 1993). Moreover, the critique of gender analysis advanced by many women of color focuses on *differences in structural position*, not just differences in identity or agency (Collins 1990; Crenshaw 1991; Hurtado 1989).

Analyzing gender relations, or social structures more generally, means focusing on social relations between and among groups of women and groups of men, and on the way the broader social context constrains and enables individual agents (Htun 2005; Hurtado 1989; Young 2005, 2000). Focusing *only* on mobilization by specific race-class-gender groups of women does not help us understand how these groups of women are positioned vis-à-vis other groups of women and men by social norms, practices, and institutions around which they may or may not be mobilized (Hurtado 1989). The focus on agency does not solve the fundamental conceptual problem of whether women or subgroups of women can be compared across national boundaries, or what we might expect to gain from such a comparison.

Gender as a Category of Analysis: The Analysis of Gender Structures

Some scholars have responded to this problem by suggesting that we think of gender as a category of analysis (Beckwith, 2000; 2005; Hawkesworth, 2005). But the leverage gained from considering gender as a category of analysis stems from the importance of gender in everyday life—the importance of gender structures, symbols, and identities (Hawkesworth 2005). If gender as a social structure has no independent effects, then it is hard to see what justifies an analytic focus on gender as a category, as opposed to, say, gender-race, or gender-race-class. Indeed, this is the force of some current critiques of feminist scholarship that uses gender *simpliciter* as a category: Some of these scholars argue that gender as an analytic category has no meaning apart from race, class, and other axes of disadvantage (and that these other categories similarly

have no autonomous effects) (Brewer 1999; Burnham 2001; Collins 1990; Ferber 1998; Harris 1990).

Iris Marion Young (2005) has argued that we ought to retain the category of gender for political analysis, that focusing on gender as a social structure abstracts from the complex experience of particular individuals and focuses on the macropolitics of social organization. Young (2005, 21) argues that "social groups defined by caste, class, race, age, ethnicity, and, of course gender name subjective identities less than axes of structural inequality. They name structural positions whose occupants are privileged or disadvantaged in relation to one another due to the adherence of actors to institutional rules and norms and the pursuit of their interests and goals within institutions." Taking this approach has the advantage, Young argues, that "we no longer need to ascribe a single or shared gender identity to men and women" (p. 22). While attributing a shared gender identity to women is problematic, seeing "women" as sharing a structurally defined social position is not: "Thus, membership in the group called 'women' is the product of a loose configuration of different structural factors" (p. 21). Following Young, Mala Htun (2005) explicitly distinguishes between structure and identity, arguing that scholars ought to focus on large-scale social structures and processes.

Young (2005) is right to point out that social structures are more than identities, and that gender organizes society systematically to disadvantage women. We need a structural account of politics because we need to be able to criticize social structures, she argues. Moreover, I agree that such macrolevel analysis need not imply shared identities across gender, race, or class groups.

But this observation does not obviate thinking about how to theorize the interaction of different axes of structural inequality (Wright 1997). Indeed, theorists of intersectionality insist that we cannot understand the ways that women are disadvantaged as women nor the ways that people of color are oppressed *unless we examine the ways these structures interact*. Specifically, they claim that certain aspects of social inequality, certain social problems and injustices, will not be visible as long as we focus on gender, race and class separately (Collins 1990; Crenshaw 1991; Harris 1990; Hurtado 1989; Roth 2004). It is not often recognized that structural analysis is *required* by the idea of intersectionality: It is the intersection of social *structures*, not identities, to which the concept refers. We cannot conceptualize "interstices" unless we have a concept of the structures that intersect to create these points of interaction.

Feminist scholars of color have argued convincingly that an account that focuses only on gender will not be able to provide a full reckoning of the ways that women are disadvantaged: In some ways, women of color are disadvantaged as *women* of color; poor women are disadvantaged as poor *women*. But these marks of the female condition are nevertheless race or class specific—they are not shared by all women, and may not even be visible unless we focus on specific race-class-gender groups. Moreover, these group-specific experiences reveal aspects of gender structure that are important for understanding the overall social context (Collins 1990, 1998; Crenshaw 1991; Harris 1990; Hooks 1981, 2000; Hurtado 1989). If gender as a principle of social organization cannot be fully understood without an examination of the interaction between social structures, and if women are structurally disadvantaged *as women* in class- and race-specific ways, then a structural approach to gender analysis requires some account of this structural interaction. The problem remains, then, of how to conceptualize and analyze the interaction between these different structures.

The Structure of Intersectionality: Two Approaches

Scholars of intersectionality point to the limits of "monism" (or a focus on one structure); argue that social structures of race, class, and gender mutually modify one another; and push for scholarship on women "at the interstices" as a way of understanding how these social structures interact (Burnham 2001; Collins 1990, 1998; Crenshaw 1991; Harris 1990; Roth 2004). But a variety of possible relations between axes of domination are consistent with these ideas. In other words, we could theoretically specify intersectional relationships among gender, race, and class structures in a number of different ways.

For example, as noted, one group of scholars seems to understand the idea of intersectionality as implying that systems of gender, race, and class have *no autonomous effects* (e.g., Brewer 1999; Ferber 1998; Harris 1990). In other words, we really have one social structure called gender-race-class-ability-ethnicity-sexuality, and people occupy one social position as defined by these categories. On this view, it would be nonsensical to suggest that capitalism sometimes reinforces and sometimes undermines gender or race hierarchies (Lipton 1988), that race is a more salient division than class in the United States while the reverse is true in Europe (Wacquant 1995), or that gender is more important than class in

explaining some features of women's work (Hartmann 1994; Wright 1997). Making such claims requires the existence of identifiably separate dynamics for each of these axes. Precluding the possibility of autonomous effects assumes that systems of race, class, and gender *always* work together seamlessly as a single system, and never have any significant independent effects. This idea that all effects of gender-race-class systems are intersectional effects—that there are no autonomous effects of these axes—I will call, for purpose of discussion, the *intersectionality-only* model of social structural interaction.

There are other ways of thinking about how systems of gender, race, and class interact that are consistent with the core of the concept of intersectionality. For example, we might think of gender, race, and class as having some independent effects *and* some intersectional effects. Or we might think of gender and race as being mutually reinforcing, while class undermines these systems. Or we might think of all three systems as being mutually reinforcing but analytically separable, and also having some intersectional effects.

Let me try to illustrate by means of an example. One might think of social structures as light shining through multiple layers of colored transparencies onto a patchwork quilt: The color and play of the light shining through depends on the constitution of each layer, but there is no light that shines through just one layer. And the effect of the light will vary, depending on the patch of quilt it hits. So long as the transparencies map perfectly onto one another, a description of the light shining through just one layer of transparency (say, red, green, or purple) would not capture how the light actually falls on any part of the quilt. And the light that shines through will be one color or consistency, although it will fall on different patches differently. The effects are not patches of green *beside* patches of red *beside* patches of purple. The effect is just brown shadows: The transparencies combine to fall on every part of the quilt together. Each slide always modifies the effect of the others, and none has an independent effect. Looking at light shining through just the red slide, or just green, or just purple, will not show us how they will combine. Nor does the light from one slide affect some parts of the quilt and not others. The same color of light falls on all patches. This is the intersectionality-only version of how gender-race-and class interact.

Alternatively, the colored slides could be overlapping, but not map perfectly onto each other. This would suggest that some areas would be just green, just red, or just purple, while other areas would be brown (as light filtered through all three slides). In order to capture the play of

light over the quilt, we would want to describe the areas of green, red, and purple, as well as the areas of brown. Indeed, it might even help us to notice the green and red and purple areas, even if most of the quilt is covered in brown-colored shadows, because it might help us to understand that the light that falls on the brown areas is filtered through three slides, not one single slide. In other words, each social structure could have both autonomous and combined effects. Finding that some combined effects (areas patterned brown) cannot be described solely by looking at one element of its composition (say, red) does not preclude the possibility that other areas *are* just red or green or purple. So finding that gender, race, and class *sometimes* combine to create effects that are unique to specific gender-race-class groups does not mean that *every* effect of social structures is unique to such groups. Finding intersectionality in some effects does not necessarily imply intersectionality in all effects.

Let me also illustrate this point using a formalization common in quantitative analysis. Sometimes we show additive effects of particular factors using a common formula for regression analysis, where some effect of interest (Y) is produced by a combination of factors (x_1, x_2, $x_3 \ldots$), coefficients that determine the size of the effect of each variable (b_1, b_2, b_3), a constant (c), and some error term (e):

$$Y = a + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + c + e$$

Say that the effect (Y) was the degree of freedom or autonomy granted to citizens in a given society. Here, the term x_1 could represent the effects of gender and x_2 the effects of race. This would be the way to model these effects as being separable from each other and combining in additive ways: gender *plus* race. We might think of this as a sort of "double burden" or "double jeopardy" conceptualization of the interaction among gender, race, and class: Each dimension of disadvantage creates some distinct advantages and disadvantages that combine by adding onto one another.

Sometimes factors combine in mutually reinforcing ways, so that they *magnify* each other's effects. This mutually reinforcing relationship is often modeled as a multiplicative one (also called interaction effects) using the formula for interactions between two variables, x_1 and x_2 (say, gender and race):

$$Y = a + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + \mathbf{b_3x_1{*}x_2} + c + e$$

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Here, the mutually reinforcing effect can be captured as a function of the original variables. We might call this the model of gender, race, and class as *separable but mutually reinforcing*.

Note that modeling multiplicative effects does not rule out additive effects: It is possible for social phenomena to have both sorts of effects (Wright 1997). If there are no additive effects, then $b_1x_1 + b_2x_2$ will be equal to zero, leaving only the interaction term, constant and error. But we will still be able to derive the combined effects from analyzing the original factors, variables, or structures that combine. So these effects are, in principle, derivable from the independent analysis of each factor or structure (say, class, gender, or race).

Sometimes quantitative researchers seem to assume that *intersectional* effects are the same as multiplicative effects (the convention of calling such effects *interaction* effects probably contributes to this confusion). But it is important to note that intersectional effects are *by definition* effects that cannot be derived as any function of gender, race, and class considered independently (Crenshaw 1991; Harris 1990). No mathematical manipulation of the effects of gender and race will completely capture the way they combine: Intersectional effects are *qualitatively different* from independent or additive effects. So the idea of intersectionality suggests that there is a third type of effect, one that is not a function of x_1 and x_2, say, x_3.[5] We would model these effects as follows, if x_1 is gender and x_2 is race, and x_3 represents the intersectional effects of a particular gender-race-class configuration:

$$Y = a + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_1{*}x_2 + \mathbf{b_4x_3} + c + e$$

To return to the earlier example, by way of illustration, if Y represents the degree of autonomy a society grants its citizens, b_1x_1 represents the effect on autonomy stemming from gender inequality, b_2x_2 represents the effect on autonomy stemming from race inequality, $b_3x_1{*}x_2$ represents the effect on autonomy stemming from the mutually reinforcing nature of race and gender inequality, and b_4x_3 represents the effect on autonomy stemming from a specific, qualitatively different reduction in autonomy resulting from a particular combination of gender-race, and particular to a particular gender-race group.

5. Hancock (2005) similarly argues that there is a great deal of confusion about how to apply the idea of intersectionality in empirical research, especially in the study of the welfare state. She offers a framework for uncovering intersectional as opposed to merely additive effects.

Note that here I specify this relationship as one incorporating all three types of effects: additive ($b_1x_1 + b_2x_2$), multiplicative ($b_3x_1{*}x_2$) and intersectional (b_4x_3). On the intersectionality-only hypothesis, though, the first parts of the equation (additive and multiplicative effects) would drop out (be equal to zero), leaving only the intersectional effects (x_4): The *only* effects are intersectional effects.

It is possible, though, that gender, race, and class interact in such a way that there are all three types of effects: additive, multiplicative, and intersectional. It is also possible that the relationship among these different structures varies over space and time. In some times or places, systems of race and class may undermine each other, while in other places they reinforce each other. Insisting that the only version of gender, race, and class is one that sees all effects of social structures as intersectional under all circumstances, it seems to me, wrongly limits the possible configurations of social structures consistent with the observation of some intersectional effects.

I propose allowing the possibility that there are additive and multiplicative *as well as* intersectional effects of gender, race, and class: Let us allow that the transparencies might not map perfectly onto one another, so that the play of light includes some green, red, and purple patches. Let us call this the *intersectionality-plus* version of the interaction of these social structures.

The intersectionality-plus account of the interaction of social structures has a major advantage over the intersectionality-only version when it comes to comparative analysis: It admits the possibility that the ways that social structures affect one another vary over space and time. Some axes might be more salient or politicized in some contexts than in others. For example, most of the writing about intersectionality derives from the work of women of color in the United States. Are gender, race, and class similarly entwined in other national contexts? The intersectionality-plus model of social structural interaction is consistent with the idea that different social structures might have different types of effects in different contexts. Observing such variation helps us to identify the distinctive features (and perhaps the causes) of particular national constellations of social structure, perhaps linking such structures to particular historic trajectories. *This makes the intersectionality-plus approach particularly useful for comparative political analysis, and it makes comparative political analysis critical for understanding gender (and race, and class) politics.*

Some Final Objections

Some will say that this argument misses the point about intersectionality. The idea of intersectionality is not compatible with the existence of autonomous effects of gender or race because we know that every single body is raced and gendered and classed: No one escapes these social structures, and since no bodies are free of these markings, it makes no sense to speak of separate "gender" or "race" effects. But saying that each person's life is marked by gender, race, and class does not imply that each and every condition he and she experiences is equally a product of gender, race, or class. Moreover, even if individuals cannot *themselves* tease apart the aspects of their experiences that are a product of their gender, race, or class, that are based on reflecting on their own lives, it does not follow that these aspects of social organization cannot be separated by analysis at a macrosocietal level. Indeed, one would not expect every aspect of a single social structure, much less the complex interactions among social structures, to be fully visible in any individual's experience. Are wage gaps more determined by race, gender, or occupation? Are they equally determined by these factors? This is not a question that can be answered by asking people to parse out parts of their personal experiences: It requires macrolevel social research. As Young argues, "the oppression of women and people who transgress heterosexual norms occurs through systemic processes and social structures which need description that uses different concepts from those appropriate for describing subjects and their experience" (2005, 13).

On the other hand, some readers might question whether any scholars actually intend to preclude the possibility of autonomous effects, even the analytic separability of gender as a category. Is the object of critique here a straw woman? I want to emphasize that although some theorists do recommend an intersectionality-only approach, my argument is not that such an approach is required or follows from the concept of intersectionality itself. Rather, I am trying to point out that as it is currently conceptualized, the concept of intersectionality is indeterminate as to the interrelationship of social structures. This indeterminacy points to the need for further theorization and specification of these relationships in reference to particular contexts and questions, not the rejection of work on intersectionality or on the interrelationship of gender, race, and class. It points to the need for further theoretical and empirical investigation of the structure of intersectionality, of the interaction of structures of gender, race, class, and other axes of inequality.

Conclusion: A Comparative Politics of Gender

A women and politics approach sometimes seems as though it merely "adds women" to existing analyses, incorporating sex as a variable in otherwise unreconstructed studies. A politics of gender, in contrast, aims to confront gender "on its own terms," examining the dynamics of gender politics to see what elements or dimensions of politics, what important questions, may have been obscured by the male, heterosexist bias in the discipline. This has long been the strategy of feminist political scientists, but these days it is sometimes seen as being in opposition to work that attends to differences among women. In this essay, I have argued that far from precluding attention to difference, an intersectional approach *requires* a structural approach to gender analysis. Moreover, affirming the importance of intersectional dimensions of gender, race, and class need not imply that these axes of inequality have no independent effects. Indeed, the interaction of these different structures likely varies across groups and nations and over time.

The probable variation in the ways that gender, race, and class are defined and the way they interact makes comparative analysis especially valuable for understanding gender politics. Are class and race as closely intertwined in the social-democratic welfare states as they are in the United States? Are gender and class as closely related? Are some social structures more salient or fundamental in some national contexts? Such questions will help us develop theoretical accounts of how gender, race, class, and other axes of inequality interact in different contexts. The answers should help us see new solutions and strategies for resistance to (or transformation of) these structures as well.

A comparative politics of gender, then, investigates the autonomous effects of gender structures, as well as the interaction of gender structures with axes of gender, race, and class. The investigation of the interaction of gender, race, and class could include additive, multiplicative, and intersectional effects. We can best detect intersectional effects by comparing how social structures interact to create particular injustices and problems for particular intersectionally disadvantaged or privileged groups of women, for example, immigrant or refugee women, women working in sweatshops, or female celebrities. We could compare such structures across many countries, or use country-specific studies to illuminate the specific ways that structures interact to shape that particular social position. We can best explore additive effects by examining each axis of inequality (gender, race, class, sexuality, etc.) separately. We can best explore multiplicative effects by examining how the independent

effects revealed in an autonomous analysis of each structure combine to mitigate or exacerbate one another's effects. Thus, a combination of analytic strategies will be required in order to paint a full picture of the politics of gender. But *comparative* analysis is key to illuminating the range of variation in structures of gender, race, class, and other axes of domination, the ways in which these structures interact, and the wide array of strategies for resistance and reform.

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Why So Slow? The Challenges of Gendering Comparative Politics

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One of my most painful memories as a newly minted assistant professor was of giving a talk at a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) meeting on democratization in Africa, during which senior Africanist political scientists (Americans) continued their private discussions while I tried to deliver a paper on women and democratization in Africa. My voice carried weakly over the din. I was too intent on getting through my prepared talk in the allotted time to do what I should have done, which was to stop until I got their full attention. I remember thinking at the time that I had something very important to say that they needed to hear, and they were missing this opportunity. That was 1994.[1]

A decade later, these same men are now listening to me and are asking for my input. There are a few more of us working on gender and politics in Africa. In fact, one of the most exciting new developments in political science in the United States over the past decade has been the expansion of the subfield of gender and comparative politics. But even given the newness of the field, comparative politics has changed very little with respect to gender perspectives. Some scholars have added gender-related chapters to their edited volumes. A few are even writing about women or incorporating gender perspectives into their work. Yet still only a few have sought to incorporate gender perspectives into their teaching.

To return to my example, I am still stunned by the fact that most scholars of democratization, and those working on Africa, in particular, have gone out of their way to ignore the role of women in African democratization efforts to the detriment of their own studies. Academics (with few exceptions from Africa) have seemingly been intent on sidestepping the role of women, even when they have been central to processes of change. One scholar managed to write about the role of retailers' associations in democratization processes in West Africa without ever mentioning that the organizations he was studying were made up entirely of women! Another wrote about women engaging the legal system as individuals to safeguard their property rights in a region where women as a collectivity were being discriminated against with respect to their access to property. Scholars from the region told me they were amazed that gender rela-

1. Workshop on "Civil Society, Democracy and Development in Africa," sponsored by the Africa Bureau of USAID, Washington, DC, June 9–10, 1994.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X06211048 Published online by Cambridge University Press

tions and the power dynamics embedded within them could be so easily disregarded by this scholar.

Although rarely if ever mentioned in studies of democratization in Africa, women's movements actively sought to participate in the political reform movements of the 1990s. They openly resisted corruption and repressive regimes through public demonstrations and other militant action. In Kenya in the early 1990s, women were at the forefront of protests defending imprisoned human rights activists and found themselves in violent clashes with police. Wangari Maathai, Nobel Peace Prize winner in 2004 and leader of the Greenbelt Movement, had already been leading many of these struggles for some time. In Mali, thousands of demonstrating women and children were shot at by forces of President Moussa Traoré in a series of events that led to his downfall. More recently in Togo in April 2005, women, including many powerful businesswomen, were among the first out in the streets to protest the presidential "win" of the son of Togo's late dictator. Even old women did not escape being beaten by soldiers in the deadly street clashes that ensued. In Sierra Leone, women were the only group that openly defied soldiers as they demonstrated to demand that free elections be held when rumors began to circulate that the military might postpone the February 1996 elections. Female peace activists were central to Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's successful 2005 bid for the presidency in Liberia, ushering in the first hope the country has had in decades for stability and democratization.

After the late 1990s, women were central to the constitution-making process in Kenya. The head of the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission, Yash Ghai, recently referred to Kenyan women as the most active civil society group within the constitution-making process.[2] In Uganda, women's groups sent in more memoranda to the Constitutional Commission than any other sector of civil society.

Women who have run for president in countries like Kenya (Charity Ngilu and Wangari Maathai) and Sierra Leone (Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf) have done so on platforms eschewing tribalism, which has often set women apart from their male politician counterparts in many parts of Africa. These are just a few snapshots of ways in which women have collectively participated in democratizing processes within the continent.

Most comparativists in the United States have written about these processes of democratization in Africa as if women were of no consequence,

2. "The Constitution Making Process in Kenya," African Politics Colloquium, University of Wisconsin-Madison, October 11, 2005.

and they have done so to the detriment of their scholarship (e.g., Bratton and van de Walle 1997; Clark and Gardinier 1997; Joseph 1999; Ottaway 1997, just to cite a few of the widely read books and edited collections on democratization in Africa). Not only have they ignored the realities on the ground, but they have also ignored the scholarship of well-respected male academics from Africa, such as Joe Oloka-Onyango (Uganda), Chris Maina Peter (Tanzania), Stephen Ndegwa (Kenya), and Kole Ahmed Shettima (Nigeria), who have highlighted the political roles of women. Moreover, they have sidestepped the highly acclaimed scholarship of feminists like Sylvia Tamale (Uganda), Maria Nzomo (Kenya), Amina Mama (Nigeria), Shireen Hassim and Sheila Meintjes (South Africa), Ruth Meena (Tanzania), and Nina Mba (Nigeria), just to name a few.

These examples with respect to the democratization literature are not peculiar to scholarship on Africa. They speak to several problems in comparative scholarship in the United States:

- There is too little scholarship focusing on gender and on women from a comparative perspective for us to have a significant impact in our field. The data is thin and the theorizing is even thinner. Even cross-national studies suffer from a lack of data from major swaths of the world, making these studies incomplete and unrepresentative of global trends and regional differences. Part of this deficit, though by no means all, arises from some of the practical difficulties of doing fieldwork, especially for women who are mothers.
- We are not publishing in journals that would give us greater visibility.
- We have not adequately made the case for the need to "engender" comparative politics.
- The new methodologically driven trends in political science have lessened the interest in country-based fieldwork that would produce the kind of research that would elicit more in-depth understanding of gender processes.
- There is insufficient collaboration and exchange with scholars abroad, with the exception of linkages across the Atlantic. The focus of comparative politics gender research is still too focused on Europe and North America, and therefore by definition incomplete.

Too Few for Impact

There are still too few comparative political dissertations concerning women and gender (see Table 1). As it is, a large proportion of the dissertations about comparative politics and gender are written by nonpolit-

Table 1. Gender-related dissertations in the United States, 1975–2005

Subfield of Political Science	*Number of Dissertations*
American politics	182
Comparative politics	148
Latin America, Central America & the Caribbean	42
Asia	40
Europe	36
Middle East	15
Africa	11
Cross-national	4
Political theory	32
International relations	18

Note: The search included all dissertations where the authors self-reported that they were covering "gender or women" and "politics" as a key word in the dissertation, and the subject was "political science." This included dissertations that were in departments other than political science. I excluded foreign dissertations in tabulating the list.
Source: UMI Proquest Digital Dissertations.

ical scientists, especially historians and sociologists. Even today, much, perhaps most, of the work on the impact of welfare state policies on women has been carried out by sociologists like Ann Shola Orloff, Diane Sainsbury, Barbara Hobson, and Helga Hernes, to name but a few. If one takes regional literatures, like the literature on women and politics in Africa, for example, it is only recently that political scientists have started writing on the subject. The literature on women and politics in precolonial and colonial Africa extending into the nationalist period was almost entirely the domain of historians and anthropologists like Shirley Ardener, Bolanle Awe, Janet Bujra, LaRay Denzer, Susan Geiger, Jean Hay, Caroline Ifeka-Moller, Nancy Leis, Nina Mba, Jane Parpart, Sylvia Leith-Ross, Filomina Steady, Margaret Strobel, and Audrey Wipper, just to cite a few scholars. Even contemporary women and politics themes in Africa continue to interest sociologists (Kathleen Fallon, Gwendolyn Mikell, Gay Seidman) and anthropologists (Gisela Geisler, Sondra Hale), who have produced some of the most important work in this area. Although there has been an increase in gender-related dissertations across the decades since 1970, in fact, the number has been steadily decreasing since it peaked in 2000 at 69 (see Table 2). The number of comparative gender-related dissertations in the United States has similarly decreased

Table 2. Comparative gender-related dissertations by year

Years	*Number of Gender-Related Dissertations*	*Number of Comparative Gender-Related Dissertations in United States*
2000–2004	252	73
1995–99	190	58
1990–94	95	25
1980–89	56	15
1970–79	17	5

Note: The search included all dissertations where the authors self-reported that they were covering "gender or women" and "politics" as a key word in the dissertation, and the subject was "political science." This included dissertations that were in departments other than political science. This table includes foreign dissertations.
Source: UMI Proquest Digital Dissertations.

by 50% from 22 in 2000 to 11 in 2004. Many graduate students I have spoken with still avoid working on gender-related topics for fear that they will fare poorly in the job market.

In Ph.D.-generating departments, there are few professors qualified to train people in this area. In the top 20 political science departments in the country, there are only two comparativists working on gender (Pippa Norris and myself). Three others have done work on gender-related topics but do not list themselves as gender specialists on their Web pages.

One of the major constraints keeping scholars—especially women but increasingly also men—from doing more comparative work is the difficulty of carrying out fieldwork if one has children. The challenges are often formidable and sometimes insurmountable. Mary Ann Mason and Marc Goulden at the University of California–Berkeley found that women who had children in the five years after receiving their doctorates were 30% less likely to obtain tenure than women who did not have children.[3] Of men who became fathers in this same time period, 77% earned tenure, while of the men who never had babies, "only" 71% got tenure. Thus, women did worse while men did better having children in the years after receiving their Ph.D. If one adds to this the challenges of fieldwork, often in politically unstable countries with poor health and school facilities, the likelihood that women with children are going to rush off

3. Robin Wilson, "How Babies Alter Careers for Academics," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 5 December 2003, p. A1.

to do fieldwork is diminished. As men take on more child-care responsibilities, they will face many of the same difficulties and problematic choices that women with children have already been facing in this regard.

These days, however, the pressures of dual-career marriages have meant that it is rare to find a woman bringing her spouse along to "the field" to help with the children, unless the husband is also involved in his own fieldwork project in the same locale. Women are more likely to bring children with them, leaving their partners behind. Male researchers are more likely to bring a spouse to help them with the children. For women doing fieldwork, this raises a host of challenges related to single parenting in a foreign country. Elsewhere I have written on some of these challenges and have identified some coping strategies (Tripp 2002).

In no way are women's private arrangements for doing international research trivial: They affect the content, subject, scope, and quality of their research. Academic expectations and norms were not established with academic mothers in mind, nor have they been sufficiently modified as more women have entered academia. To the contrary, while the competitiveness of academia has made it difficult for male scholars who are involved in raising children to do fieldwork, it has become exponentially harder for academic mothers and, in particular, mothers who do foreign field research. Domestic responsibilities and considerations still, unfortunately, affect women's careers to a greater extent than those of men.

Academic norms and expectations, especially for graduate students and junior faculty, are not compatible with active parenting, let alone doing international research at the same time. The challenges are numerous. It is expensive to bring children to the field because insurance, airfare, and school fees are generally not covered by granting agencies. Scholars may encounter difficulties negotiating with a spouse or in taking children to faraway lands. Moreover, women guilt-trip themselves about doing it. Friends and family may not be especially sympathetic. The supports within departments and academic institutions for parents in the field are virtually nonexistent.

One part of the changes necessary to increase the opportunities for women to undertake gendered comparative political research and fieldwork must come from within academia and from funding agencies. The other part of the battle still has to be waged within households, where women need to learn to become better at negotiating with their partners, and where greater equality in decision making and sacrifice needs to be encouraged (Tripp 2002).

Why Is Our Work Not More Visible?

Those of us who do work in this field are not publishing in the top 10 political science journals ranked most highly for impact, in which comparativists are most likely to publish.[4] Over the past decade there have been a paltry number of articles published on comparative gender concerns by these journals: *Journal of Democracy* (6), *World Politics* (4), *Comparative Political Studies* (4), and *International Affairs* (3). From there on, one finds one article in a handful of journals and zero for most. Of these few articles in top journals, half were quantitative and cross-national, while half had a single-country focus, and over half had a focus on Europe. It is interesting to note that one-third were written by men, who generally do not figure prominently in this field of scholarship, although their presence is growing.

Of the 3,510 articles listed in JSTOR, the Scholarly Journal Archive, for these same top political science journals over the past decade, 2.5% (90) had "gender" or "women" in the title, while 21 articles were gender related with a comparative focus (0.5%). Of all the political science journals listed in JSTOR for the past decade (18,730), 2% of the articles (391) were gender related.

The lack of interest in gender is reflected in the boards of comparative political science journals. Few if any board members do work on gender issues.[5] These editorial boards do not even include women, let alone scholars who work on gender.

So where are comparativist political scientists publishing on women and gender? Based on 313 records of gender-related articles in 2004 listed in Worldwide Political Science Abstracts and on an examination of the curriculum vita of prominent comparativists working in this field, my research found that comparative political scientists working on gender are publishing in women's studies journals, such as *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, *Differences*, *Gender and Development*, *Feminist Economics*, *Feminist Review*, *Signs*, and *Women's Studies International Forum*. They are publishing in area studies journals and in single-issue

4. These include *Journal of Democracy*, *World Politics*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *International Affairs*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *Journal of Politics*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *Comparative Politics*, *American Political Science Review*, *Political Science Quarterly*, and *Journal of Peace Research*.

5. In terms of gender balance, *World Politics* has 1 woman out of 17 members; *Comparative Politics*, 1 of 7; *Comparative Political Studies*, 4 women of 34; the *Journal of Peace Research*, 1 of 30; the *Journal of Human Rights*, 3 of 29; and the *Journal of Democracy*, 5 of 40.

journals, such as *Development and Change*, *World Development*, *Forced Migration Review*, and *Human Rights Quarterly*. They are also publishing in second-tier political science journals, in journals of other disciplines (e.g., *Gender and Society*, *Social Politics*, *Contemporary Sociology*, *Politics and Society*), and in political science journals abroad.

More importantly, comparative politics and gender scholars are publishing books. In 2004, of all books on women and politics reviewed in *Women's Review of Books*, half (35 out of 66) were comparative, although not all were by political scientists. The publishers printing the most gender-related comparative politics books in 2004 included Routledge (11), Rowman & Littlefield (7), and Palgrave (5). Of the university presses—Johns Hopkins, Rutgers, Duke, and Cambridge—all published three books each in this area in 2004, while Indiana, Michigan, Pittsburgh, and Oxford each published only one.

Why are so few comparative gender and politics scholars publishing in political science journals and in top political science journals? In part, we are not submitting enough to these journals. Lee Sigelman, editor of *American Political Science Review* (APSR), told me that he simply did not have submissions in this area.[6] Although we are perhaps hesitant to try because we know our readership is elsewhere, it is also true that we will not have the impact we desire until we tackle some of these key journals. We may be afraid that our methodologies, the interdisciplinary nature of much of our work, and our topic choices will not fit traditional ideas of what reviewers and editors consider to be the best or most rigorous research. If we do not try, we cannot legitimately claim that we are being ignored.

The challenge is, in part, to do a better job of explaining what it is we are doing and why it is important: why good comparativists need to understand women's movements to understand social movements; why they need to understand women's mobilization to understand civil society; why women's rights are human rights; why one cannot understand democratization without understanding gender exclusions; and how gender is central to the construction of ethnic identity. We have much more work to do than conventional political scientists in order to explain the "so what" question, that is, questions about the relevance of our work. It often seems unfair that others do not bother to learn more about gender as it relates to their work and scholarly interests when it is

6. Discussion at APSA meeting, August 31, 2005.

so abundantly evident that it is central to what they are trying to explain. Yet we are required to know the broader context of our fields. That is a reality with which we have to contend. We need to connect the dots for others and to demonstrate the relevance of gender to their concerns. Until we put it into their language and in their terms, it will continue to be trivialized.

We also need to do more to network and to promote one another's work outside of the women and politics circles. In the American Political Science Association, almost none of the book or paper awards outside of the Women and Politics Reserach Section have gone to people working on women in comparative politics. One-quarter of the papers winning awards in the Women and Politics Research Section have comparative themes. Similarly, one-fifth (5 out of the 25) of the books winning the APSA Victoria Schuck Award for the Best Book on Women and Politics have gone to comparativists, and half of all dissertation prizes awarded by the APSA Women and Politics Research Section were given to comparativists (6 of 12).

Challenges Posed by Methodologically Driven Research Trends

Methodological trends in research may also be serving to stifle research in this area, even as the needs remain great for more quantitative studies related to gender. The Perestroika movement within political science has bemoaned the lack of methodological and intellectual pluralism in the discipline. The movement has railed against methodologically driven research. Perestroika activists have rightly argued that politics should be taken as a starting point and that methods should be adopted to suit the questions being generated about politics itself.

Peregrine Schwartz-Shea (2005) found that in the top 57 doctoral programs, 66% had quantitative methods requirements, while only 16% had foreign language requirements. This trend is also reflected in publications; for example, between 1991 and 2000, the *American Political Science Review* published 225 articles using statistical methods and 88 articles employing mathematical modeling, while only five articles in this same period used empirical qualitative methods. Comparativists are publishing in the *APSR* in proportion to their presence in the field (22%); however, only certain types of comparative research have been published there. Similarly, between 1985 and 2001, approximately 90% of all the articles published in the *American Journal of Political Science* involved

statistical analysis and mathematical modeling (Kasza 2005, 421). This creates a built-in bias in major journals toward cross-national studies in comparative politics. Although there is important cross-national work being done in politics and gender, much of it is focused on those parts of the world where the data is the strongest (e.g., Europe and North America). This situation also creates disincentives in the field for those who do the painstaking and challenging field research that requires historical knowledge, command of languages, and more contextual understanding of the politics of particular countries. Without that work on the ground, the cross-national comparative theories can potentially remain stale, uninformed, and thin. The in-depth case studies explain the mechanisms of processes uncovered in cross-national studies; they can help develop theories that can be tested more generally and assist in making sense of quantitative findings. In short, we need both types of studies.

The fact that many comparativist gender and politics scholars often use ethnographic methodologies, in-depth interviews, snowball surveys, and/or focus groups, and focus on individual countries, means that they are at a disadvantage in terms of the range of journals in which they can publish. They often adopt interdisciplinary approaches, which take a lot of time to develop and involve a lot of self-training. This does not always sit well with others in the discipline. It may be easier for those with joint appointments to adopt a broader range of methods, but not so easy for those working on gender and politics solely within their departments.

Even those doing statistical cross-national studies run into difficulties when they move outside of the advanced industrialized countries, because the data just are not there. Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris's pathbreaking 2003 study, *Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change Around the World*, is missing 110 cases, all of which are developing countries. Surely they would have been included had the data been available. Databases are incomplete at best and, for many categories, the data simply do not exist.

Thus, it is no surprise that the majority of studies explaining women's legislative representation have concentrated on Western Europe and North America, where explanations focusing on electoral systems, district and party magnitude, and the ideological orientation of political parties have been well established. Cross-national studies and a few regional studies have begun to refine our understanding of what factors hinder and facilitate a greater presence of women in legislatures globally (Htun and Jones 1996; Inglehart and Norris 2003; Jones 1998; Ken-

worthy and Malami 1999, Paxton 1997; Reynolds 1999). It has only been very recently that electoral quotas for women have begun to attract attention, especially for those studying Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East and, historically, the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. When quotas are incorporated in cross-national studies, they fundamentally change the explanations that account for female legislative representation today. Moreover, regional differences become more important in the way we think about representation (Tripp and Kang 2006).

The European and North American focus of existing comparative work also poses other limitations that are more conceptual. Concepts that have evolved in one context do not always travel well or would need their meanings expanded to be of comparative use. Take, for example, the literature on state feminism, which has evolved primarily in the context of North American and European democracies. Dorothy McBride Stetson and Amy Mazur (1995) found in their comparative study of North America, Europe, and Australia that women's policy machineries had considerable impact when the state was defined as a site of social justice and had the institutional capacity to respond to new demands for equality. They have focused on the role of feminist organizations working both within and outside of unions and parties (Stetson 2001; Stetson and Mazur 1995). Stetson found in comparative studies of abortion policy in Europe and North America that women's movements had the most policy impact when left-wing parties were in power and when the movements were closely aligned to the leftist parties. It was also necessary that women's movements were unified around their demands and placed those demands high on their agenda. Even when left-wing parties were not in power, if feminists within the state agencies intervened, they could also be responsive to women's movements by bringing about substantive policy changes (Stetson 2001).

Within the Latin American context, the debates were different but the framework remained a democratic one. Democratization in Latin America brought to the fore a conflict between those who called themselves "institutionales," who worked within the system, and the "autónomas," who sought to preserve the movement. Much of the debate dealt with the role of state feminism and femocrats, a debate that ironically was a product of some of the successes of the women's movement in institutionalizing their objectives (Baldez 2002, Rios Tobar 2003, Waylen 1996). Studies of state feminism within democracies have assumed that society was interested in engaging the state because the state had the will and the capacity to respond to societal pressures.

How then do we understand state feminism as we shift to nondemocratic contexts? Why do semiauthoritarian and authoritarian states adopt female-friendly policies (e.g., creating national machineries for women, introducing maternity leave with full pay, giving women one-third to half of the parliamentary seats, signing and ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), when they could just as easily ignore popular demands or where there are no particular popular pressures to adopt such policies? Why do they adopt seemingly pro-women policies, particularly when they are not especially interested in promoting other civil, political, and human rights? These questions challenge the meaning and purpose of state feminism that has arisen in democratic contexts, but these policies in nondemocratic states cannot be easily dismissed.

Sometimes these policies have served symbolic purposes to signal the political sympathies of the establishment or ruling party in the context of an Islamicist challenge. In other cases, the policies have been used to obtain women's votes, to create new patronage networks, or to curry support on a world stage. They have also served the purposes of state legitimation. Yet these motivations need to be accounted for in the same way that state feminism has been discussed as fulfilling various objectives of welfare states that have both enhanced and detracted from women's status.

Finally, despite today's easy Internet access and e-mail communication, the links between scholars in the global North and South seem to be fairly weak. The research networks and linkages around gender issues are stronger across the Atlantic and within Europe, but much weaker across other continents. The lack of connectedness and mutual exchange impedes comparative analysis above all. The weakness of truly global research collaborations makes it difficult to obtain different perspectives and to learn from alternative analyses, share literature, collect data, and collaborate in research. The paucity of alternative global perspectives confines the scope of our understanding of analytical concepts to the North American and European context. Phenomena almost always look different up close. It is not sufficient for any of us scholars the world over simply to ponder from afar. Thus, our work and that of our colleagues abroad, both empirically and theoretically, is incomplete and much thinner than it need be.

The existence of new and older diasporas in the United States facilitates some of these linkages, but more needs to be done to pressure foundations and government funding agencies and universities to facilitate more exchange and global dialogue. We will all be the better for it.

Teaching Gender

Although one might expect limited progress in the area of teaching, comparativists have a dismal record overall. In googling the first 20 syllabi to appear when typing in the terms "comparative politics syllabus," I found only one that had any readings explicitly relating to women or gender, and this was a former student of mine (Timothy Longman)! It is no comfort that the other subfields do little better. The first 20 international relations, American politics, and political theory syllabi each had three references to gender/women in a similar Google search. My findings are further supported by a more detailed study of the contents of comparative politics syllabi for undergraduates carried out by Patrick Fagan in July 2005.[7] He found one reference to three articles and one book in an analysis of 183 comparative politics syllabi.

Conclusion

This is one of the most exciting times to be doing comparative gender studies. The field is wide open. We have only begun to scratch the surface in answering very central questions in the field and in contributing to the general literature on state building, the role of ethnicity, democracy, economic development, conflict, parties, legislatures, social movements, civil society, and many other topics of interest. But there are many challenges in bringing greater credibility to the subfield.

There is no one solution to the dilemmas we face. We need to encourage more students to go into the study of comparative gender political science, and we need to get as many as possible placed in universities that train doctoral students. We need to find ways to facilitate the work of students and junior faculty who do research abroad and to be more attentive to their particular needs and pressures. We need to encourage deans, departmental chairs, foundation program officers, and other institutional representatives to do the same. We should encourage one another to publish in top political science and comparative politics journals and to reward one another for work well done in political science association sections other than (and in addition to) the Women and Politics Research Section. We need to encourage the new trends toward greater methodological pluralism within the discipline. We should sup-

7. http://workingpapers.org/writings/comparative_politics_syllabus.htm.

port efforts to make our work truly comparative beyond Europe and North America and to incorporate cases, data, and perspectives from the global South. This requires more collaborations, networking, and exchanges with the aim of mutually strengthening our capacity for comparison.

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