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CHAPTER 26

Gender Experiments in Comparative Politics*

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Abstract

We review experiments in the field of comparative politics that take questions related to gender and power as their central theme. We first document the rise of experimental and quasi-experimental methods in this area and discuss their many advantages. We then summarize the most common types of questions asked in this literature. These include, for instance, how women gain and use bargaining power within the home and the effects of increasing the number of women in politics. We also present three design challenges inherent to the experimental study of gender: (1) that adults' attitudes on women's place in society tend to change only very slowly, often making them impervious to short-term interventions; (2) that gender biases often operate in context-specific ways that can elude survey experimental measurement; and (3) that scholars often face ethical challenges when designing interventions intended to alter existing gender power hierarchies. We conclude by discussing emerging topics in the subfield, including work that examines how candidate gender affects vote choice from a comparative perspective and research that considers how the content and salience of gender identity varies across individuals and contexts.

26.1 Introduction

Patriarchy is a near-universal organizing feature of human society. At the same time,

the degree of social, economic, and political inequality that women face varies dramatically over time and place. Gender and comparative politics scholars give insight both into the stubborn universality of patriarchy

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and into its considerable variations. To this end, experimental methods have become an increasingly popular tool for measuring the causes and consequences of women's power within their homes, communities, and governments.

In this chapter, we review experiments in the field of comparative politics that take questions related to gender and power as their central theme. We first document the increase of gender experiments within political science over the last 20 years, both broadly and within comparative politics specifically. We then highlight the advantages of experimental designs in this research area, noting common types of endogeneity that they can help researchers avoid. Next, we summarize the most common questions asked in this literature and discuss the general conclusions or major debates they have produced. In particular, we review experimental research related to household bargaining power, gender differences in political participation, citizen support for women in politics, and the substantive (policy-related) and symbolic (attitudinal and behavioral) effects of increasing women's political representation.¹

We then address three specific design challenges that emerge from the literature on the experimental study of gender: (1) that adults' attitudes about gender roles seldom change in the immediate wake of experimental interventions; (2) that gender biases often operate in complex and context-specific ways that can elude survey experimental measurement; and (3) that interventions to alter household or societal gendered power structures present several ethical challenges. We discuss what these challenges mean for open questions related to experimental design – for instance, the need for sustained interventions and

¹ In reviewing the field, we include research by economists who also frequently use experimental methods to examine questions related to gender and power. Experimental sociologists and social psychologists have played a less prominent role in the study of gender and power in comparative politics (in particular compared to their influence on research on gender in American politics), but we also reference related work from these disciplines.

long-term data collection efforts. In our conclusion, we also detail three emerging substantive research areas in the study of gender and comparative politics, namely: the need for more comparative work on the role of candidate gender on vote choice; research that examines men, rather than women, as a social category; and work that examines how gender is constructed across individuals and contexts, including how gender intersects with other salient identities.

26.2 The Rise of Gender Experiments in Comparative Politics

Experimental methodologies are an increasingly common tool in political science, and the study of gender in politics is no different. Figure 26.1 displays the number of gender and politics articles published in three well-ranked general interest political science journals (*American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, and *Journal of Politics*) over the last two decades. It also shows the number of these articles each year that use experimental or quasi-experimental methodologies.² Figure 26.2 displays similar data from three well-ranked comparative politics journals (*Comparative Political Studies*, *Comparative Politics*, and *World Politics*).

The number of gender and politics articles that use experimental methods has steadily increased over time. Within the general interest journals, between 2000 and 2009, only 6% of gender articles used experimental methods, but between 2010 and 2019, 30% used this approach. This trend has become particularly pronounced in the last two years. In 2018, 39% of gender articles used experimental methods, and in 2019, this number rose to 47%. The rise is less pronounced in comparative journals, but is still present. Between 2000 and 2009, no gender articles in these comparative journals used experimental

² We include all studies in which treatments are assigned at random. We also include quasi-experimental studies, those that do not strictly use random assignment, and this includes certain studies often characterized as natural experiments (see Dunning 2012; for an alternative conception, see Chapter 6 in this volume).

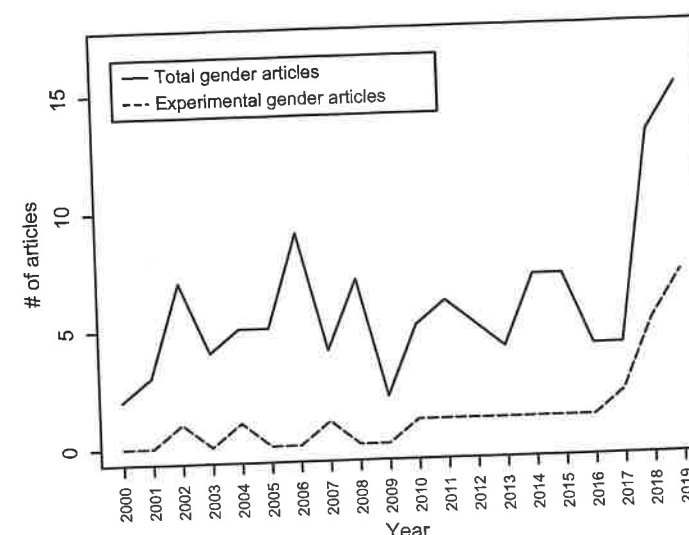


Figure 26.1 Total number of gender articles and experimental gender articles in three leading general interest political science journals (*American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, and *Journal of Politics*).

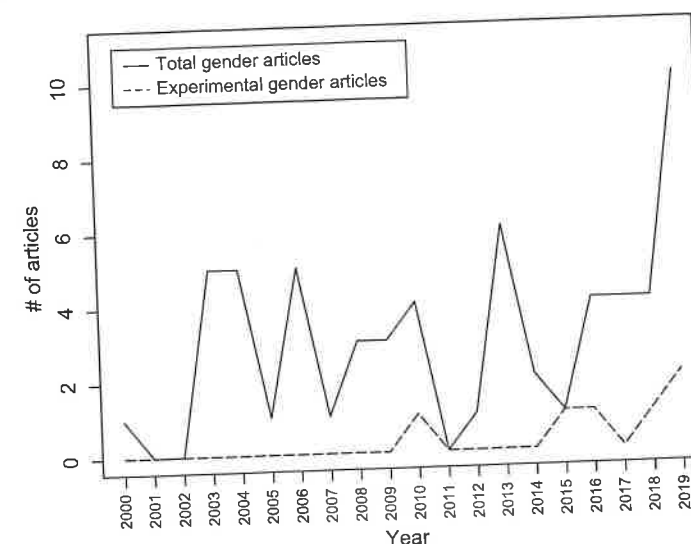


Figure 26.2 Total number of gender articles and experimental gender articles in three leading comparative politics journals (*World Politics*, *Comparative Political Studies*, and *Comparative Politics*).

methods. Between 2010 and 2019, this figure rose to 17%.

26.3 Advantages of Experimental Designs in Gender and Comparative Politics

Scholars have employed a wide range of experimental and quasi-experimental

techniques to examine questions related to gender and power.³ These methods have grown in popularity because they present several advantages over observational work. For example, scholars might want to

³ We define quasi-experimental studies as those in which subjects (or other units) are assigned to treatment and control groups, but without strict random assignment.

know whether exposure to more gender-equal legislatures causes citizens to update their beliefs about the capabilities and appropriateness of women in politics. The problem is, of course, that an electorate with more gender-egalitarian beliefs is also more likely to elect women representatives in the first place. And women in these societies are also more likely to put themselves forward for election. Similarly, scholars have observed that women citizens are more politically engaged when they have a woman representative or when a woman is running for a highly visible public office (Alexander 2012; Barnes and Burchard 2013; Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007). Yet, again, this relationship surely runs both ways: while a woman representative may inspire her women constituents to engage more in politics, an electorate with highly engaged women citizens is also more likely to elect women to public office in the first place. Further, many variables may confound these types of relationships. For instance, historically, democracies and governments led by left-leaning parties tended both to have higher numbers of women in elected office and to have citizens with more gender-egalitarian views. Observational work has a difficult time disentangling such instances of reverse causation and potential spuriousness.

Experimental designs avoid these types of issues that plague observational work and allow researchers to identify causal relationships of great scholarly and public import. For example, a policy experiment implemented by the government of India has allowed social scientists to identify the causal effect of women's political leadership on a host of outcomes related to public policy and public opinion. In 1993, India passed a constitutional amendment that reserved leadership positions in local governments (*gram panchayats* or GPs) for women. At this time, one-third of all GPs were randomly selected for reservation, and one-third of GPs have continued to be randomly selected for reservation in each election cycle since (Beaman et al. 2009, p. 1501). Women still compete with other women in reserved GPs, but men are not allowed

to compete, and almost no women win leadership positions in unreserved GPs. As we discuss in much greater detail below, this random assignment has allowed researchers to identify the causal effects of women's political leadership without fear that the factors that gave rise to women in power are also independently affecting the outcomes of interest. While in this chapter we detail many challenges in designing externally valid and ethical experiments, the ability of experimental designs to allow this type of causal identification cannot be overstated.

26.4 Gender in Comparative Politics: Common Questions Using Experimental Methods

Gender and politics scholars have employed experimental methodologies to investigate the field's foundational questions related to how women gain and exercise power within their homes, communities, and governments. While far from exhaustive, we group this work into four research areas: women's bargaining power within their homes, gender differences in political participation, citizen support for women in politics, and the effects of increasing women's descriptive (numeric) representation. We briefly review key findings in each area, as well as major debates and possibilities for future research.

26.4.1 Household Bargaining Power

Researchers have employed experimental methods to better understand the causes and consequences of women's power within the home. To begin, this body of work suggests that husbands and wives often have divergent preferences, and in situations of unequal bargaining power, men's preferences often prevail. For instance, in a survey with experimental behavioral measures in Pakistan, Khan (2018) finds that husbands and wives prioritize different types of public goods, but when asked, wives often express their husbands' preferences to political representatives. More specifically, she assigns respondents into one of three conditions: in

the first, respondents must give up part of their survey compensation to have their own priorities relayed to a local representative rather than their spouses'; in the second, respondents must forgo compensation to have their spouses' priorities relayed; and in the control, respondents may choose to have either their own or their spouses' priorities relayed at no cost. She finds the starkest gender gap in the control condition: 88% of men chose to relay their own priorities over their spouses', whereas only 24% of women do so. This gap closes substantially when the respondent must pay to relay their own rather than their spouse's priorities, but a difference still exists in this condition. While almost no men are willing to forgo income to relay their spouses' priorities, nearly 20% of women respondents still are. Moreover, gender gaps in the willingness to relay one's own priorities are most extreme in homes in which women have considerably less bargaining power than their husbands (as proxied by spousal age and education differences and women's employment outside the home, among other measures).

Research in this area further suggests that when opportunities to increase their bargaining power are available, women take them. For example, in a three-year field experiment in India, Jensen (2012) deploys a randomized intervention aimed at recruiting young women to work in call centers and other related industries to understand how employment opportunities affect women's family choices. He finds that young women in treated villages were significantly less likely to marry and have children than young women in control villages over the experiment's duration. In Norway, Skorge and Finseraas (2019) find that the quasi-random expansion of publicly subsidized daycare in Norwegian municipalities increased the likelihood that mothers sought out leadership positions at work. Collectively, this body of work suggests that reforms that grant women opportunities outside the home and relieve familial duties inside the home give women greater control over household decisions. This work also suggests that when women have access to their own resources, they tend

to delay marriage and childbearing, have fewer children, and continue to pursue work opportunities outside the home.

A related strand of literature examines how women's access to income affects household decisions related to child health. For instance, Duflo (2003) takes advantage of an expansion to a pension program to the Black population in post-Apartheid South Africa to examine how recipient gender affects children's health within the home. She does this in two ways. First, she compares children living in a household with men or women pension recipients above the age cutoff to those living in a household with an older man or woman within five years below the age cutoff. Second, for households with an age-qualified woman, an age-qualified man, or no eligible member, she compares the effects of children born after the expansion of the pension program to older children within the same home. Across comparisons, she finds pensions received by grandmothers – but not grandfathers – had a large effect on the weight and height of girls but not of boys living in the home. Her findings suggest that income in the hands of women disproportionately benefits girls in their households. On a related research question, Qian (2008) finds that random variation leading to higher tea prices in China, a crop traditionally picked by women, improves the survival rates of girls and increases the educational attainment of all children within the home. Both studies find that women's access to income causes household resources to be distributed more equally, and the studies suggest that these effects may operate through women's increased bargaining power within their homes.

In another research area, several recent studies have used variation in matrilineal or patrilineal kinship practices to examine gender differences in household bargaining power across groups, as well as gender gaps along other dimensions such as political participation (Brulé and Gaikwad 2019; Lowes 2018; Robinson and Gottlieb 2019). For example, in one recent study, Lowes (2018) uses a geographic regression discontinuity design along the matrilineal belt in Africa to test how kinship practices – namely, the

inheritance of family wealth through the matriline – affect spousal cooperation. Using a series of lab-in-the-field experiments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, she finds that men and women from matrilineal ethnic groups cooperate less with their spouses than those in patrilineal communities. Her findings suggest matrilineal women have more inter-household bargaining power than patrilineal women. Moreover, she finds that children of matrilineal women are healthier and better educated, and that matrilineal women experience less domestic violence, which she suggests is the result of their heightened bargaining power. Comparing patrilineal to matrilineal tribes in northeast India, Brulé and Gaikwad (2019) also find that members of matrilineal kinship groups tend to hold more egalitarian norms about household decision-making. Through a survey experiment that randomly varies whether respondent hear about a hypothetical household in which either only the husband works or only the wife works, they find that patrilineal men in both conditions tend to report that the husband should make the household's financial decisions. In contrast, men from matrilineal groups tend to report that the husband and wife should jointly make household decisions in response to either condition. In combination, both studies suggest that access to family wealth improves women's bargaining power within their homes and changes cultural norms about who should make important decisions.

Despite these generally uplifting outcomes, an emerging body of work suggests backlash may occur if women's increased access to wealth butts up against existing patriarchal norms. For instance, investigating the state-level expansion of reforms equalizing women's right to familial inheritance in India, Bhalotra et al. (2019) find that the reforms exacerbated son preference and the rate of sex-selective abortion.⁴ Children born

after the reform in families with a firstborn daughter are about 4 percentage points less likely to be girls. They also find that the reforms increased excess female infant mortality and son-biased fertility stopping. The authors contend that their findings are due to the stubbornness of the norm of patrilocality – the custom of daughters moving to their husbands' home area at marriage. Awarding inheritance to daughters rather than sons means wealth is more likely to leave the family permanently and makes parents more averse to having a daughter. Below, we return to this point and discuss how the stickiness of patriarchal norms presents a challenge to researchers interested in designing interventions to alter traditional gender roles.

26.4.2 Gender Differences in Political Participation

Gender scholars have used experimental approaches to examine how a group's gender composition affects women's willingness to lead. In a lab experiment in Sweden, Born et al. (2019) assign participants to men- or women-majority teams and require teams to perform a group task, elect a group leader, and then perform a second group task. They find that regardless of performance on the first task, women in men-majority teams were relatively less likely to be elected leaders and were rated as significantly weaker on a variety of leadership dimensions than women in women-majority groups.⁵ In contrast, men in women-majority teams were the most likely to be elected leaders and were rated the highest on leadership traits. These findings parallel important experimental work on gender from the USA. In a series of lab experiments, Karpowitz and Mendelberg (2014) find that women are more likely to speak in groups as the number of women in the group increases when decisions are made

⁴ The authors argue that this expansion is plausibly quasi-random, as there are no identifiable reasons for the specific years in which the different states implemented these reforms. They further employ a difference-in-difference method to examine within-state changes pre- and post-reform.

⁵ These included reduced willingness to lead, the belief that they performed worse in the task than they actually did, and reduced influence. Women in men-majority teams were also more swayed by the discussion and accurately anticipated less electoral support from team members.

through majority rule. In a very different context, Karim et al. (2018) run a series of lab-in-the-field experiments with members of the Liberian National Police. Examining group decision dynamics in teams of six police officers, they find that women's participation and influence in group deliberations increase with their increasing presence in groups. Collectively, this body of work suggests that women are constrained by social expectations about who should participate and who should lead, and these constraints seem to be ameliorated as the number of women in the group rises.

Comparative scholars have also leveraged preexisting quasi-random variation or deployed randomized interventions aimed at increasing women's engagement with politics. For instance, Prillaman (2018) leverages as-if random variation in access to women's credit collectives – called self-help groups (SHGs) – in India to examine how increased access to women-only social networks affects political participation. Specifically, her design takes advantage of the fact that villages included in the expansion of women's credit collectives were selected based on their distance from state district offices. Comparing villages just inside the arbitrary distance range from a district office to those just outside the range, she finds that women in villages with access to the credit program were twice as likely to attend local political meetings than women in control villages. She argues that this effect stems from SHG participants' increased capacity for collective action through their women-only meetings, their increased access to political information, and their increased civic skills. This finding suggests that women's collective participation in one area – in this instance, income-generating activities – can have positive spillovers into their political participation.⁶

There have also been several recent studies in South Asia examining interventions to increase turnout among women voters. For instance, Giné and Mansuri (2018) evaluate the effect of a randomized message campaign targeting only women voters in rural Pakistan with messages related to the importance of voting to affect local service delivery and the significance of the secret ballot. They find that women who received these information treatments (either the first message or both messages) were 11 percentage points more likely to vote than women in control communities. They find no effects for men in treated communities but find similarly large effects for untreated women in treated communities, suggesting positive within-community spillovers for women. Cheema et al. (2019) also investigate the effect of a get-out-the-vote effort in the lead-up to the 2018 Pakistani general election. In contrast to Giné and Mansuri (2018), they find that nonpartisan mobilization only increased women's turnout if canvassers target men in households. Targeting women alone did not affect women's turnout. Together, these two studies suggest an unresolved question in the literature: In societies where women's household agency is often severely constrained, can interventions targeted only to women reduce the gender gap in political participation?

Still other research examines how the quasi-random expansion of quotas for women in politics affects the progressive ambition and career trajectories of men and women legislators. For instance, two studies examine this question related to the expansion of quotas for women candidates on proportional representation lists across Swedish municipalities.⁷ In one study, Besley et al. (2017) find that quotas improve legislator competence, as measured through several proxies, including scores from tests for cognitive ability and

⁶ The research group Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP) is currently conducting a multi-country field experiment to better understand how membership in women-only village collectives affects women members' political participation and the collective efficacy of the group in improving local service delivery.

⁷ These quotas were adopted by the largest political party in Sweden at the time, the Swedish Social Democratic Party, due to pressure from feminist groups at the national level. The quota requirements were then imposed from the national party to municipal party groups. The quota works through a "zipper system," in which men's and women's names are listed in alternate order on official candidate lists.

psychological capacity for leadership given to all men during the then-mandatory Swedish military training program. They attribute their findings to the relative absence of "mediocre men" on more gender-equal lists following the quota's adoption. In a second study, O'Brien and Rickne (2016) find that quotas increase the likelihood that women representatives are elected to party leadership positions. Together, these studies suggest that when political opportunities in politics are made more accessible, women take them, and average legislator competence may improve as a result.

26.4.3 Citizen Support of Women in Politics

Gender and comparative politics scholars are also increasingly using experimental methods to understand how citizens evaluate women candidates with varying characteristics (Aguilar et al. 2015; Clayton et al. 2020; Saha and Weeks 2018), although the number of comparative studies on this topic is far smaller than this line of research in American politics (see Chapter 25 in this volume). Typically relying on survey experiments with conjoint or conjoint-like designs, this work generally suggests that, on average, voters prefer hypothetical candidates who are women over those that are men (see Schwarz and Coppock 2019 for a meta-analysis on this topic). This consistent preference for women candidates is surprising given the near-universal underrepresentation of women in politics and the considerable body of evidence revealing implicit and explicit biases against women in politics by other measures, including experimental, observational, and qualitative sources. We return to this point below and discuss how experimental designs in which voters evaluate hypothetical candidates may be particularly prone to measurement challenges.

A similar vein of research has examined citizen support for women's representation in general or for gender-equity reforms such as measures that promote women in politics (Bush and Jamal 2015; Devroe and Wauters 2018; Frederick and Streb 2008; Masoud et al. 2016; Pérez and Tavits 2018). This

body of work generally finds that citizen support for these reforms is malleable. For example, using a survey experiment in Jordan, Bush and Jamal (2015) find that a ruling-party endorsement of a quota for women in politics decreases support for women's representation due to popular opposition to the ruling party. In a similar vein, using a survey experiment in Egypt, Masoud et al. (2016) find that respondents who were exposed to arguments in favor of women's equality grounded in the Qur'an were significantly more likely than non-treated respondents to express approval of women in politics. While below we note that citizens' gender attitudes tend to be fairly stubborn, this line of research suggests two important qualifications to this trend: first, it seems that the party responsible for gender-equality reforms matters a great deal. Citizens are more responsive to sources whom they trust (e.g., religious figures) and less responsive to those whom they do not trust (e.g., unpopular governments). Second, research on citizen support for gender equality draws heavily on survey experiments and typically asks about hypothetical policy reforms. Support for hypothetical reforms appears much more malleable than citizens' reactions to actual reforms that have granted women more power.

Gender scholars have also employed survey experiments to examine how women's presence in political bodies affects citizens' trust and confidence in their governments. For instance, two recent survey experiments in Norway (Arnesen and Peters 2018) and the USA (Clayton et al. 2019c) find that citizens view decisions and decision-making procedures as more legitimate when women are included in the decision-making process. Relatedly, Karim (2019) examines how women's inclusion in state security bodies in Liberia raises citizens' trust and confidence in post-conflict security reforms. Using a survey within ex-combatant communities, she finds that citizens who recently interacted with a woman police officer report more trust in security reforms than those who interacted with a man in the post. She argues that because daily staffing decisions are as-if random, the increased trust stems from

interacting with a woman rather than a man. Yet, in a related field experiment, Karim (2020) works with the Liberian police to randomize whether households in remote villages are visited by police officers and whether the visits are by men or women officers. She finds that police officer gender does not differentially affect citizens' trust in police. While this field experiment involved relatively short interactions with citizens (20- to 30-minute visits), one could imagine a more sustained intervention in future work. For instance, given that post-conflict countries have employed quotas for women in national police bodies (e.g., 20% in East Timor, 30% in Liberia; Karim 2019, p. 805), a future field experiment might randomize women officers to different geographic units to measure how their presence affects citizens' trust in post-conflict reforms.

26.4.4 Effects of Increasing the Number of Women in Politics

The most developed experimental literature in gender and comparative politics examines various effects of increasing women's presence in politics. To address this question, a great deal of experimental work has taken advantage of a government-initiated policy experiment in India. In 1993, this constitutional reform reserved one-third of all local council positions (elected through single-member districts) and one-third of all council leadership positions for women. Districts reserved for women and councils reserved for women's leadership rotate at random in each electoral cycle. This policy experiment has produced a truly vast literature. To begin, many scholars have examined whether women in council leadership positions change policy outcomes or affect the provision of public goods. In a foundational study, Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) find that women's leadership increases investment in access to potable water, a good preferred by women in rural India.⁸ Subsequent work has examined other

policy effects associated with the Indian quota, including how women's leadership affects policy enforcement. For instance, Iyer et al. (2012) find that districts reserved for women leaders experience a significant rise in documented crimes against women. They present evidence that this effect is driven by women's greater willingness to report these crimes in reserved districts based on the (correct) belief that they will be more likely to be investigated.

Yet, research in this area also shows the potential for resistance. Also using the Indian policy experiment, Brulé (2020) examines the effect of reservations for women council leaders on the likelihood that a daughter will inherit familial land. She examines daughters' inheritance in reserved and unreserved villages both before and after substantial reforms in India that equalized women's legal right to inherit familial property. She finds that, pre-reform, daughters inherited significantly more land in reserved villages. Post-reform, she finds that reservations *decreased* daughters' inheritance. Importantly, she finds that this effect is driven by women who are likely already married (instrumented by women over 20 years of age). Using extensive qualitative evidence, she argues these equalizing reforms caused male heirs to fight their married sisters' claims most intensely in reserved villages out of anticipation that women councillors would be more likely to enforce a daughter's legal right to inherit family land. She finds that

budget allocations based on the Indian policy experiment. However, a number of comparative studies, mostly observational, have confirmed that women and men tend to prioritize different public goods. The most common observed differences in the developing world are that women citizens tend to prioritize investments in drinking water, health, and general poverty reduction, while men citizens tend to prioritize investments in roads and infrastructure projects (see, e.g., Gottlieb et al. 2018 in sub-Saharan Africa; Olken 2010 in Indonesia; Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004 in India; Khan 2018, p. 17 in Pakistan). There is also evidence that these gender gaps among citizens correspond closely in size and substance to gender gaps among political elites (Clayton et al. 2019b) and that increases in women's numeric representation tend to lead to public budget allocations that better reflect women's priorities (Clayton & Zetterberg 2019).

8 We are not aware of work subsequent to Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) that documents different

younger, likely unmarried women are better able to strike family bargains, exchanging monetary dowry at marriage for property inheritance (see Chapter 20 in this volume for more on using qualitative evidence with experiments).

Collectively, this body of research suggests that women influence policy in ways that substantively benefit women constituents, either by distributing resources in ways that reflect women's preferences or by enacting or enforcing policies that grant women greater rights. Yet, if women's leadership challenges existing patriarchal norms, it may exacerbate rather than relieve some forms of gender inequality, at least in the short term and possibly longer.

Researchers have also used the Indian policy experiment to examine how women's leadership affects the political participation of women citizens. This body of work is somewhat mixed in its findings. For instance, Ban and Rao (2008) find no effect of reservations on whether women attend and participate in village meetings, while Brulé (2020, p. 24) finds that women leaders nearly halve the gender gap in meeting attendance.⁹ Further, recent work finds that while women's leadership does not increase the participation of women citizens in village meetings, it does increase the likelihood that women citizens will be acknowledged and receive a policy-relevant response from council leaders (Parthasarathy et al. 2019). Additionally, both Bhavnani (2009) and Beaman et al. (2009) find that women are more likely to run and win elections in districts that have been previously reserved for a women councilor.¹⁰

However, again, there is evidence of resistance. Clayton (2015) takes advantage of a government-initiated policy experiment in Lesotho that is very similar to the Indian experiment in design: one-third of single-member local government districts were

reserved for only women candidates between 2005 and 2011. She finds that women citizens in reserved districts reported *lower* levels of political engagement than women citizens in unreserved districts during the quota period. She presents evidence that this effect is driven by resistance to the quota rather than a negative reaction to women's representation. She argues that the exclusionary nature of the quota (that only women were allowed to run in particular districts) in addition to the perception that the quota was implemented due to international and regional pressure rather than a local initiative led quota-elected women to lose credibility in the eyes of voters. In a related study, mirroring the results from India, Clayton and Tang (2018) also find that women candidates are more likely to win in districts previously reserved by the quota. However, they present evidence that this effect is driven by the greater number of open seats in previously reserved districts – given that quota-elected women were less likely to rerun for their positions – and not by a greater number of women candidates or less gender bias among voters.

Collectively, this work suggests an important caveat in understanding the generally uplifting findings from India: effects may be contingent on the duration of women's leadership. Most research from India measures the quota's effects after at least two reservation cycles (10 years) – and it may take this long for women leaders to make a difference. Second, research from Lesotho reports strong opposition to the quota after its initial adoption (Clayton 2015, p. 357). There are no experimental studies from India immediately following the quota's implementation in the early 1990s, but it stands to reason that it took some time before citizens saw the quota – which prohibits men from running in reserved districts – as a legitimate electoral rule. Collectively, these findings suggest the need for more research examining how elections through quotas moderate the symbolic effects of women's representation over time. This line of research is particularly pertinent given the massive increase in electoral gender quotas in both national and subnational governance in the last two decades. Indeed, most

⁹ On a similar research question, using a survey experiment in Brazil, Schwandt-Bayer and Reyes-Housholder (2017) find women respondents report more interest and engagement in politics after reading a vignette describing a woman governor.

¹⁰ For further discussion of the experimental analysis of Bhavnani (2009), see Sekhon and Titunik (2012).

countries now elect women through some form of electoral gender quota (Hughes et al. 2019).¹¹

Researchers have also examined how women's presence in politics affects other types of public attitudes and behavior. For instance, again taking advantage of the policy experiment in India, Beaman et al. (2009) find that after two electoral cycles of reservations, citizens improve their evaluations of women leaders and hold weaker stereotypes about gender roles.¹² In Lesotho, Clayton (2018) finds that the gender quota did not reduce citizens' biases against women in politics after one electoral cycle, except perhaps among young women and girls. In related work, Beaman et al. (2012) find that after two electoral cycles, the quota increases adolescent girls' career aspirations and education attainment, citing role model effects as a potential mechanism. These studies again point to a central theme from this line of research that we will return to below: it often takes several years or even decades before exposure to counter-stereotypical women changes citizens' attitudes about women's proper place in society.

Finally, a corollary literature examines an inverse type of relationship. Taking advantage of the random assignment of the sex of one's children (particularly one's first child), this body of work examines how exposure to a daughter affects the behavior of parents. Such "daughter effects" have been documented among political elites such as US Senators (Washington 2008) and US judges (Glynn and Sen 2015), but also among citizens in the

USA and Britain (Oswald and Powdthavee 2010; Shafer and Malhotra 2011; Sharrow et al. 2018). For parents, these studies typically show that having a daughter moves political attitudes and behaviors in a more feminist direction and generally toward the political left, an effect that is largely driven by fathers who were previously conservative. Yet this work to date largely comes from advanced industrialized democracies. In one of the few studies on this topic outside the USA or Europe, Clayton et al. (2019a) find no evidence that daughters cause parents to update their preferences about gender equality among South African citizens. They speculate that daughter effects may only exist in countries with relative *de jure* and *de facto* equality for women.

26.5 Design Challenges in the Experimental Study of Gender

Based on our assessment of the literatures presented above, we outline three specific challenges in designing and implementing gender experiments in comparative politics: (1) that adults' deeply held beliefs about gender roles tend to move slowly and are unlikely to respond to experimental interventions in the short term; (2) that gender biases often operate in complex and context-specific ways that can elude survey experimental measurement; and (3) that ethical issues often arise when interventions are designed to alter existing social hierarchies. Throughout, we note the experimental technique most susceptible to each concern.

First, societal gender norms are very slow to change. Adults who have been socialized to view men and women as holding distinct social roles are unlikely to change their assessments quickly, particularly when gender differences are seen as biologically determined or divinely prescribed. Indeed, attitudes toward gender equality appear incredibly sticky. In a study on the origin of gender roles, Alesina et al. (2013) use quasi-random variation in the suitability of land for plow-based agriculture to find that citizens' attitudes toward women's place in society

¹¹ The India and the previous Lesotho quotas are the only two in which single-member districts have been randomly assigned. In majoritarian electoral systems, most quotas reserve seats for women in legislative bodies that are implemented in various ways, often through separate elections for women representatives in addition to general elections in which both men and women compete. In proportional systems, quotas are somewhat more straightforward to implement, and parties typically mandate that women comprise a certain percentage of candidates on party lists, often with placement mandates and sanctions for noncompliance (see Hughes et al. 2019).

¹² To our knowledge, this finding has not been replicated in India.

are still predicted by preindustrial patterns of agricultural production. The authors argue that plow-based societies developed a gendered division of labor, placing women and men in different economic and social roles. Even as societies transitioned away from the plow, beliefs about these gender roles continued to be passed through the generations (see also Charles et al. 2018). In light of this, perhaps any discernible changes in gender attitudes in the short term should be considered surprising.

Yet, of course, societies do change. Reforms that reserve political positions for women provide a helpful reference in assessing how long citizens must experience women's leadership before public attitudes about gender roles evolve. For instance, the Indian policy experiment suggests men living in villages reserved for women leaders for the first time actually hold more negative views toward women in politics. It is only after living in a reserved village for two electoral terms (10 years) that men's biases against women leaders begin to erode (Beaman et al. 2009). Other experimental work across a variety of cases also shows the potential for backlash to women's leadership in the short term (Bhalotra et al. 2019; Brulé 2020; Clayton 2015; Gottlieb 2016). Still more work has shown either limited or no effects of short-term interventions that grant women temporary leadership positions in their communities (Beath et al. 2013; van der Windt 2018; van der Windt et al. 2018) or superficial changes that leave fundamental gender hierarchies intact (Pierotti et al. 2018). Together, these studies suggest that patriarchal norms and expectations about women's proper role in society change only very slowly. Yet, there is one bright spot in this general trend: young women and girls appear to update their gender beliefs more quickly than adults. This demographic group also appears to be the most susceptible to the positive influence of women's leadership and are the first to change their beliefs about the appropriateness and capabilities of women in politics (Beaman et al. 2012; Clayton 2018).

The generally slow-moving nature of public perceptions toward gender roles is of

particular concern to those designing field experiments intended to study how attitudes or behaviors change. Researchers should thus be aware that interventions in this area likely need to be administered over many years or even decades to have discernable and positive effects, and backlash in the short term is likely. Further, experimentalists might also consider designing interventions that specifically target young women and girls, as this demographic group appears most susceptible to change in the short run and may act as a predictor for larger social change. Other work may seek to design clever ways to raise the salience of existing patterns in women's leadership, such as by bringing citizens' attention to the fact that women are increasingly involved in local and national politics.

Second, measuring gender biases can be difficult with common experimental techniques. In particular, biases may be missed through survey experimental measures, such as conjoint-like or vignette experiments, and even those designed to detect implicit discrimination.¹³ Indeed, as we note above, conjoint-like designs that ask respondents to rate hypothetical candidates typically suggest that citizens prefer women over men on average across a variety of cross-national contexts (Schwarz and Coppock 2019). Yet we posit that actual electoral contexts shape voters' opinions in ways that are very difficult, though certainly not impossible, to pick up experimentally. On a similar point, in Chapter 12 of this volume on how to improve experimental treatments, Mutz warns against using hypothetical scenarios "if we would

13 There are no audit studies that we are aware of related to gender discrimination in comparative politics (on audit experiments, see Chapter 3 in this volume). While audit studies from the USA generally examine race or ethnicity rather than gender, when gender is included in these designs (i.e., signaled by name), results are mixed. Some work suggests that employers may be biased against women applicants (Milkman et al. 2015), particularly if they signal that they are mothers (Correll et al. 2007). Other work finds no evidence of gender discrimination from employers (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004). In one study specifically on gender and political mentorship, Kalla et al. (2018) find that politicians are more likely to respond to an email asking for career advice from a student with a woman's name rather than a man's name.

like our findings to reflect how people make decisions here and now in their world of direct experience." We argue that this advice applies well to detecting how gender biases operate in elections. As Bansak et al. describe in Chapter 2 in this volume, conjoint designs are well equipped to detect implicit biases toward out-groups for whom respondents may feel a negative affect (as might hold for anti-immigrant attitudes, for instance). Yet, we suggest that conjoint designs are less able to detect biases against groups, such as women, toward whom respondents may feel a positive affect *in general*. Asking respondents to imagine a hypothetical woman candidate puts them in an abstract realm in which they are likely to think about women generally, and not about a specific woman operating in a gendered campaign environment.

Mixed-method approaches with qualitative components can be helpful in assessing how biases operate in practice (see Chapter 20 in this volume). As an example, Clayton et al. (2020) examine whether and how voters discriminate against women candidates in Malawi. The study consists of both focus groups with local council candidates in addition to a vignette experiment with 600 Malawian citizens. Similar to other candidate choice experiments across a variety of contexts, the experimental results suggest that Malawians, on average, have a slight preference for women over men candidates. Yet, in focus groups with women candidates, almost all participants reported instances of extreme discrimination on the campaign trail, but in ways not captured through the experiment. Almost universally, women candidates recalled their competitors using misogynistic slurs to discredit them publicly, most often through claims of sexual impropriety. Thus, while Malawian voters may support *hypothetical* women leaders, many women candidates thought that the negative campaign environment caused voters to harbor ill feelings toward them specifically – a type of discrimination that is difficult to capture experimentally, but one that certainly affects real electoral outcomes. In short, the equal footing on which hypothetical candidates compete in

surveys may not match the unequal footing on which real candidates compete. Notably, the study's vignette experiment did not include a "rumor-mongering condition," one meant to activate gender biases against women candidates. It is an open question whether this approach would capture the ways in which voters' gender biases are activated by negative campaigning.

Evaluating voter gender bias through survey experimental techniques presents two additional measurement challenges. First, conjoint and conjoint-like designs randomize across candidate characteristics and are thus able to isolate the effects of candidate gender on voter evaluations. Yet, this may miss how elections operate in practice if voters are seldom presented with men and women candidates who are otherwise comparable. On this point, Teele et al. (2018) find that American respondents have a slight preference for women candidates, *ceteris paribus*, and that respondents evaluate men and women candidates with the same traits similarly. However, they also find that voters prefer candidates, both men and women, who are married with children, a status that is much more common among men than among women running for political office, both in the USA and elsewhere. For instance, among state representatives in the USA, 67% of women are married compared to 87% of men, and these numbers are remarkably similar in the US Congress (68% of women vs. 89% of men), and women in both state and national politics, on average, have fewer children than their men colleagues (Teale et al. 2018, p. 536). Clayton et al. (2020) find a similar pattern in their survey of local council candidates in Malawi. While all of the men candidates were married, a slight majority of women candidates were *unmarried*, and women were much less likely than men to have young children still in the home. Thus, while voters may evaluate hypothetical men and women candidates similarly, they are seldom given this choice in actual elections. Second, it is also possible that sexist campaign rhetoric mobilizes voters with a preference for male leadership such that this group is particularly compelled to turn out (see

Cassese and Holman 2018; Valentino et al. 2018 on this dynamic in US elections). The electorate thus may depend on who is running in ways that survey experiments seldom explicitly tackle.

Third, interventions that seek to alter household or communal power structures present several ethical challenges. This is because the study of gender is fundamentally about the study of power. Gender hierarchies serve the purpose of upholding the power and status that men accrue through patriarchy, and thus researchers should be aware that attempting to alter these hierarchies is likely to produce resistance. Indeed, the accumulation of studies showing resistance to women's political participation and to gender-equity reforms broadly suggests that short-term interventions along these dimensions might exacerbate rather than ameliorate some existing inequalities. For instance, Gottlieb (2016) analyzes the effects of a randomized civics education training in Mali and finds that participation actually *exacerbated* gender gaps in civic engagement. In a series of focus groups with men and women participants as well as with traditional community leaders, she finds pervasive evidence that women who participated in the course were shamed and intimidated by their husbands and other men in their communities in such a way that compelled them to limit their future political participation. Also recall that Beaman et al. (2009) find that men in villages reserved for woman leaders in India actually exhibit more hostility toward women in leadership positions after one electoral cycle (five years). And Brulé (2020) finds that women receive less familial inheritance in reserved villages after reforms that granted women greater inheritance rights. These studies all suggest that interventions meant to grant women more power within their communities may produce substantial resistance and backlash in the short term. Relatedly, we also give particular caution to researchers interested in designing interventions to encourage women to run for office before fully ascertaining the specific barriers that women face. This is particularly true in the many contexts in which physical and psychological violence

against women running for office is a common occurrence (Bardall et al. 2019; Krook and Sanín 2019), a trend that exists even in relatively gender-equal countries such as Sweden (Håkansson forthcoming).¹⁴

Another ethical concern in designing gender-related interventions is the potential for unintended consequences. As an example, in their field experiment in Zambia, Ashraf et al. (2014) randomized whether women received vouchers for a concealable form of contraception either alone or in the presence of their partners.¹⁵ Women who were given the vouchers without their partners were more likely to seek out family planning services and less likely to become pregnant during the duration of the study. The researchers also found an unintended outcome: women who received the vouchers without their partners reported significantly lower subjective well-being as a result of concealing their contraceptive use and their subsequent lower fertility. The ability of researchers to meddle in intra-household dynamics, in which women already have less power, presents numerous ethical issues, including the risk of exposing women to higher levels of domestic violence.¹⁶ The very real possibility of backlash within intrapersonal relationships when women attempt to accrue more power suggests that these sorts of interventions may not meet the ethical standard laid out in Chapter 7 in this volume. It seems likely that a reasonable person, unaware of whether she would be

¹⁴ In the Malawi study in particular, candidates reported that the extreme gender-based defamation experienced by female candidates deterred other women from running for office.

¹⁵ See Chapter 16 in this volume on how to conceptualize spillovers within households.

¹⁶ Several randomized controlled trials examining the impact of microfinance programs on women's well-being have examined outcomes related to domestic violence as well. Results have been mixed. In South Africa, Kim et al. (2007) found that women in villages with microfinance programs experienced a reduction in intimate partner violence. Yet, in ? found that women who participated in a gender and entrepreneurship training program suffered more frequent abuse than women in a control group. In two experiments in Uganda, Green et al. (2016) find no effect of microenterprise assistance to women on domestic violence rates.

the researcher or the researched, would have qualms about consenting to participate in this type of study. Researchers are thus well advised to take extreme caution beyond what is typically required by institutional review boards when designing experiments to alter gendered dimensions of power.

Experimental designs that take preexisting household and community gendered power structures into account are better positioned to avoid ethical concerns and are also likely to be more effective. As one recent example, Green et al. (2020) study how messages contained in short video dramatizations of intimate partner violence (IPV) affect villagers' willingness to intervene to stop IPV in rural Uganda. They find that the intervention led to a substantial increase in villagers' willingness to report IPV to authorities, especially among women, as well as a decline in the share of women who experienced violence. The goal of this study was not to fundamentally shift gender hierarchies, but rather to influence social norms about the costs of intervention. These sorts of designs may avoid the pitfalls of approaches meant to *alter* men's and women's power. Yet, researchers should still exhibit caution, as this type of design might also be subject to backlash. For instance, Htun et al. (2019) analyze the effect of a federally mandated in-person sexual misconduct training program for all incoming students at the University of New Mexico. They randomly assign participants to complete a survey on attitudes about sexual assault either immediately prior to or immediately after the hour-and-a-half training. They find that men students were *more likely* to report hostile sexist attitudes if they took the survey after taking the course. Drawing on interviews with students and staff, the authors attribute this finding to students' negative reactions to the legalistic and mandatory nature of the training. Thus, even in instances in which treatments are designed to alter communal norms rather than necessarily giving women more power per se, participants may react in ways that reinforce or even exacerbate existing power hierarchies. These mixed findings suggest that intervention design,

particularly as it relates to community buy-in, is critical to the treatment's success.

The above concerns suggest both best practices and open questions related to experimental design. Related to field experiments, the slow-moving nature of gender attitudes suggests the need for repeated interventions or extended data collection. The potential for backlash to short-term interventions calls for a more explicit disciplinary discussion on ethics, including whether it is ever advisable to implement interventions meant to alter existing power structures for research purposes. On this, including local researchers with strong embedded ties to the communities under study can facilitate the design of ethical and effective treatments. As an example from American politics, Karpowitz et al. (2017) work with a state Republican party chair to conduct a field experiment encouraging local party leaders to support women candidates at precinct-level caucuses. It is hard to imagine that this sort of experimental design would be possible without the researchers' strong preexisting ties with state party apparatuses, and it serves as a good example for comparative scholars to model in their own research communities (on this point, see Chapter 11 in this volume for helpful advice in forming community partnerships).

Turning to survey experiments, several issues of measurement are particularly important for researchers to keep in mind. In particular, we suggest conjoint-like designs that ask respondents to evaluate hypothetical candidates may not adequately capture gender discrimination in elections. As we note above, a recent meta-analysis of 42 candidate choice experiments across both US and comparative cases uncovers a consistent preference for hypothetical women over hypothetical men candidates (Schwartz and Coppock 2019). However, if the included survey experimental designs are not accurately capturing the ways in which biases operate in real elections, and in particular the ways in which otherwise dormant gender stereotypes are activated, then they may collectively lead to mistaken conclusions about which barriers still exist for actual women candidates.

Multiple measures, including qualitative components to these designs, are particularly important in order to avoid misleading conclusions. Further, researchers might consider building different types of electoral contexts into survey experimental designs that might attempt, for instance, to recreate the environments in which gender biases are activated (see, e.g., Bauer 2015; Karpowitz et al. 2019 in the US context).

26.6 Emerging Research Areas

To conclude, we present three substantive areas in which gender scholars in comparative politics could make considerable contributions: (1) an expansion of studies that use innovative experimental measures to examine how candidate gender affects vote choice in comparative contexts; (2) further work that examines men as a social category; and (3) work that considers variation in the salience and content of gender identity across individuals and contexts.

To begin, as Chapter 25 in this volume outlines, gender and politics scholars have developed a robust literature examining how voters evaluate candidate gender in the USA. This work now includes a well-developed literature on how gender stereotypes are activated in elections and how gender interacts with other candidate qualities. Yet, the role of candidate gender in voters' evaluations is still a relatively uncommon topic in comparative politics. Rather, as we have detailed here, the most common related question examines whether increasing women's representation changes citizens' acceptance of women candidates broadly. This area would benefit from studies that provide more nuance across comparative contexts, examining, for instance, how candidate gender interacts with other salient identities to affect voter support, such as religion or religiosity; race, ethnicity, or class; or stereotypically masculine or feminine traits. Comparative studies on this topic are just beginning to emerge (e.g., Aguilar et al. 2015 in Brazil; Kao and Benstead 2019 in Jordan; Clayton et al. 2020 in Malawi). And this area is ripe for innovation involving

clever experimental or mixed-method designs that might address the concerns related to measurement that we outline above. Additionally, a growing body of survey experimental literature from the USA examines voters' perceptions of candidate gender and corruption and generally finds that voters perceive women candidates as less corrupt than men candidates (Barnes and Beaulieu 2014, 2019). Yet, surprisingly, this topic has received scant attention outside the USA (but see Schwindt-Bayer et al. 2018).

More generally, work that investigates how voters evaluate women candidates is a particularly apt area of research for comparative study given the massive, yet uneven, increase in women's political representation worldwide in the last two decades. While some national parliaments are now majority-women (e.g., Rwanda, Bolivia, and Cuba), others still have fewer than 10% women members (e.g., Nigeria, Thailand, and Haiti), suggesting that voter support for women candidates is highly contingent and variable across contexts.

A second promising area of future work is that which examines men rather than women as a social category. Indeed, "gender" still largely means "women" in the field of gender and politics. Yet, from a normative perspective, because gender inequalities almost always favor men, understanding how men uphold patriarchal attitudes and behaviors is a valuable area of inquiry. Experimental studies that seek to alter men's attitudes or behaviors are still quite rare, but they offer a great deal of promise. As one example, Bursztyn et al. (2018) show that informing Saudi men that other married men support women's labor force participation increases the likelihood they will allow their wives to look for work outside the home. Men in the treated group were more likely to sign their wives up for a job-matching service. Moreover, four months after the intervention, the wives of men in the treated group were more likely to have applied and interviewed for a job outside the home.

Finally, gender – as both a social category and a personal identity – cannot be assumed to be the same across contexts or individuals.

As Chapter 23 in this volume discusses, checking a box to self-report an aspect of one's identity does not reveal the extent to which an individual identifies with the category he or she belongs to, nor does it reveal the meaning of membership. Even within countries, the content of gender identity is not homogeneous: for instance, in the American context, women often do not share a political identity (Burns et al. 2015). Democratic and Republican women tend to hold very different attitudes about feminism, and partisan identity can outweigh shared gender identity, leading women to distrust women out-party members even more than men out-party members (Klar 2018; Reger 2002). Moreover, as Chapter 25 in this volume discusses, the salience of gender as an identity can vary greatly, and the effects of priming gender identity in different ways have been shown to powerfully affect behavioral outcomes. Experimental comparative work on gender has done very little to explore or manipulate variation in the salience and social meaning of gender. Finally, one's attachment to his or her gender identity often hinges on other ascriptive characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and religion, among many others. While Americanist gender scholars have been quicker to grapple with the notion that identities are intersectional rather than additive (Crenshaw 1989), comparativist gender scholars – both experimental and observational – have been slower to consider how multiple dimensions of identity affect how we select our research questions and implement our research designs (for important exceptions, see, e.g., Benstead et al. 2015; Hughes 2011; Muriaas et al. 2019). Going forward, we suggest that scholars undertaking this type of research can do more to contend with variation in the content and salience of gender identity across contexts and individuals.

26.7 Conclusion

The power women hold within their households, communities, and governments has increased massively, yet unevenly, in the

last several decades. For instance, between 1950 and 2015, global fertility rates halved, dropping from 5 children per woman to just under 2.5 on average, often reflecting women's preferences to have fewer children (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division 2017). But variation is extreme. Women still have over 7 live births on average in Niger, while this number is less than 1.5 in Italy. On another dimension of power, in just over two decades, women's representation in single or lower parliamentary houses doubled, moving from 11.7% in 1997 to 24.3% at the beginning of 2019 (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2019). But again, these patterns are uneven, even in neighboring countries. For instance, women are at near parity in Namibia (46%) and South Africa (43%), but women hold only 9.5% of parliamentary seats in neighboring Botswana. Gender and comparative politics scholars give insight both into how societies change in ways that grant women more social, political, and economic power and into how they resist change. And to this end, experiments present a powerful tool to measure and potentially change existing inequalities. At the same time, because the study of gender is fundamentally about the study of power, experimental researchers have a responsibility to tread lightly, treating existing power hierarchies with caution.

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