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**Lizzy:** Hi, I'm Lizzy Ghedi-Ehrlich.

**Lisa:** And I'm Lisa Hernandez.

**Lizzy:** And we're the hosts of Scholar Strategy Network's No Jargon. Every other week, we discuss an American policy problem with one of the nation's top researchers without jargon.

**Lisa:** And today we are sticking with tradition and talking before the interview and speaking of tradition, we're thinking a lot about, like, traditionally, or what is known as gender dynamics, as gender in general. How do women fit into different political parties, ideologies, et cetera? So I'm excited as someone who identifies as a cis— as a woman in general, but also maybe doesn't identify with some of the political affiliations of the women that we are talking about.

**Lizzy:** Sure. I think so. That's what this conversation is fundamentally about. Our scholar today is a woman who has researched Christian conservative women as a political force, like who they are, what their motivations are. And it's one of those things that if you're a part of this community, you would just say, what are you even talking about? Like, how do you, like, this feels either infantilizing or anthropological. We're not aliens. This just is the world.

**Lisa:** Yeah.

**Lizzy:** And then consistently women like us who are not part of those communities and see the policy positions that they take as not just limiting and harmful, but also seemingly very hypocritical. You know, that's the thing that, so my family would constantly get hung up on what seems like the hypocrisy of especially like conservative Christian women. How are they backing policies that seem so misogynistic? How are they getting behind a person who seems so anti-Christian and so crude? And I just think it's not that simple.

**Lisa:** Absolutely. And I think it's interesting to dive into maybe a little bit of what the appeal is behind some of the narratives, behind some of the goals that a lot of Christian conservative women share with folks and that bring people into Christian conservative movement overall. Like, women are a huge driver in policy. In just media engagement overall. I mean, I feel like

every single friend that I have spoken to over the last couple of years at some point we have talked about tradwives. At some point we have touched on the Nara Smith or the cooking or the baking of it all. Even if it's just as simple as the aesthetics of it, it is something that is so appealing to culture overall.

**Lizzy:** Yeah. Well, what's really exciting about the interview that we are about to, uh, present to you all is that, you know, that's kind of that surface-level discourse that I think a lot of us are exposed to. If you're on Instagram, then you have seen a tradwife and maybe that's where you've left it. But there's that level of discourse that is, like what Christian conservative women online are sort of presenting to the world.

The scholar that we spoke to today is someone who actually did the deep research and embedding and interviewing with these people and asking them questions about their lives and hearing them out in ways that were truly just meant to get to their truth as opposed to make anyone else think or feel anything differently. And I think that's a really big piece of this puzzle. And so for anyone who's seen any of that content and is like, what is going on here? That's what we're going to talk about.

That is what I spoke about with Katie Gaddini. She is a sociologist and an associate professor at University College London and currently a visiting scholar at Stanford University. So we have her here stateside. Her new book, *Esther's Army: The Christian Women Who Power the American Right*, comes out June 30th. So by the time of airing, it might be available for you to take a look at now. And it examines how right-wing Christian women have become the political force that we already agree that they are. Here's our conversation.

Professor Gaddini, welcome to No Jargon.

**Katie:** Thanks for having me. It's great to be here.

**Lizzy:** Super excited to talk to you today. I love all of our scholars, and I love learning different things. Your issue area that we're going to talk about today is one that I have studied in the past and is perennially of interest to me. And so I'm super excited to talk to you. I love those conversations too. We could relate this to a lot of things, but we're going to start with our current federal government. I think that's the conversation that a lot of people, you know, most want to have.

When Trump first appeared, he wasn't an immediate favorite of conservative Christian women for reasons that I think seemed clear enough to people both inside and outside that community at the time. But there was and continues to be, though it has become, I think, somewhat tempered, this sense of incredulity among people who aren't part of conservative Christian communities in America that they could ever support him.

And, women in particular, here was a person who broke a lot of their rules, who was very coarse about it. These are things that we think are really critical to the identity of that American conservative Christian woman. And also seemed really intent on not just misogyny, because I think we'll unpack even like what that looks like and how it functions in that culture, but objectifying and sexualizing women in a way that seems to be a cornerstone of, or an anti-cornerstone of the conservative Christian female identity. Instead, we have this.

You have spent years studying religious identity, formation, how religious identity and politics are, are entwined in America. It's not right to say that that's a new thing, but certainly you've studied the trends and what we're seeing in the last few decades. Your book that will have come out, I think, right at the time of airing, but the brand new book, *Esther's Army*, explores the role of conservative Christian women in that current interweaving process of religion and politics.

So I kind of want to start there. I know that's a big question, like, how do we explain the really strong support that we've seen and continue to see through weathering all of these instances where other people who aren't part of those conservative Christian communities are going, wait, isn't this against your guys' rules? Like, why are these women still showing up for this and, and with the strength that they are?

**Katie:** So the really short answer is that conservative Christian women have a different set of priorities. So they don't prioritize or understand their gender in the same way as liberal women do. And I know that seems really simplistic and it seems obvious, but it plays out in a lot of different ways. So understanding your gender and understanding what it means to be a woman does not mean supporting abortion rights. For them, it means supporting abortion restrictions, which President Trump has done. And that becomes more important than comments he may make about women while being recorded or his conduct with women when it comes to his life outside of the presidency. And that simply does not matter as much to them.

**Lizzy:** We're recording this on April 27th. Lately, there's been a lot of striking Trump-related news about his engagement with Christianity, different strains of Christianity specifically. There was the AI-generated image depicting him as a Christlike figure. There's this public feud with the Pope. Catholicism, of course, is different than evangelical Christianity, but there's still a piece of, you know, the Christian tradition here in the U.S. And these incidents seem like they provided even more fodder for people outside those communities to go like, okay, they've got to be upset by this.

**Katie:** Right.

**Lizzy:** What do you see from your history of talking to actual people who lived through incidents like these, but also all of the others that have happened before even Trump showed up on the scene? How are they kind of processing those kinds of incidents?

**Katie:** You know, it's interesting. I would say that some of those violations of Christian identity have been more upsetting for conservative Christian women than some of the women generally gender-related violations. So if we want to do a straight comparison between the AI-generated image, which Trump later said was him as a doctor, not Jesus, even though it looked remarkably like a Jesus figure, that was more upsetting than when it was revealed that he paid hush money to a porn star, for example.

And that was because it was seen as violating the sacredness of Jesus and of their Christian faith. Same with some of the feud language that he and J.D. Vance have gotten into with the Pope. That being said, though, those sorts of instances are also coming on the heels of wider splits and sort of fissures within the MAGA movement that have been upsetting some conservative Christians. So it'd be hard to know if they would be as upset about these sort of Christian violations if there wasn't already a lot of frustration with Trump over some of his policies, especially his foreign policies.

**Lizzy:** Got it. So it's layered some, but let's, let's go back for a second because, I mean, your short answer was, was excellent and succinct, but I do want to unpack more like, what is it about Christian womanhood that did make this candidate, this movement, something that has fit so naturally that it's been able to weather so much?

**Katie:** So Trump really embodies this sort of strongman masculinity that allows a lot of conservative Christian women to then embody a sort of femininity that they find a natural fit and foil. And this is a sort of gender roles that are mirrored within their church communities, within their faith communities, within their friendships. And it's the sort that prizes womanhood as being vulnerable and having a sense of needing protection, prioritizing marriage, straight marriage, prioritizing motherhood, care for the family. And Trump reflected that not only in his persona, but in his stated policies, which then, from what women told me, allowed them to inhabit the sort of Christian womanhood that they wanted to inhabit anyway, and that they felt called to inhabit.

**Lizzy:** I mean, I kind of want to ask the million-dollar question. And this is an outsider's question. I want to situate it that way. And this is from conversations that you and I have had, you know, some of my background of studying this because I was an outsider. What is it about that version of womanhood that is pitched to all of us to varying degrees, and you can be part of a closed community that pitches it real hard and gives you plenty of examples. But it's not that they're all tricked into making a choice. Like, this is truly deeply resonant for a lot of people. It is a choice chosen freely a lot of times. And I'm interested in just who it is that makes that choice, what that feeling is like for them. And partially this is also bringing in your personal story, that you are not an outsider in the same way that I am. You bring your background as the daughter of a Baptist minister, someone who experienced some tenets of this culture, into your work and into your scholarship. What's your understanding of what's happening with this concept of womanhood?

What is allowing these people to still even sometimes claim the mantle of feminism while saying, this is my conceptualization of a woman and I, and I choose it, and this is the political path that's allowing me to enact it?

**Katie:** A lot of women find value and find meaning in more traditional forms of femininity, and especially in this conservative Christian womanhood. They find power, they access power that way, they get to make a lot of decisions within the household. They receive power within their communities for being wives, for being mothers, and for being knowledgeable and caring about matters related to the home. And so it's, it's deeply valued within that community, and then it bestows value on the women that inhabit it. And what's interesting when it comes to politics is that traditionally, sort of entering into politics was seen as more masculine territory within these communities. And so you had to enter into it in a very careful way. And I'm thinking of the 1970s and '80s and the Phyllis Schlafly types that kind of entered through the back door of, you know, I'm called to do it. I'm not formally involved in politics, but I'm advocating for these certain issues. Whereas now that's really shifted, and especially the younger women I met, they aspire to a career in politics. So there have been shifts. shifts within how femininity and masculinity are understood while still retaining some of the core tenets and some of the values associated with traditional femininity.

**Lizzy:** That does feel like a bit of a shift. We— to rewind for a second, tell us briefly who Phyllis Schlafly was for listeners who maybe hadn't lived through that era.

**Katie:** Yes, of course. And so Phyllis Schlafly came up actually in the late '60s. She was a Catholic wife living in Missouri, and she had several children. And she became very agitated with the Equal Rights Amendment, which was proposed across the United States. It had to be ratified by a certain number of states in order to become a national law. And she began her activism opposing it. And it really became about opposing feminism at the same time. So she was opposing second-wave feminism and traveling throughout the country. She started an organization called the Eagle Forum. She later went to law school so that she had these sort of legal knowledge to argue against the Equal Rights Amendment on legal terms.

And she was wildly successful. I mean, because of the women that she rallied, they defeated the Equal Rights Amendment. It still hasn't had passage in the United States. The Eagle Forum is still in existence today. And the irony of Phyllis Schlafly is that she advocated for traditional gender roles and women staying at home and opposed all the second-wave feminist ideas. And yet she herself was out there campaigning and going to law school. She even had a few failed runs for office and yet never achieved that. Never achieved any sort of formal political positions.

**Lizzy:** I think the story of Phyllis Schlafly is an important frame for everything that we're experiencing now, because, I mean, she so embodies what many would name as sort of the

supreme irony of strong women leaders advocating against women as power holders. But to me, it's less about the fact that she is ironic and more about the fact that she was successful. So, you know, I think that's an interesting thing for folks to think about. But you're seeing today your current work, you, you know, you've looked back into history at figures like Phyllis Schlafly, but you've also been talking to a lot of modern conservative Christian women, including younger people, people who are sort of, you know, working in this new space that involves influencers on the internet. Like we've kind of expanded the roles that I think people, women generally, honestly, can play to maintain this kind of soft power. Tell us more about the range of women that you discuss. In *Esther's Army* and kind of those different archetypes and maybe what's their— what's the thread that holds them together?

**Katie:** Yeah, so this research took place, I have to say, almost 10 years. I had a lot of data. I did interviews and participant observation all over the country. I think I covered 28, 29 states of the 50. And when it came time to organize the data into something coherent to write the book, I saw that there were recurring patterns, there was a recurring type of women. So I mapped them out. And that's how I structured the book as well.

So I cover everything from college idealists that I interviewed on conservative college campuses, all the way up to the powerhouses who are women that run for or, and/or hold office. I covered lawyers, Black activists, I cover Latina women, mama bears, white suburbanites, and social media influencers. And I found that this allowed me to really showcase the breadth of conservative Christian women who are politically active in the United States today. And that was one of the aims of the book as well, is to kind of dispel this idea that conservative Christian women are— there's only one type. They are meek, they are mild, they have very little impact. They're just doing what their husbands are telling them to do. And instead to show that, oh no, this is a very deep and wide force that is showing up in corners that you might not expect if you're not familiar with them.

**Lizzy:** Yeah, no, it is truly a breathtakingly diverse coalition. I have been really struck by that. So why a coalition then? Is it simple— is just like gender essentialism and this idea of like what a woman is the single linchpin, or are there other things binding them?

**Katie:** I think the sort of gendered coalition that we see under the MAGA movement is similar to the MAGA movement as a whole, which the 2024 election showed us. It's a diverse coalition when it comes to race and social class and ethnicity, and that is reflected in the women as well. There are some distinctions between kind of how men and women play out with the coalition in numbers, but this sort of diversity cuts across gender lines under MAGA, and I'm presenting the sort of female version of it.

**Lizzy:** Well, tell me more about some of these women then. You named kind of the different groups and there was, I mean, so much diversity even within those groups. I fall prey to, when I think of a conservative Christian woman, I think of like a middle-aged married white woman. And right away, your schema that you presented included people who in the titles that you use are explicitly not that. Like, tell me some stories. Who are some of the people that you met who exemplified what you're talking about?

**Katie:** Yeah. So one of the surprises that I found was definitely the racial diversity. So I. I knew about the white suburban middle-aged women that it was really familiar to me having grown up in Republican conservative Christian communities. Numerically, that is the majority of conservative Christian women voters in the country. You know, we're talking like 33 million. But when the more I went to rallies and events and town hall meetings, the coalition of women got more and more diverse.

So one thing that surprised me was the Latina presence. And I've spent a lot of time in Latin America. I knew the statistics in the US when it came to Latina voters, they tend to vote Democrat. And yet they were popping up at a lot of the rallies I was attending, especially the maternal activism. So there are kind of loose groups of women that are politically active under the name of being a mom and being a protective mom. Sometimes they call themselves mama bears. And these groups And these rallies became more and more diverse when it came to Latinas. So a lot of times there would be signs and speakers speaking in Spanish. There would be a lot of merchandise in Spanish. All of the events had subtitles in Spanish or in English, depending on who was speaking.

So I found this really curious and I was kind of wondering, okay, how did these women get involved in this form of politics? I knew the Republican Party has been courting Latinos in the US for decades. This has been like a target demographic they've been wanting to capture, especially as the country grows in numbers when it comes to Latinos. But I knew it probably wasn't going to be a straight case of just like, we've been courting them and we finally won.

So what surprised me is to find out that one of the biggest groups I studied, which is Don't Mess With Our Kids, actually started in Peru. And we tend to think, unfortunately, US scholars think this all the time. You probably don't think this, but we think that, oh, you know, the, the Christian nationalism and the Christian right really start here, and it radiates out to the rest of the world. And some of the repercussions that we're seeing right now in France and Italy and Hungary and Brazil are a U.S. phenomenon that has had these repercussions. And to a very small extent, that's true. But actually, a lot of it is coming from the outside in.

And this is what happened with Don't Mess With Our Kids. So a man named Christian Rosas in Peru started this group Con Mis Hijos No Te Metas, and from there, it spread throughout Latin America. And a woman pastor in Oregon heard about the group and was like, that sounds like a very successful political group. She imported it to the United States. She gave it an English name. She did podcast interviews with Cristian Rosas, who speaks English fluently and has started the movement based on the Peruvian model.

I just found that really surprising to think about some of these transnational flows and how some of these ideas are landing in the United States, how they're getting picked up here, and then how they're getting picked up by groups that are now agitating and politically active in supporting the MAGA movement, which at the same time is a movement that is really focused on dehumanizing Latin American migrants, really draconian immigration policies, ICE protocols, et cetera. It just opens up a whole new field of inquiry that I hadn't anticipated, and I certainly hadn't anticipated the way that this movement started.

**Lizzy:** That sounds like in some ways maybe a more relevant irony than the ones that we've a little bit dispatched with already.

How did you see women who were inhabiting those multiple identities? On the one hand, the mama bear identity that is finding its home in a more gender essentialist politics versus cultural, ethnic, racial identity that really is being attacked in that same space. How were they dealing with that? Or did people have conversations with you about I could also understand that being really sensitive for folks.

**Katie:** Yeah. I mean, they really led with the idea of being a Christian mom and having that in common with the women they were organizing with was the number one point of commonality and the thing that mattered the most. So it's kind of like all other policies fell away. And I found that myself when I was at these rallies, women would approach me and I was a new mom at the time and, you know, would say to me, you know, you need to care about what's going on in the schools. And I'd say, oh, you know, I have an 18-month-old and I'm not really, you know, thinking about that. And they'd say, you got to start early. It's really important.

So even in those exchanges with other women, no matter who they were, where they came from, the thing that was the most important is we are Christian moms and we have a shared mission. And we need to focus on that shared mission and nothing else matters beyond that.

So, in more academic terms, I see this as a way of offering a conditional racial inclusion to this group of women, almost like what they have in common is more important than what they don't.

**Lizzy:** Which also seems like, well, they're already practiced at conditional inclusion because that sounds like that's sort of a main part of being a politically active conservative Christian woman is also understanding sort of the limitations of how you fit into a movement or into voice.

**Katie:** Oh, I just wanted to add as well that sort of having a common enemy allows that particular mama bear coalition to hold together. So the common enemy certainly leading up to the 2024 election was trans rights, and gender and sexual diversity. And this has been extrapolated by this particular population to be concerned about how gender and sexual

diversity are affecting children. Having that in common allowed a common enemy, and it allowed these new lines of inclusion and exclusion to be drawn.

I interviewed Catalina Stube, who is the Hispanic outreach coordinator for Moms for Liberty, which is the biggest and most well-known and well-funded conservative moms organization. And she told me that when it comes to the Latina presence, they are similarly— these were her words— similarly concerned about transgender identities. She used a different term that I'm not going to repeat, and how that has allowed them to organize alongside Americans, which I understand as white American moms.

So I think that just makes it really clear that having that in common has brought them together and they are understanding that common threat through their identities of being Christian and being Christian mothers.

**Lizzy:** Yeah. Another sort of subcategory of MAGA women that I think is interesting for its diversity and for the effect that viewing it has had on people outside of it, their continued kind of confusion and dismay. And I'm talking about MAHA, the Make America Healthy Again regiment. This is another— this is a big space for moms. What do you make of that? Like, what's the through line there?

**Katie:** Yeah. So I will say when it comes to MAHA, I know that there are a lot of moms involved in MAHA, and I certainly found that in my research. And that's certainly sort of the lead when it comes to mainstream media reports. But there are a lot of non-moms in MAHA as well.

So Alex Clark, who I interviewed for my book, is one of the top MAHA influencers, and she's single, and she's in her early 30s. And she's not the only one. She has an audience of women who are in their 20s and 30s. Many of them are moms, and she told me this, and I've certainly seen this online, but a lot of them aren't. She also appeals to sort of a Gen Z and millennial single woman who cares about her health and wellness and is a Christian type of audience.

So that is one of the remarkable features about MAHA is that it does include moms, but it also includes single women. It includes liberal crunchy women. It includes conservative homesteaders, school moms. It is a very fragile coalition because it is made up of such strange bedfellows. I am very curious to see how it is going to continue to evolve or hang together, especially after Trump's presidency and after Robert F. Kennedy's tenure comes to an end, because it is very tenuous.

And Alex Clark was really open about this in the interview. She's like, I don't know how this is going to go, but right now we're focused on our common goals. And we're going to, you know, we previously hated each other and we're going to continue to try to work together. So yeah, that's a space I'm interested to watch. It seems less unified than the mama bears, the ethnic and racial diversity of the mama bears that we talked about. That seemed much more coherent and cohesive.

**Lizzy:** For me, I guess it feels like that's a space where it's coming down to individualism as the highest order element. We don't parent collectively. And I don't know, but then I'm interested because a lot of the groups of people that you study are so collective-oriented.

I mean, just the idea of a church is really about like building a community outwards from that family unit. Do you, how do you see that? What did you hear from people when they talk about like their personal charge to do what they do versus the group that they're part of?

**Katie:** Yeah, I think it— they move back and forth between the two. So certainly when it comes to the mama bears, they are advocating not just for their children, but the nation's children. So there's not a demarcation between children that, let's say, are living in Christian households and those that are not. They believe all children in the United States need to be protected from the left, from what they call woke ideology, from gender and sexual diversity.

So there's a sort of imagination of the collective in that sense. And the responsibility of that is on the Christian mother writ large. Then there's certainly a lot of concern when it comes to the individual and not wanting the government to have any interference, any sort of say when it comes to childcare or public education, migration, immigration, vaccine skepticism. All of those can often be couched in individualistic terms.

I will say as well though, just returning to the topic of MAHA, that MAHA also runs the gamut. So I've seen everything from pretty wild conspiracy theories within that movement to what I would consider as a social scientist, very sensible proposals to limit, let's say, chemicals that have been shown to be harmful to our health.

So, so there's, there's a wide range and another facet of diversity that feels relatively rare.

**Lizzy:** Those are some interesting back blows for sure.

**Katie:** Yeah, definitely. I mean, I was part of a social media group with a lot of Christian women who were MAHA. And at times, I mean, at one point when there were these new FEMA alerts that were coming out on our cell phones, I forget what that was around, but it was to trial for a real emergency. And there was chatter in the group that it was going to turn people who had taken the COVID vaccine into aliens. And so several women posted that their husbands were taking the day off of work. They were going to go hide out in the woods away from any 5G, any cell phones, and any people who might have been vaccinated. So, we have that sort of thought going on in the group. And then there were postings about how chemicals in Roundup can be harmful and some of the pesticides and some of the lax regulations in the United States when it comes to health and safety and medication, which I agree with.

**Lizzy:** So those, you know, I agree with those not on ideological grounds, but because that's an evidence-based statement. We know that these things, we've proven that they're harmful and

we've proven that regulatory capture or lax regulatory frameworks have allowed them to still harm people.

**Katie:** So it can be disorienting as a scholar to find yourself in a space where you're feeling like, oh yeah, that makes a lot of sense. I agree with this. And then suddenly out of, you know, left field, something comes out about people turning into aliens or Democrats controlling the weather or how all vaccines are harmful and detrimental and, and, and do really bad things. So my own reaction to it was a really good barometer for how wide-ranging and diverse the ideas within this fragile coalition can be.

**Lizzy:** I still wonder, we've outlined some of the ways that, or some of the things that these people have in common that are allowing them to move together toward common goals. And yet it still feels like there's a level of irony at times. You know, what's different, I guess, is my question between your reaction to seeing that divergence to saying, yeah, I agree that certain types of pesticides are harmful to people. We know this. And yet I'm not ready to move towards aliens. What's the difference between that reaction and someone who is a little bit less uncomfortable with that, or maybe someone who works through their discomfort and stays?

**Katie:** Yeah, I think that's part and parcel of political organizing, is understanding that there's going to be parts of the movement that you agree with and parts that you don't. But if the larger mission and vision is the same, then you can hang in there. And I think the pandemic was so mentally catastrophic to all of us. And there was no sense in what was happening at the time. And I think that people are still trying to make sense of that period and the aftermath. And some people made sense of it with ideas that we might consider conspiracy ideas.

And those haven't gone away. It entered them on a path that they are still on. And I feel a sense of understanding and deep empathy because I too felt that sense of nothing makes sense right now and the world is topsy-turvy. We reached for different explanations of what happened and we are at different places now on where that path led us. But I really think the pandemic was a watershed moment when it came to birthing some of these coalitions. changing some of these mindsets and setting in motion a form of politics that is reliant in many cases on conspiracy.

**Lizzy:** I hate to ask scholars questions that seem like I'm asking for predictions, but I just, I just feel so prompted by what you just said. I'm like, okay, so as we get further away from that singular catalyzing event that had this huge effect on everyone, how do you see things going? Do you think ultimately the fragility that you're seeing in some of the kind of more hinky spaces within the MAGA movement that are working with Christian women are going to become equally fragile? Or do we think there's actually more power building going on here? And is it going to snowball further?

**Katie:** Well, I can say this comfortably. There is more uncertainty and instability in our country that continues to happen. We are at war currently. There was another assassination attempt on the president a few days ago.

These are more destabilizing events that are going to cause people, all of us, to look for explanations and reason and understanding. So if you've already been set in motion on a path that is finding holes and alternative storylines within these unstable events, these current happenings are going to push you further in that direction. See any sort of evening out in the United States or globally right now in such a way that is going to cause people to sort of let down their guard or move away from that path that they're already on.

**Lizzy:** You have forged some actual relationships with folks in these spaces. You've done at least like interviews where it sounds like people spoke very freely with you for a large part of it. And that must have, must have been some tension there for you as well. But like, was there anyone who maybe opened up a crack a little bit into the difficulty of being themselves in these spaces?

**Katie:** I mean, women spoke about struggles that they faced, but it wasn't couched in, I have to present myself this way, and yet this is what I'm really dealing with behind the scenes. I suppose one example is I interviewed a woman who is a lawyer at the Heritage Foundation, which is a conservative think tank in DC and helped draft Project 2025, which if you're not familiar with, just pause this podcast and go have a quick look online. And she worked crazy hours. She had 6 kids. She was hoping to have more kids. She was Catholic. And I said, how are you managing to keep the ship afloat? And she said, oh, and they homeschool the kids as well. And she said, well, my dad moved in with us to help with childcare. My husband only works part-time so he can do the homeschooling. We let the kids for the large part kind of homeschool themselves. And that's the arrangement behind the scenes. And I'm not sure if she ever would have led with that sort of representation because that doesn't fit with the conservative Christian model, you know, to be having a dad and a husband kind of do the childminding and the homeschooling while you're working a high-powered DC job.

So I think there's— and she certainly would never call herself a feminist, even though to my mind, that's quite a feminist arrangement. There's sort of the story you get on the face of it. And then there's the behind-the-scenes way that women are making it work. And I saw that even with some of the archival research I did in the historical figures from the '80s, I interviewed— did some oral history interviews with women who worked for Reagan's administration, pretty high up. And they were hardcore, like women should be at home and we should be homeschooling and multiple kids. And yet when I looked at their travel memos in the archive, I saw they were traveling every week across the country, speaking engagements, meetings with the president, and they had other people watching their children and doing, making the meals. So this sort of tension has been going on for a long time.

I think it's probably pretty hard as a conservative woman if you have that set of beliefs about child rearing and being a wife and mom, and you also really want the career, you have to find a way to navigate that tension behind the scenes and also what you present outwardly.

**Lizzy:** Yeah. Well, yet another thing that is not exclusive to conservative women or Christian women. Yeah, I'm like, we're all, we're all doing that for sure.

**Katie:** So we are just different levels of sort of what we feel we can admit to.

**Lizzy:** I will leave it at that because I think that was a really poignant note. And I'm very excited to read your book. And I'm very excited for folks to hear what you have to say. So thank you so much for joining us today.

**Katie:** Thanks, Lizzy.

**Lizzy:** Thank you everyone for listening. For more on Professor Gaddini's work, check out our show notes at [scholars.org/nojargon](https://scholars.org/nojargon).

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