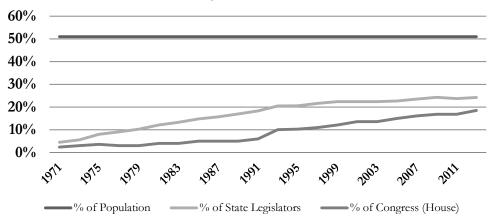
Barriers and Solutions to Increasing Women's Political Power

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"Within quite a small space are crowded together St Paul"s, the Bank of England, the Mansion House, the massive if funereal battlements of the Law Courts; and on the other side, Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament. There, we say to ourselves, pausing, in this moment of transition on the bridge, our fathers and brothers have spent their lives. All these hundreds of years they have been mounting those steps, passing in and out of those doors, ascending those pulpits, preaching, money-making, administering justice. It is from this world that the private house (somewhere, roughly speaking, in the West End) has derived its creeds, its laws, its clothes and carpets, its beef and mutton. And then, as is now permissible, cautiously pushing aside the swing doors of one of these temples, we enter on tiptoe and survey the scene in greater detail." ~ Virginia Woolf, Three Guineas. 1938

Women as a Proportion of U.S. Legislative Bodies and U.S. Population, 1971-2013¹



Virginia Woolf imagines women poised on a bridge between the private house and the public house. With women holding less than a fifth of political offices (both in the U.S. and worldwide), we appear still to be stuck partway across. "Formal barriers to women's participation in politics are nowadays almost nonexistent around the world. However a glass ceiling remains." This paper will consider institutional, social/cultural, and psychological/motivational barriers to further advancement on the part of women as political leaders, with special attention to minority women (racial/ ethnic minorities as well as Republican women, who are a minority of women in politics³). It will also suggest changes in feminist organizing and policy demands that would promote gender equality and greater political power for women as a whole. The final section suggests action steps to lower or remove at least some of these barriers in a 2, 5, and 10-year timeframe.

INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S POLITICAL POWER

Political Parity recently asked, "Why the scarcity of female candidates and elected officials? Are women uninterested, unwilling, or uncertain? Is the political system unresponsive and impenetrable? Ultimately, is the issue the driver or the road?" Ultimately, the report concludes both the driver and the road matter to any journey. "In particular, the driver's perceptions of whether she will face smooth road conditions or stop-and-go traffic influence her choice to take or avoid a certain route. Likewise, women contemplating running for office are strongly affected by the costs and benefits they anticipate from a candidacy. We also found that road conditions appear to differ for women; the roads on which men travel to higher office have fewer potholes and roadblocks than those navigated by women. Surely women's documented lesser confidence matters for whether they run for office — but so too does the larger set of structures that help shape their choices."

Districts & Primaries: At the most basic structural level, the U.S. single-member-district system (SMD) with a first-past-the-post (FPTP) rule appears to advantage men. Comparative research suggests that women do better in multi-member districts with a proportional-representation (PR) rule. Our practices of recruitment and internal party selection (primaries) also seem to have gendered effects. Recruitment into political candidacies in the U.S. relies mostly on would-be candidates stepping forward relatively independently. As Wattenberg and others have noted, the U.S. has "candidate-centered politics" rather than a party-centric system. Citizens rarely become candidates without some (and often a large) degree of self-recruitment. Although parties are usually quite important in the election and governance processes, the parties have relatively little control, compared to their counterparts in other democracies, over who will run under their name. U.S. democracy is not simply the "competitive struggle for the people's vote," as Schumpeter has it, but also the prior competition over who will wage that struggle. Primaries may be a key barrier to women's entry, particularly for Republican women.

Lack of Quotas: Yet generally-low levels of party involvement in recruitment/candidate selection (coupled with a national allergy to affirmative action) means that single the most effective remedy for women's underrepresentation internationally – internal party quotas of – may not be possible here. Interestingly, our two major parties already both have internal gender quotas in another arena; 50% of delegates to each party's conventions must be women. With serious political will, such as that stimulated by voter- and organized feminist demand, perhaps party leaders could commit to stronger recruitment efforts, including, as in the corporate world, "business targets" or "goals" of half of all candidates being women.

Comparing U.S. to Select OECD Countries on Campaign Assistance for Candidates¹⁰

	Public Funding to Political Parties?	Free/ Subsidized Media Access?	Tax Relief for Cand's/ Parties?	Campaign Expenditure Limits?
Australia	Yes	No	Yes	No
Austria	Yes	No	No	Yes
Canada	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chile	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
France	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Germany	Yes	Yes		No
Hungary	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ireland	Yes	Yes	Some	Yes
Israel	Yes	Yes	Some	Yes
Italy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Japan	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Luxembourg	Yes	No	Some	No
Mexico	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Netherlands	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
New Zealand	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Norway	Yes	No	Yes	No
Portugal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Spain	Yes	Yes	Some	Yes
Switzerland	No	Yes	Some	No
Turkey	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
UK	No	Yes	Some	Yes
US	No	No	No	Some

Campaign Funding: Generally, when money dominates politics, women lose out. With women having persistently lower incomes for many reasons (gender gap in pay, occupational segregation, disproportionate unpaid family care, frequent unwillingness to face the social consequences of pushing for higher salaries or promotions¹¹), and with social and business interaction proceeding heavily along gendered lines, women are far less likely than men to be in the social and business networks that pour money into political campaigns. Combine a lack of public funding for our campaigns in the U.S. (for the most part) with, at the very least, careful fundraising and spending limits, and women are at a decided disadvantage as candidates.¹²

Better "Working Conditions" for Candidates and Electeds: Another key difference between campaigning in the U.S. versus in many other advanced democracies is our expectation that running is not a "real job." Candidates do not receive pay or benefits; very few, therefore, can afford to campaign full-time. They also come overwhelmingly from the ranks of those whose jobs permit flexibility, which disadvantages lower-income workers (who are disproportionately female), resulting in "white-collar government." Elective office, even at entry level, can be round-the-clock work, with constant travel, evening events, and late-night markup sessions. If we genuinely want a more diverse set of elected officials, we need better "job conditions" for those running (better working hours, professionalization, health care insurance, day care, and the ability to pay oneself a salary from a campaign). In a 2005 Salzburg Global Seminar on women and politics internationally, delegates agreed that "Family-friendly work hours in political institutions, especially the national parliament" should be part of the "Equality Machinery" that needs to be built into a country's political structures and institutions to bring more women to political power.¹⁴

Spotlight on minority women: Black and Hispanic women tend to have even less access to financial resources than white women, and are disproportionately concentrated in low-wage and service-oriented work (the jobs least likely to allow room for politics). They are seldom encouraged to seek political office, and are oftentimes actively discouraged, either formally or informally.¹⁵

SOCIAL/CULTURAL BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S POLITICAL POWER

Persisting Gender Roles: Certain features of gender have proven resistant to feminist critique over the past few decades, including the association of masculinity with leadership and femininity with weakness. Although recent discussion of "transformational leadership" has begun to help us appreciate the advantages of nontraditional approaches, implicit biases (especially activated in a context of crisis) lead to suspicion that women are not "strong enough" to be political leaders. A lack of women in high-powered positions may affect both men's and women's perceptions of women's "ability to rule." And while we know that mentorship is the most powerful way to bring more women into political office (and counteract social biases), being a token "woman at the top" is often accompanied by extreme work-overload that leaves little time for female political leaders to be nurturing the next generation of women in politics.

Family Work and Time Constraints: Continuing uneven distribution of family care responsibilities means that women spend far more time than men in home- and child-care. Studies repeatedly demonstrate that women pay a "motherhood penalty," across fields¹⁷, relating not just to the time, effort, and medical care of pregnancy and childbirth, but to the far greater maternal involvement necessary for breastfeeding, and to the persistent tendency of women to do a larger share of childcare as the child grows. Anyone deeply involved in childcare, whether male or female, would face tough time constraints navigating between family responsibilities and a political position; because the work is rarely equally shared, women are more disadvantaged. Generally, the result

("consistent around the globe") is that, compared to men, "female politicians tend to start their careers later, have fewer children, spend more time caring for their families, and arrange their lives to have shorter commuting time than their male counterparts." [Indeed, commute time to a state's capital correlates strongly with the number of women who run for that state's legislature. [9] This means that "[O]nly women with supportive families run for office, whereas men are more likely to run in spite of discouragement from their families."

Spotlight on minority women: Work-family conflict may be exacerbated for various groups of women. In speaking to Latinas across the U.S., Political Parity found the impact of gender roles to be stronger for Hispanic than white women. Traditional gender-role ideology also proved more complicated for the candidacies of Republican women, as compared to Democrats. Structurally, single women find it difficult if not impossible to run, for reasons both financial and time-related, which disproportionately rules out far too many black women. And while there are not enough examples to study much yet, we have yet to find out whether openly-lesbian women will continue to face the kind of gender-role discrimination that has limited their political careers in the past.

Risk-taking and Rushing In: New political "spaces" frequently open up through revolutions (be they political or technological) or the creation of new groups or movements. It is common for men to rush in to fill these new spaces Sometimes the exclusion of women has been explicit and intentional, as in the classic case of the French Revolution²³ -- but often it is an unintended consequence of men's greater tendency to seize the moment without needing to consider gendered effects of their actions and women's to hesitate, perhaps rationally, knowing the punishment for them will be harsher should they fail). When deliberate exclusion gives rise to awareness and anger on the part of women²⁴, it can launch feminist movements, as with suffrage and women's liberation. Recently created spaces, such as those created by the Silicon Valley rush and the emerging political blogosphere²⁵, provide an interesting example, seeming to enrich and empower men without a corresponding feminism being awakened on the part of women (and mostly without conscious effort on the part of men to be gender-inclusive).²⁶

PSYCHOLOGICAL/MOTIVATIONAL BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S POLITICAL POWER

Political Culture: Political discourse and electoral campaigns have grown extremely negative, acrimonious, and, all too often, uncivil. While acrimony and incivility seem to turn off most citizens²⁷, and turn away good potential candidates of all genders and colors, it seems to affect women more than men²⁸, and women of color most of all.²⁹ Generally the effect of increased partisanship and negativity has been the exit of crucial moderate legislators – like Connie Morella in the House and Senator Olympia Snowe, Republican women who made possible bipartisan progress on gendered policy issues – and the increased entry of hardline ideologues (both male and female). Finally, it appears that the increasing intrusion into the private lives of candidates (as well as their families and friends) may deter women more than men – but also seems to deter good potential candidates, no matter their gender.³⁰

Not Believing Politics Matters: Like men, women are often ambitious to change the world, but are far less likely to believe that politics is the most effective or efficient means of doing this. In a recent survey of graduate students in law or policy schools, men were significantly more likely to agree that "The problems that I most care about can be solved through politics." Given the many costs, financial and personal, involved in mounting a political campaign (costs which are higher for women

than for men), and the scant rewards of holding office, it is no surprise that women are far less likely to want to run. Additionally, as institutionalist scholars point out, we continue to exclude women from politics by maintaining gendered political institutions that value men and masculinity and devalue women and femininity. "Inclusion" thus has to mean more than bringing in women and expecting them to conform to male norms within institutions; our ideals of candidates and officeholders need to be "re-gendered" to give women greater incentive to engage.³²

Spotlight on minority women: Women of color, especially black and Hispanic women, were the least likely to think that politics could lead to positive change.³³ Republican women may also be limited by the conscious and unconscious associations of their party with masculinity³⁴ and/or with their party's extreme rightward tilt in past elections (including the threat to "primary" those who are not extreme conservative ideologues, which may lead moderate Republican women to simply not run).³⁵

POLICY TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY

Laws, policies, and procedures that promote gender equality send positive messages to women and girls about their role and place in this country; the lack of such sends the opposite message. Understanding policy as "whatever governments do or do not do"³⁶ helps us realize that state silence in the face of continuing injustice and inequality is a real problem for women. First and most importantly, U.S. women lack a constitutional guarantee of equality (an element of state action that scholars have found related to women's political inclusion).³⁷ Nearly as important, the U.S. has still not ratified CEDAW, the widely-supported international Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (putting us in the stellar company of only 7 nations who have thus far failed to ratify, including: Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Iran, Palau, and Tonga). One third lesson we could learn from peer countries would be the process of "gender analysis" in budgeting and policymaking; many countries have made "gender responsive budgeting" a priority, to good effect both for women and these countries as a whole.³⁸

At the level of domestic policymaking within the U.S. on substantive issues, we need greater awareness of the connection between government's work and women's private-care burdens. Generally the less the government does to care for and support those who cannot care for themselves (children, the elderly, and the disabled), the more time women put into unpaid family, neighbor, and/or community care work. Full political equality in politics necessitates womenfriendly/maternalist policies that support public solutions to women's "private" caretaking burdens, so women have the time and energy to participate in politics. We also need rules assuring that candidates and legislators are paid a family wage, so women can seek political office as a viable career choice, and be able to feed themselves and their families whether or not they win. Women also must have laws protecting their ability to choose whether (and if so, when and how) to bear children; unplanned and unwanted childbearing is not only an affront to equality and a severe impediment to women's autonomy, but it is also a major time consideration that would likely interfere with political equality and participation. Those women who do want and plan to bear children should be protected by law and practice from persisting, documented pregnancy and parental discrimination (especially for women).³⁹ Wage equality is essential, as are policies mandating equal treatment in the workplace. 40 Finally, there need to be state-created and –enforced policies at all levels of government that make the world safe for women to fully participate, through protecting them against sexual harassment, threats, and other forms of violence. 41 We must reach agreement that, as Okin puts it, the family (including its division of labor and the violence that occurs within it) is not "beyond the realm of justice." And, as MacKinnon points out, the national government will

need to be actively involved, as women's rights (and persons) generally have been safer "the farther they are from home." ⁴³

NEED STRONG/STRATEGIC, AUTONOMOUS, MULTI-LAYERED FEMINIST MOVEMENT

Our democracy is in need of a strong, coordinated feminist movement that could to some degree mitigate the lack of party effectiveness in increasing women's political participation. Such a movement could work to recruit more women as candidates, put pressure on elected officials (both male and female), speak for women as a group, and push for policy to continue progress toward gender equality. In a federated system of government as in the U.S., we need a multi-layered feminist movement that can simultaneously address and push for local, state, and national-level gender issues. The movement must be strong in that it includes (and therefore can claim to represent) a large cross-section of women (and this must include women of all ages, races, religions, professions, beliefs, and sexual orientations), that it is constantly recruiting new members, and it must work strategically, in that its activists work to keep private and ego-driven conflicts from interfering with the work, and that organizational leaders actively collaborate to create and exploit opportunities (as in collaboration between the radical groups to push too far, too fast, while the more moderate groups come in and look reasonable by comparison). "The challenge for future champions of women's equality is to find ways to build coalitions for progressive change that take account of evolving family, workplace, and political bargains that structure politics, employment, and domestic life.",44

The movement must be "autonomous" in that it cannot "belong to" or only affiliate with one political party; it must instead have the power to pressure both parties by remaining neutral and threatening both with a gender gap in voting during each election. The movement also must remain autonomous in that it remain an "outsider" and not become co-opted into government itself; the "femocracy" in Australia (beginning in the 1970s) was effective in passing gender-progressive policy, but feminist legislators began to find themselves without "cover" to act for women once the movement activists became bureaucrats and there was no longer a strong movement to support them. Generally there need to be strong ties and alliances between "insiders" (elected and appointed officials and bureaucrats) and "outsiders" (movement activists), but these cannot be the same people. Insiders need both "cover to act" (pressure from the outside movement, so that they can reasonably claim to have to support or propose a certain bill or policy change); they also need frequent reminding of the movement's substantive goals, and reminders of why (and how) they got into politics in the first place, to counter the "conformity pressures" that can swiftly accumulate once one joins an institution (as in a bureaucratic agency, a legislature, a court system, etc). The movement should be a union of what Virginia Woolf calls "permanent outsiders."

Yet the women's movement today is fractured and struggling. We are in an era of decline of women's "civic voice," where women's groups could speak for women as a whole. 48 The membership of broad-based, nonpartisan, multi-issue groups like the League of Women Voters and NOW and the Women's Political Caucus is graying and dying out, without being replaced. Young feminists are more likely to support either extremely local efforts (such as campus anti-rape groups) or single-issue groups that tend to be headquartered in NYC and DC. Such support seems more and more to take the form of tweeting or posting, rather than paying to become a "member" or attending organizing meetings, leading to a deterioration of grassroots activism. We are in an era of what Skocpol calls "advocates without members," complete with intra-group in-fighting and intergroup competition over funding dollars (which increasingly come from large-dollar donors rather

than grassroots involvement). Yet when they do attempt to join the more traditional feminist organizations, young women often feel unwanted or unappreciated, and are often not given the chance to hold leadership positions.

Especially to encourage more women to become political candidates, and to overcome the "gender gap in political ambition," we also need a large, federated, nonpartisan organization that focuses specifically on recruitment and "civics" training. Democracy is only as good as those who participate; as women in India proclaimed (in support of constitutional gender quota measures), "Democracy without women is not democracy." In the U.S., civics training has traditionally happened through schools or unions, which are both weakened and inadequate to the task of specifically recruiting women to think and work as women, politically. We need the voices and participation of people who currently don't think that politics solves problems. We have large, prominent groups (mostly partisan) that do training and fundraising, while others (usually nonpartisan) do issue awareness and organizing, but there is no bipartisan, nationally-organized effort at recruitment, retention, and "citizen schooling." State organizations have begun to spring up to recruit/train women for open seats, but these efforts are too local to have a national impact yet. ⁵²

Spotlight on minority women: Women of racial/ethnic and sexual/gender and other minorities have (rightly) felt excluded from mainstream feminist movements in this country in the past. ⁵³ Yet minority women are essential to the work and success of feminism, both because they are a significant portion of "women" in this country and also because their concerns and claims for justice are both parallel and intertwined with those of white women. Any successful feminist movement will need an understanding of intersectionality, and an appreciation for the additional concerns of women who are not white, middle-class, cisgender, or able-bodied. Yet it will also need agreement that, whatever our differences, there are things that women as a group share.⁵⁴ It is incumbent on the leaders of the movement to do (and force their activists to do, and often to re-do) the work involved in both recognizing/appreciating and then surmounting difference. This work was originally called "consciousness raising (CR)," and it is sorely need today, when feminism and women's studies seems more focused on what divides rather than what unites women. For example, at a 2007 Salzburg Global Seminar conference on women's leadership in politics, 50 assembled delegates from over 30 countries initially had a hard time agreeing that they all shared any feminist concerns across such wide gulfs of country, culture, religion, and more. When finally a woman from India explained how she lived in fear of sexual violence, and all the heads around the room began nodding, the delegates realized they had more in common than they thought.

ACTION STEPS

In the next 2 years:

- Feminist political organizations need to agree and work together toward certain shared precepts:
 - o "Democracy without women is not democracy"
 - o "Every open seat a woman's seat"
- ➤ Initiate shared feminist organizations and foundations massive project to recruit women to run ("The Septima Clark Project"?)
- ➤ Legislatures at all levels (local, state, and national) should debate explicitly and put into practice gender-conscious practices⁵⁵, including family-friendly rules and committee (and

- other debate-forum) rules and practices that rely on structure and respect rather than interruption and competition 56
- ➤ Campaign finance reform initial steps
 - O Begin laying legal groundwork toward constitutional amendment against idea of "corporate personhood"
 - o Set overall campaign expenditure limits and expand public funding for campaigns
 - O Allow candidates who make under a certain annual income to pay themselves a salary (and to buy health insurance) through a campaign
- ➤ Initiate discussion with all political parties, especially the 2 major ones, about candidate gender-equality "agreements" or "business targets"
 - o "No more than 60% of candidates drawn from either sex"
- Need diminution of rules and procedures that make voting more difficult (need to simplify voting, decrease registration barriers, expand franchise, encourage full participation)

In next 5 years:

- ➤ Continue and expand demands that "Every open seat is a woman's seat"
- ➤ Hold parties accountable to force adoption and enforcement of candidate gender targets
- Pass constitutional amendment to prohibit corporate personhood
- ➤ Continue and expand recruitment and "citizenship schooling" work through "Septima Clark Project"
 - O Women's political groups of all varieties can do research in their local areas and with their own members to determine how best to convince women that a.) politics matters, and b.) they should run, and report their promising results out as "best practices"
- ➤ Continue and expand efforts for constitutional equality based on sex⁵⁷
- Force national, state, and local legislative bodies to enact legislation ensuring access to reproductive choice and affordable high-quality child care

In next 10 years:

- ➤ Get parties to agree and commit to precept of "Every open seat a woman's seat"
- Continue to pressure parties (both from inside and outside) to live up to agreed-upon "targets" for women as candidates; ensure that these women are not all hopeless challengers ("sacrificial lambs")
- ➤ Begin to legally re-examine reasoning in Buckley v. Valeo that money is equivalent to political speech, and develop legal arguments that this violates equal protection
- > Pass constitutional guarantee of sex equality

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Notes

- ¹ Compiled from data given in CAWP 2014
- ² Rosenbluth, Kalla, and Teele 2015, 4
- ³ Political Parity 2015
- ⁴ Political Parity 2014
- ⁵ Representation 2020, Norris and Lovenduski 1995, Rule 1981
- ⁶ Wattenberg 1996
- ⁷ Schumpter 1976, 269
- ⁸ Parity 2014, Thomsen 2013
- ⁹ Dahlerup 2003, 2006; see also Norris and Krook 2011
- ¹⁰ Source: International IDEA 2012
- ¹¹ Bowles et al. 2005
- ¹² Center for Responsive Politics 2013, re:Gender et al. 2014
- 13 Carnes 2013
- ¹⁴ See also Krook 2009; Norris and Krook 2011; Dahlerup 2006 and 2003
- ¹⁵ Higher Heights and CAWP 2014; Parity 2014
- ¹⁶ Mansbridge 1999; Alexander 2012
- ¹⁷ Hewlett 2007, Crittenden 2002; Thomas 2002; Williams 2000
- ¹⁸ Rosenbluth, Kalla, and Teele 2015
- ¹⁹ Silbermann forthcoming
- ²⁰ Ibid
- ²¹ Political Parity 2013
- ²² Political Parity 2015
- ²³ Landes 1989, Hufton 1988
- ²⁴ Seneca Falls Convention 1848; Morgan 1994 [1970]; Schneir 1994; Schneir 1972
- ²⁵ Goodman 2007
- ²⁶ See also Faludi 1991, Kathlene 1994, Bowles et al 2005
- ²⁷ Mutz 2007; Mutz and Reeves 2005
- ²⁸ Lawless and Fox 2010, 2005; Shames 2014
- ²⁹ Shames 2014
- 30 Ibid
- 31 Ibid
- 32 Krook 2009; Kathlene 1994; see also Fletcher 1999
- 33 Ibid
- 34 Winter 2010
- 35 Thomsen 2013; see also Political Parity 2014
- ³⁶ Dye 1984; see also Conway, Ahern, and Steuernagel 1999
- 37 McDonagh 2009
- 38 UNIFEM 2015
- ³⁹ Williams 2000; MacKinnon 2001; Iverson and Rosenbluth 2010; Okin 1989
- ⁴⁰ Iverson and Rosenbluth 2010; Okin 1989
- 41 Okin 1989
- ⁴² Okin 1989
- ⁴³ MacKinnon 2000
- 44 Iversen & Rosenbluth 2010, xv; see also Williams 2000
- 45 Eisenstein 1995
- 46 Thomas 1994
- ⁴⁷ Woolf 1938
- ⁴⁸ Goss 2013
- ⁴⁹ Skocpol 1999
- ⁵⁰ Lawless and Fox 2010, 2005
- ⁵¹ In this vein, we could all take a page from Septima Clark's book (see African-American Registry N.D., North Carolina Humanities Council 2015).
- ⁵² See, for example, the "Close the Gap CA" project (Close the Gap 2015)
- ⁵³ Crenshaw 1991; Combahee 1981 [1977]; see also Strolovitch 2007
- ⁵⁴ Hooks 2000; Young 1994 and 1990; see also the "Consciousness Raising Manual," available in the NOW Historical Archives

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Representation-2020, "Gender Conscious"
 Freeman 1973
 MacKinnon 2014