

SVO: In your view, what are the disadvantages women face for being part of a field that is predominantly male?

LM: The professor and lawyer Joan Williams and her daughter Rachel Dempsey wrote an amazing book about this: *What Works for Women at Work* (Williams and Dempsey 2014). They interviewed 127 successful working women and signaled four main patterns that affect women at work.

The first pattern is called “Prove It Again.” This refers to the way women often have to prove themselves, time and again. “The Tight Rope” refers to the delicate, often impossible, balance women need to find between being feminine (and not being taken seriously) and masculine (and not being likable). The third pattern is called “The Maternal Wall,” which refers to the negative competence and commitment assumptions on becoming a mother. Even women without children are influenced by the Maternal Wall: they are expected to be available more than they should because of not having children. The fourth pattern is a combination of all of the above: “Tug of War” refers to the way gender bias against women creates conflicts among women. For instance, an older woman applies harsher standards to a younger woman because that is what it takes to succeed as a woman. I think these four patterns are very important because we see them everywhere, definitely also in academia.

SVO: What can we do about it?

LM: We need male allies. Research shows that quality of work increases in more diverse organizations, so this is in everyone’s interest. We need to invest in structures and institutions to try to change the culture. We need men on board to make that change (Mügge, Evans and Engeli 2015). Additionally, academia should become more diverse in terms of race, religion, and ethnicity. In the United States, APSA has a strong community of African American scholars; they are very visible. This is a challenge that European political science should take on (Mügge et al. 2018). ■

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ONE WOMAN’S CAREER PATH—WITH ADVICE FOR YOUNG WOMEN SCHOLARS

Patricia A. Hurley, *Texas A&M University*

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Some context for this article is necessary. I started my career being extremely naïve about gender discrimination in the world at large. My family never gave me any indication that I should have limited expectations for what I might accomplish because I am a woman. Parental expectations for me were high—and higher than they were for my brothers, at least from my perspective. After graduation from high school in 1968 (a date necessary for further context), I attended Newcomb College of Tulane University and graduated in 1972. Newcomb was a women’s college at that time and all of my classes (with only a few exceptions) in my first two years were populated only by female students. Gender bias in the classroom did not exist.

My cohort in graduate school at Rice University included only five people, of whom I was the only woman. There were no women on the faculty in the political science department at that time, but it was a small department and I did not give it much thought. Although I was a quiet student, it was not because I felt intimidated by men in my seminars. (I confess to being intimidated by students in the class ahead of me, who all seemed to know so much more than the members of the entering class.) Once I was far enough along in the program to have a dissertation committee (all male), I received support and encouragement for my work. Does this mean that the department was free of sexism? No. Certainly there were people (students and some faculty) who would tell an off-color joke, make the occasional comment that would be interpreted today as creating a hostile environment, or even occasionally say something outrageous directly to me. None of it was any worse than I had heard growing up with three brothers—this was simply the way the world was in those days, so I never took particular offense. If my fellow students were willing to tell that off-color joke in my presence, it simply was a sign that I was “one of the guys.” If a meeting with my committee reduced me to tears (it did once), it was not because they were harder on me than they were on the male students—it was because I was the one who cried. There were times I thought I would fail in those days, but it never occurred to me that I would fail because I was a woman.

After taking my first job in the summer of 1976 (a non-tenure-track position at the University of Houston), I began to recognize the professional difficulties that women faced because of their gender. There were tenure-track women on the faculty who seemed to be judged harshly because they were women. There were women on the faculty who found the environment intimidating because of the behavior of men. There were the conversations all about sports that seemed to leave women out. I received little, if any, mentoring from senior faculty, even while male colleagues also in non-tenure-track positions did receive such support. (I continued to receive mentoring from several dissertation committee members, who were in close geographic proximity.) Add to that the male students who approached their female professors inappropriately. Yes, there was gender bias in the academic world and I was just realizing it.

The atmosphere was far more supportive when I moved to a tenure-track position at Texas A&M in 1987, where I was encouraged, given resources, and chosen for administrative leadership positions, including two terms as department head and appointment

as associate dean of liberal arts. This is not to say there is no gender bias at that institution but, in my experience, it was limited (and, oddly, more pronounced when I had more senior rank). The worst was from students exhibiting inappropriate behaviors.

Yet, I rarely felt disadvantaged in my subfield of legislative studies because of my sex. There were not many women in the subfield, but when I was just starting out, there were scholars senior to me (e.g., Barbara Sinclair) to consider as role models. It also is the case that the entire field was smaller at that time, and there were fewer graduate students vying for the limited space to present papers on panels. Conferences have expanded to meet the demand for participation, but this means that not all panels are composed of equally prominent scholars. In the 1980s and 1990s, the odds of being placed on a panel with top scholars were much higher than today. Being on panels with top scholars meant that I was able to meet them, and the folks who came to a panel to hear them also had to hear me. It was easier for any young scholar in the field—and, therefore, for a young female scholar—to get beneficial exposure in the 1980s than it is today. And exposure leads to opportunities that lead to more exposure. I served a term on the editorial board of *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, twice organized panels for the Legislative Politics Section of the Midwest Political Science Association, did the same for the Southern Political Science Association once, and served as a member of the advisory panel for political science at the National Science Foundation. Whereas some might see this as thankless service work, it also is an opportunity for professional networking and getting one's name in front of people. I also participated in several specialized conferences on various aspects of the legislative process, sometimes through an application process and sometimes by invitation. These conferences provide good opportunities for networking and making people aware of one's work. Yet, at one such conference, I had the only seriously negative experience that I can remember that I attribute to gender bias. The paper I presented (with a male coauthor) critiqued on methodological grounds an earlier work on the same topic that was coauthored by a very senior scholar who also was at the conference. During a break, he cornered me to question that critique and take me to task for it. It was notable to me that he did not question my coauthor alone or the two of us together. My subsequent relations with that individual (who I encountered at panels and events) were rather chilly. However, if this is the only unpleasant experience I had related to gender, it is not so bad.

It is entirely possible that I was successful at being integrated into the field precisely because I am a woman. This is simply the serendipity of timing. In the 1980s and 1990s, universities and professional associations were making an effort to afford women more opportunities. If there was a demand to include women (e.g., on the program committee of a professional association) and there were not many women available, then the odds of being included were greatly increased. At its worst, this was tokenism. However, even tokenism gives one a seat at the table. The challenge is to take advantage of that seat.

The most significant change to the field since I was an assistant professor is that it is larger. There are more women, but there are more men too. Therefore, the competition is stiffer than it used to be. It is more difficult to have work accepted in top journals, and the proliferation of panels and the sheer size of conferences dilute the opportunities for networking. Ironically, women also may be currently disadvantaged by an increase in their numbers in the

field, which makes them a visible minority but does not give them parity with men.

Despite this situation, many aspects of the route to success today are no different than the ones I took: show up, speak up, be competent, and be responsible. Attend the important conferences, go to panels other than your own, join the relevant subfield sections, and attend their business meetings and social events. Present papers that are essentially finished products rather than works in progress. Be willing to serve as a panel chair or discussant and then do a good job. I have observed a remarkable decline in professionalism during the course of my career: people present papers that are too rough for prime time, panel chairs who do nothing more than keep time, and discussants who offer no useful comments to an author. They are joined by those who refuse to review for journals, write sloppy reviews, or send them in late. One simple step toward success is to counter this trend by cultivating a strong sense of professionalism. No matter the role, do your best work and always—and only—put your best work forward. Set high expectations for your career and recognize that, at least to a degree, you can control your achievements through your own efforts and abilities.

Some readers will conclude that I remain naïve about gender bias in the profession or lament that I have not addressed the repercussions of the #MeToo movement in the discipline. I acknowledge that both sexism and sexual harassment are problems in some departments and in parts of the discipline. But they are barriers that can be overcome by persistence and professionalism. Withdrawal in the face of bias is not an option. Success is the best revenge. ■

ADVICE FOR WOMEN AND FOR THEIR COLLEAGUES AND MENTORS: AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANCES E. LEE

SoRelle Wyckoff Gaynor, *University of Maryland*

Frances E. Lee, *Princeton University*

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SoRelle Gaynor (SG): When you first started graduate school or as a new professor, were you aware of a gender disparity in the field of legislative studies?

Frances Lee (FL): I wasn't. And, in fact, when I first started out, there were particular women scholars who were very visible in the legislative politics field. Obviously, there was Barbara Sinclair. There was Linda Fowler and Diana Evans as well. When I started my first job—a one-year research fellowship at Brookings right after grad school—Sarah Binder was on staff there and Wendy Schiller was a visiting scholar. I was well aware of work by all of these scholars as I studied for comps and worked on my dissertation. So, there seemed to be quite a few women in the field. It was only later, over time, that I began to see that women are a distinct minority in legislative studies. It's not unusual today to go to panels where most—if not all—of the panelists are men and most everyone in the audience is a man, too. But I wasn't cognizant of this at the start. That impression evolved over time.

SG: Do you see any reason for this gender imbalance? And what approach could legislative scholars take in addressing this gap?

FL: It seems to be true of the study of American institutions overall. The presidency subfield also is very male dominated, just like