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# WOMEN'S POLICY JOURNAL OF HARVARD,

JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

VOLUME 6 • SUMMER 2009

## FEATURE ARTICLE

“Permission to Vote ‘No’”: Framing the Abortion Debate  
in South Dakota

*Lura Barber*

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Policy Issue Today

An Interview with seven students, faculty, and practitioners

*Compiled by Baylee DeCastro*





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## CALL FOR PAPERS DEADLINE: 18 DECEMBER 2009

The *Women's Policy Journal of Harvard, John F. Kennedy School of Government* is accepting submissions for its summer 2010 volume. The journal is a student-run, nonpartisan review dedicated to publishing interdisciplinary work on policy making and politics affecting women. By bridging the divide between academics and practitioners, the journal seeks to educate and provide leadership that improves the quality of public policies affecting women with the intention of furthering female economic, social, and political empowerment.

We seek papers that explore the impact public policies have on women both in the United States and around the world and that provide new insight into issues affecting diverse groups of women. Articles and commentaries can also offer a gendered or a woman's perspective on pressing political, social, and economic policy issues or investigate the role of women in the policy-making sphere.

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The *WPJH* will be selecting papers for publication based on the following criteria:

- Timeliness of topic to current policy discussions
- Originality and depth of research and ideas
- Sophistication and style of arguments
- Contribution to scholarship and policy making

### SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- **Research articles** should be between 4,000 and 7,000 words and include a 100-word abstract.
- **Commentaries** should be between 2,000 and 3,000 words.
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- Work should be formatted in any version of Microsoft Word.
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- All figures, tables, and charts must be submitted as entirely separate files.
- A cover letter should include the author's name, address, e-mail address, daytime phone number, and a brief biography.
- Five hard copies of the article should be provided.
- An electronic copy of the submission on a labeled CD should be provided.

Authors are required to cooperate with editing and fact checking.

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## EDITOR'S NOTES

We can see issues of women's policy almost everywhere we look. But this requires us to look. It requires a certain amount of open-mindedness and concern, a certain degree of community, and the necessity of inclusion. From debates surrounding the abortion ban in South Dakota, to the struggle for a closed "gender employment gap" in the European Union, to restrictive military combat rules, women's policy issues resonate in all sectors and geographies.

Considering these issues requires broadening our scope of the policy areas in which women are particularly impacted. But we should not consider "women's policy" as wholly distinct from policy more generally. What affects one group should inherently weigh on the minds and actions of the entire global community. This concept of striving for full inclusion is precisely the inspiration behind this sixth volume of the *Women's Policy Journal of Harvard, John F. Kennedy School of Government*. It is our sincere hope that the articles and issues that follow resonate beyond policy students and teachers to an audience of global citizens in its most general form.

In the pages that follow, we have chosen a varied array of cases and concepts, reflecting the diverse opinions of several authors and interviewees. We begin with an analysis of South Dakota's 2006 and 2008 defeated abortion bans through the lens of individual rights that expands beyond simple dichotomies of "us" versus "them" and continue on to a lively debate regarding the ban against women in combat that also challenges our notions of what it means to be a "soldier." Harvard Fellow Martina Viarengo shows us that women's issues expand beyond the boundaries of any one sphere in her discussion of Europe's continuing struggle with pay-gap gender disparities. In an interview that follows, Lois Lowry gives us a glimpse into her life as an award-winning author of the inspiring tales many of us grew up reading. Finally, we conclude with a unique interview of sorts, which seeks the inclusion of a wide array of voices on the most pressing issue of women's policy today. These articles illustrate the point that we cannot capture women's policy with any specific set of lenses or theories, but that our sense of gendered differentiation must constantly evolve. We are confident that these articles will inspire, enlighten, and intrigue.

This sixth volume pays particular testament to the hard work and sincere passion of the journal's editorial staff. They not only advised and edited based on content, but truly engaged with the material in a meaningful way, ensuring the quality of our final product. Specifically, I must acknowledge the contributions of Gloria Kim, our managing editor, who has provided an important sounding board for ideas and direction. I would like to show particular gratitude to our publisher Jen Swartout, who is the invaluable institutional memory that keeps our journal afloat and guides us with her incredible patience and support. I would like to offer sincere thanks to the Women and Public Policy Program at Harvard not only for its unyielding support of the journal specifically, but also for the goals and visions more broadly. Finally, recognition goes to Professor Richard Parker, our faculty advisor; the Kennedy School Student Government; and the office of Senior Associate Dean and Director of Degree Programs Joseph McCarthy, who has prioritized this journal since its inception. It is, quite obviously, a team effort, and we are thankful to all those who have supported this work and message through the years.

Sincerely,  
Carrie Schuettpelz  
Editor-in-Chief



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# “PERMISSION TO VOTE ‘NO’”: FRAMING THE ABORTION DEBATE IN SOUTH DAKOTA

*by Lura Barber*

*Lura Barber is a master in public policy student at the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota. Her research interests include reproductive justice and work and family policy. She spent several years as a pension rights advocate and a union officer at the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago, and has a bachelor's degree from Grinnell College, in Grinnell, Iowa.*

## **Abstract:**

In both 2006 and 2008, abortion bans appeared on the ballot in South Dakota, a state where more than half of voters believe that abortion should be banned to some extent. Yet both bans were defeated by wide margins. In this article, I examine how pro-choice activists used a narrowly framed message about individual rights and government intrusion in order to defeat the 2008 ban. I also explore the possibility that, by excluding ideas and images that fail to resonate with conservative values, the campaign might have conceded the war of words to anti-choice groups.

## **Introduction**

On Election Day 2008, 55 percent of voters in South Dakota voted “no” on Initiated Measure 11, a ban on abortion that allowed exceptions only for rape and incest victims and for the mother’s health. Such an outcome was far from assured in a conservative state like South Dakota, where in 2008, 38 percent of voters were registered Democrats, 15 percent were registered Independents, and 45 percent were registered Republicans (South Dakota Voter Registration 2008). Nor does antiabortion sentiment follow party lines in the South Dakota state legislature; for example, Casey Murschel, now executive director of NARAL Pro-Choice South Dakota, was a Republican state representative during the 2006 abortion debate.

In 2006, Referred Law 6—a near-total ban without exceptions for rape and incest victims or for the mother’s health—failed to find voter support by a similar margin of 56 to 44. After the 2006 vote, polls indicated that 58 percent of South Dakotans would support a ban that included the exceptions for rape, incest, and the life of the mother—measures that were deliberately added to the 2008 measure to make it more palatable to voters (Lewis 2008). After the 2008 ban was also defeated, polls by Planned Parenthood found that 50 percent of voting South Dakotans still thought that abortion should be illegal in all or most cases (Planned Parenthood 2008). Yet, abortion remains legal in South Dakota. How did two successive antiabortion ballot measures fail in a conservative state where half of the voters support banning abortion to at least some degree?



In 2006 and 2008, the South Dakota Campaign for Healthy Families (SDCHF) mobilized voters in successful attempts to defeat Referred Law 6 and Initiated Measure 11. In this article, I examine how SDCHF used a narrowly framed message in order to help defeat Initiated Measure 11. Against this political victory I weigh the possibility that, by excluding ideas and images that fail to resonate with conservative values, SDCHF might have conceded the war of words to anti-choice forces. The South Dakota Campaign for Healthy Families has won the votes of the people of South Dakota, but has it changed their minds on abortion?

### **The Abortion Wars in South Dakota**

Pro-life activists in South Dakota had developed politically successful messages and strategies long before the 2008 battle over Initiated Measure 11. Between 1973 and 2006, lawmakers in South Dakota enacted parental notice requirements for teens seeking abortion, restricted low-income women's access to abortion via Medicaid, and created counseling and mandatory delay requirements, among other restrictions. In its 1992 decision in *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey* (505 U.S. 833 1992), the Supreme Court replaced the judicial doctrine of strict scrutiny of abortion regulations with the less restrictive "undue burden" standard, which recognizes the state's legitimate interest in regulating abortion, so long as regulation does not have "the purpose or effect of placing a substantial obstacle in the path of a woman seeking an abortion of a nonviable fetus." Following the decision in *Casey*, lawmakers across the country introduced bills regulating the provision of abortion in their states. During this period, the South Dakota legislature enacted seventeen anti-choice measures—including additional counseling requirements, mandatory reporting of patient information to the state, and a criminal law creating separate legal status for embryos and fetuses—and considered, but failed to pass, fourteen pro-choice measures (NARAL 2007).

By 2006, pro-life activists had become confident that South Dakota—a culturally and politically conservative state with a small population and little national presence—would be an ideal testing ground for legislation that, if passed into law, would present a direct challenge to *Roe v. Wade* (410 U.S. 113 1973) (NARAL 2007; Siegel and Blustein 2006). On the eve of the state legislature's passage of the 2006 ban, Leslee Unruh, a long-time pro-life activist in the state, reiterated the movement's anti-Roe strategy in an interview with National Public Radio:

We've been very successful to chip away at the laws of *Roe v. Wade* in South Dakota, and we think the rest of the country should really be following us and following the heartland . . . and this is definitely planned to go after *Roe v. Wade*. (Rovner 2006)

Abortions in South Dakota represented only 0.1 percent of all abortions performed in the United States in 2005. South Dakota's rate of legal abortion has decreased by more than 26 percent since 1992, from 26.3 to 19.4 abortions per thousand women aged fifteen to forty-four and is now the third-lowest in the country (Guttmacher Institute 2008). In 2004, 814 abortions were performed in South Dakota; by contrast, in the same year, 126,002 abortions were performed in New



York, the state with the highest abortion rate (CDC 2007). What's more, no doctor in South Dakota is willing to perform elective abortions; once a week, Planned Parenthood, which runs the only clinic in the state, must fly a doctor in from Minnesota to perform abortions (Rovner 2008). Thus, a ban in almost any other state would have been a more effective use of anti-choice resources if the goal were in fact to reduce the number of abortions.

While pro-life activists like Leslee Unruh may attribute the rarity of abortion in South Dakota to their own assiduous efforts, there may be another reason: in a state with so few abortions, most residents do not know, or may think they do not know, any woman who has had one. This is an important fact to keep in mind when, as Lindsay Pagel, field director for SDCHF, said, most people will not change their antiabortion views "unless they know someone who was placed in a circumstance that was very difficult and it made them think twice" (Pagel 2008). In other words, a person's view of abortion changes when they know a woman—a sister, an aunt, a friend—who has needed to terminate a pregnancy. The dominant anti-choice discourse about abortion in South Dakota made it difficult for citizens and pro-choice groups to articulate a moderate pro-choice view. According to Pagel, "In 2006, people did not even want to utter the word 'abortion,'" (2008). Murschel concurs, stating that even those who may have opposed the ban "just didn't know what to say to have conversations . . . about choice" (2008a).

### **"Protecting Women from their Abortion Choices"**

In laying the groundwork for the 2006 abortion ban, anti-choice activists implemented a two-part strategy. First, through public hearings they publicized the testimony of anguished women who regretted their abortions and who felt betrayed and misled by the pro-choice movement. Second, they argued that because a woman experiences an "intrinsic" bond with her child, she is actually incapable of giving informed consent to an abortion; further, abortion endangers both her physical and mental health:

It is simply unrealistic to expect that a pregnant mother is capable of being involved in the termination of the life of her own child without risk of suffering significant psychological trauma and distress. To do so is beyond the normal, natural, and healthy capability of a woman whose natural instincts are to protect and nurture her child. (South Dakota Task Force to Study Abortion 2005)

Proponents of this line of thought argue that women lack the capacity to freely choose abortion, and therefore they must be victims of coercion and misinformation at the hands of their parents, their partners, and the abortion providers. The state therefore has an interest in prohibiting abortion in order to protect a woman's right to a relationship with her child. As Reva Siegel and Sarah Blustein have noted, the anti-choice movement now links pro-choice language about women's rights to essentialist notions of gender in order to argue that the state should "protect women's health and choices as *mothers*" (Siegel and Blustein 2006; original italics). This woman-protective rhetoric radically reframes abortion discourse so that, from a pro-life perspective, the interests of the mother and the fetus are no



longer in conflict. At the same time, it sidesteps the liberal conception of private liberty that informs contemporary pro-choice discourse.

Feminists and anti-choice groups alike have criticized the pro-choice movement for failing to acknowledge the ambivalence and regret with which some women regard their abortions, even those that felt they had chosen freely (Baumgardner 2008). American pro-choice discourse, with its focus on the liberal conception of individual rights, “marginalizes those women who are in reality victims, and who have been ‘left alone’ by the state to deal with the economic, personal, and social crisis they are experiencing with their pregnancy” (Ferree 2003, 336). Pro-life activists in South Dakota, like other antiabortion groups, have capitalized on this discursive weakness by “positing a ‘postabortion syndrome’ of guilt and remorse,” that helps women explain their own suffering and experiences of coercion and regret (Ferree 2003, 336).

In 2004, the South Dakota legislature gave twenty “post-abortive” women a public forum in the legislature to testify to their experiences and to plead for lawmakers to enact an abortion ban to protect other women (South Dakota Task Force to Study Abortion 2005). Murschel, then a state representative, remembers lawmakers having to leave the room in tears during testimony from women about their abortion regrets (Murschel 2008b). A year later, the South Dakota House and Senate voted to create the South Dakota Task Force to Study Abortion (referred to here as the “Task Force”), a seventeen-member committee charged with the task of researching the current practice and impact of abortion, the medical advancements in determining fetal viability since the legalization of abortion, and the potential harm to women who have abortions. The Task Force included nine “staunchly antiabortion” members, among them anti-choice legislators, a lobbyist for an antiabortion Catholic group, and Allen Unruh, husband of Leslee Unruh and an antiabortion activist in his own right (Bans 2006). Pro-choice members—who eventually worked on their own minority report—included Republican Senator Stanford Adelstein, Dr. Maria Bell (a gynecologist), Linda Holcomb (a family therapist), and Kate Looby, South Dakota state director for Planned Parenthood Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota. Of the Task Force’s proceedings, Looby said, “This was supposed to be a fact-finding mission and it was so contentious you can’t even imagine. The atmosphere in the room at all times was hostile” (Bans 2006).

The anti-choice bias of the Task Force and its final report cannot be mistaken. Throughout its final report, the Task Force cast the interests of women and fetuses in direct opposition to those of male partners, parents, and abortion providers, all of whom were seen as coercing women to submit to unwanted abortions. According to the Task Force, the very legality of abortion constituted a risk to women because it made women more susceptible to pressure from outside forces to have an abortion (South Dakota Task Force to Study Abortion 2005, 21). It also concluded that because abortion is “inherently coercive,” as it is irreversible, and because—as the Task Force alleged—abortion providers did not provide enough information for a woman to exercise informed consent to the procedure, the state should prevent abortion from being used by a pregnant woman to “waive her fundamental right to her relationship with her child” (South Dakota Task Force to



Study Abortion 2005, 55). In this construction, legal abortion is no longer a right, and access to it is not a guarantee of women's freedom; rather, it oppresses women and violates their essential human dignity and right to self-determination:

This method of waiver of the mother's rights expects far too much of the mother. It is so far outside the normal conduct of a mother to implicate herself in the killing of her own child. Either the abortion provider must deceive the mother into thinking the unborn child does not yet exist, and thereby induce her consent without being informed, or the abortion provider must encourage her to defy her very nature as a mother to protect her child. *Either way, this method of waiver denigrates her rights to reach a decision for herself.* (South Dakota Task Force to Study Abortion 2005, 56, author's italics)

Although the Task Force relied on expert testimony to make legal and medical arguments against abortion, the testimony of "post-abortive" women was its driving force, referred to repeatedly and quoted directly in the final report. While some of the women expressed explicitly antiabortion sentiments, others expressed emotions that could just as easily impel pro-choice activism that acknowledges their experience of loss and regret: "I grieve the loss of my daughter to the point of almost being suicidal . . . it has caused emptiness in my life . . . I carry the guilt and shame with me every day" (South Dakota Task Force to Study Abortion 2005, 33). Few pro-choice venues exist for women to express these emotions, however; perhaps as a result, these women found solace in the pro-life movement and empowerment in a public forum that allowed them to express "anger toward the abortion providers, their baby's father, or society in general, which promote abortion as a great right, the exercise of which is good for women" (South Dakota Task Force to Study Abortion 2005, 21).

The four members of the Task Force who worked on a dissenting minority report—Adelstein, Bell, Holcomb, and Looby—offered amendments and recommendations that, in their words, "were not accepted by the majority and in many cases, were not even discussed" (South Dakota Task Force to Study Abortion 2006, 1). Some of the recommendations included reducing abortion through access to contraception and comprehensive sexual health education. The minority report criticized the Task Force for ignoring the democratic process and scientific fact and recommended that:

Findings and motions passed by the Task Force be consistent with current medical science and based on findings from the most rigorous and objective studies that are accepted by respected organizations such as the American Medical Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Psychiatric Association and the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology. (South Dakota Task Force to Study Abortion 2006, 5)

The minority report also argues that the woman-protective arguments underlying the state's informed consent statute relied upon "sexist, insulting, condescending, and inaccurate stereotype[s] of women" (South Dakota Task Force to Study Abortion 2006, 26). Planned Parenthood's injunction against the statute was struck down by the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals, but continues to be litigated.<sup>1</sup>



As in the Task Force report, the minority report uses legal and medical testimony and research to reach its conclusion, which was that “the most effective way to reduce abortions is to reduce unintended pregnancies” (South Dakota Task Force to Study Abortion 2006, 2). While clearly the Task Force had been “formed to give political support for a policy agenda that had been formulated in advance and was already well underway” (NARAL 2007), the minority report does not address the powerful role that women’s testimony played in the antiabortion work of the Task Force. The minority report, while strongly argued, fails to address the emotion expressed by women in their “stunning and heart-wrenching testimony” (South Dakota Task Force to Study Abortion 2005, 21), even though this testimony had clearly impelled the passage of the anti-choice legislation. In the minority report’s statement that, “[w]hen faced with unintended pregnancy, women make informed and voluntary decisions” (South Dakota Task Force to Study Abortion 2006, 20), the dissenting Task Force members—perhaps reluctant to engage in the sexist stereotyping of the majority report—utterly failed to acknowledge the lived experience of women who, because of their vulnerability and regret, find solace in the women-protective message of antiabortion groups.

All the same, the Task Force’s findings and recommendations laid the groundwork for the successful passage of the 2006 abortion ban. Before 2006, two near-total abortion bans had failed to pass the South Dakota legislature by narrow margins. In 1991, the Senate failed, by one vote, to pass a House-initiated ban, and in 2004, the Senate and House passed a ban that the governor vetoed on technical grounds—the veto override failed by one vote in the Senate (NARAL 2007).

#### **“Permission to Vote ‘No’”: Referred Law 6 (2006)**

The woman-protective antiabortion argument propelled the legislature’s passage in 2006 of a sweeping abortion ban with exceptions only to save the life of the mother. South Dakota Governor Michael Rounds signed the ban into law in March of that year. According to Connie Lewis, progressives in South Dakota then contacted Planned Parenthood to ask them to “take it to the people” (Lewis 2008) through South Dakota’s veto-referendum process, rather than through litigation, which Planned Parenthood had typically used in response to antiabortion measures (NARAL 2007; Hansen 2007). The veto referendum offered the opportunity to shift the debate to a possibly more receptive political venue than the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals or the state legislature. Sarah Stoesz, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, characterized the 2006 ban as a “gift to abortion rights activists” because it mobilized activists and generated open debate among citizens about abortion rights in South Dakota:

It’s hard to get people angry over small assaults on our reproductive rights . . . but when the radical anti-reproductive-rights agenda is laid as bare as it was in South Dakota, even mainstream people who don’t think much about the issue of abortion become angry enough to become politically active. (Hansen 2007)



Planned Parenthood and other pro-choice and progressive organizations—including NARAL Pro-Choice South Dakota and the American Civil Liberties Union—subsequently formed the South Dakota Campaign for Healthy Families.

After gathering more than twice the number of signatures necessary to put the law on the ballot, SDCHF researched a variety of messages for framing its opposition to the ban. Both Lewis and Murschel agreed that there was “no question” (Lewis 2008) that a typical “pro-choice” message would fail to persuade moderate and independent voters who self-identified as “pro-life.” SDCHF also found in focus groups that the lack of exceptions in the law for victims of rape and incest and the narrowness of the exception for the mother’s health made many people uncomfortable. The challenge, according to Lewis, was to meet people “where they were at” in their views of abortion and to then frame the issue in a way that let people “step out of their pro-life frame to think about the consequences of rape, incest, and health problems” for pregnant women; in effect, she claimed, such a frame “gave them the permission to vote ‘no’” (Lewis 2008).

According to Murschel, SDCHF’s focus in 2006 was to argue that the ban simply “went too far” and to correct misleading claims by antiabortion groups about the extent to which Referred Law 6 would ban abortion (Murschel 2008a). For example, on a sample ballot mailed to voters by a group supporting the ban, the attorney general’s statement that the only exception to the ban was to save the life of the mother was obscured by a large red arrow (Looby 2006). Ban supporters, including Allen Unruh, argued that the ban made exceptions for rape and incest victims to obtain emergency contraception after a medically administered pregnancy test; as opponents of the ban pointed out, however, emergency contraception is only effective within a seventy-two-hour time period, while a pregnancy test may not be administered until weeks after the rape or incest occurred (Looby 2006). Ultimately, about 56 percent of voters voted to overturn Referred Law 6. Antiabortion groups were encouraged, however, by a poll finding that 58 percent of South Dakotans would support a ban with exceptions for rape and incest victims and in cases where the mother’s life was in danger (Lewis 2008). This set the stage for the 2008 battle.

### **Framing a Dialogue about Abortion: Initiated Measure 11 (2008)**

Until the passage of the 2006 ban, pro-choice groups had struggled to advance in the political arena and to tailor their pro-choice message for the citizens of South Dakota. While some South Dakotans became radicalized by the ban, SDCHF would have to develop a powerful message to convince others—namely, the roughly 60 percent of voters who self-identified as independent or moderate—to reject such a law (Lewis 2008; Planned Parenthood 2008). SDCHF leaders shaped their message to appeal to these independent and moderate voters by framing the issue as one of government intrusion into personal matters. This message reflected voter concerns about “individual rights,” which has been the most politically effective pro-choice frame in the United States (Ferree 2003; Ferree et al. 2002; Saletan 1998). By hewing to conservative frames in the debate about the abortion ban, SDCHF used local and national discourses about privacy and individual rights that “resonated” with voters. Frames that “tap into a hegemonic discourse”



in this way are more likely to be politically effective (McCammon et al. 2007, 726). All the movement leaders I interviewed identified SDCHF's framing as a key part of its political success.

SDCHF used messages about "individual rights" and "government intrusion" to great effect in the 2008 battle over Initiated Measure 11. Initiated Measure 11 was a citizen-led ballot initiative to outlaw abortion in South Dakota, with narrow exceptions for rape and incest victims and in cases where the mother's health was threatened. Since 58 percent of voters had said they would vote for a ban with exceptions, SDCHF knew that it needed another message in order to defeat the measure. "In order to get voters thinking again about this issue, we had to construct our messaging from another angle," Pagel said (2008). In focus groups of South Dakota voters, SDCHF found that once a hypothetical abortion ban included an exception for the health of the mother, it gained broad support. Focus groups were opposed, however, to a ban on abortion that made no exception for cases of fatal fetal anomaly, where the fetus had little to no chance of surviving, in or out of the womb (Lewis 2008). The vaguely worded 2008 ballot measure had no clear exceptions for fatal fetal anomaly, so it became—along with government intrusion and individual rights and privacy—an important part of SDCHF's message.

Although politically successful, these conservative themes of privacy and individual rights preclude a more progressive discourse about women's rights and tend not to challenge traditional ideas about women's role in the family and in society (Saletan 1998). Hence, SDCHF's name and slogan, "Let Families Decide," made no mention of women, even though abortion is at its root a women's issue. According to Pagel, SDCHF's goal was not to challenge voters' beliefs about women's roles but to show how women struggled with abortion decisions and made them in consultation with their husbands, families, doctors, and pastors. "The more connected the woman is, the more likely people are to 'believe' her. She is a mother. She is a daughter," Pagel said (2008). South Dakotans considered an unmarried woman without these support networks to be less credible and sympathetic than a married woman who had consulted with her husband and others before reaching the decision to have an abortion. "There is very little sympathy for healthy women with healthy babies who simply don't want to be bothered by a pregnancy," said Pagel, who added that South Dakotans tend to blame a woman in this circumstance for lacking familial or religious support (2008).

SDCHF's primary spokeswoman, Tiffany Campbell, was able to counter negative stereotypes about women who seek abortion (Murschel 2008a) by "open[ing] people's minds to thinking about the personal experiences" of women who have had abortions (Lewis 2008). Campbell fulfills all the "requirements" of a "credible" woman in South Dakota: she is a married mother of three in her mid-thirties who was a pro-life Republican before her own abortion experience. About three years earlier, during an ultrasound, she and her husband learned that their twin boys' lives were threatened by twin-to-twin transfusion syndrome. After consulting with experts, they chose to selectively terminate the weaker twin so that the other would live. Campbell approached SDCHF in late 2006 after she realized that under the ban her abortion would have been illegal and both of the



twins would have died. During the 2008 campaign, she and her husband recounted this story in a television ad that ran throughout the campaign.

Even though Campbell offered an image of abortion decision making that countered negative stereotypes held by South Dakotans by resonating with their deeply held values, the fact remains that only a small fraction of women seek abortions because of health complications. A 2005 study of U.S. women seeking an abortion found the most common reasons were that the woman was not ready for a child or the timing was wrong (25 percent), she could not afford a baby now (23 percent), or that she had completed her childbearing, her children were grown, or she had other people depending on her (19 percent). Only 3 percent of respondents listed possible problems affecting the health of the fetus as their most important reason for having an abortion (Finer et al. 2005). SDCHF's narrow frame excluded almost all women and their reasons for having abortions from the public discourse—even as it succeeded in preserving their abortion rights. Other social movements have similarly “cherry-picked” their spokeswomen: Rosa Parks was not the first black woman in Montgomery, Alabama, to refuse to give up her seat, but she was the most “respectable” (Robnett 1997, 74).

Further, the de-gendered “individual rights” frame, when used in such a context, does not construct women as individuals worthy of rights. Rather, the rights of individuals accrue to men. Only through their relationships to men—their fathers, husbands, pastors, doctors—do women gain credibility as decision makers in South Dakota's abortion discourse. My interview subjects, all of them feminists, or what Pagel would call “independent women” (2008), are powerful decision makers. They spoke of consciously choosing frames that would succeed in South Dakota's political climate, even as they acknowledged that they believed in women's abortion stories and wanted to help all women. Shifting the meaning of individual rights in South Dakota to an explicit support of rights for women will require the kind of fundamental cultural shift that happens over long periods of continued dialogue. Until then, social movements will choose frames that are politically successful, even at the expense of more radical feminist concerns:

Narrowing public framing of feminist claims to those that are most resonant is expedient for the purposes of influencing policy, gaining public support, and forestalling countermovement attacks; however, such strategic framing also excludes interests and needs that—while no less feminist in principle—are radical, that is, less defensible in that discursive context, but whose success implies more fundamental change. (Ferree 2003, 306)

Time will tell if the defeat of Initiated Measure 11 signals “fundamental change,” but it is clear that the frames themselves helped draw people out of a reflexively pro-life mindset by linking the preservation of abortion rights with the American ideal of individual freedom. When I canvassed undecided voters for SDCHF the weekend before the election, I found that the people I spoke to did not like abortion, but the thought of government intruding into private medical decisions repulsed them. Some people also expressed empathy for women seeking abortions, particularly those who were victims of rape or incest. While SDCHF may have succeeded in reframing the debate, what language has it provided to women in



South Dakota who need abortions but do not fall into the narrow discursive boundaries drawn in the 2008 campaign? How do they convince themselves—much less their partners, parents, or pastors—that they have the right to decide for themselves whether to have an abortion when that right is so conservatively defined?

Ferree's "fundamental change" also refers to a change in the way that the pro-choice movement addresses the concerns of women who regret their abortions and who feel that their "right to an abortion" was forced upon them through the coercion of a partner or parent. In order to secure and expand reproductive rights, the pro-choice movement in South Dakota, and in the United States, will need to find a way to speak to these women's concerns and give their experiences credence within a pro-choice framework.

### **Implications for the National Debate on Abortion**

Lewis and Murschel both acknowledged that the pro-choice movement still has a lot of work to do in South Dakota, but they believe that the mobilization and debate around the two abortion bans means that fundamental change is possible in the long run. "Winning those elections and being able to engage in a conversation about abortion with people in the middle—people conflicted about abortion—advances our movement a great deal," Lewis said (2009). Without the pressure of fighting an abortion ban, pro-choice organizations may be able to commit more resources toward changing the discourse around abortion. Lewis emphasized that the pro-choice movement needs to acknowledge that people are "conflicted" about abortion in order to bring people in from the middle. SDCHF, according to Lewis, will try to leverage its strong, positive brand into a pro-choice legislative agenda. She thought that legislators (but not antiabortion activists) had lost their enthusiasm for banning abortion after losing twice, especially since their constituents were tired of discussing such a divisive issue every two years.

Having failed in their attempts to ban abortion in South Dakota, anti-choice legislators have reverted to their post-Casey strategy of attempting to impose additional administrative burdens on abortion providers. The only anti-choice bill of the 2009 legislative session, Senate Bill No. 92, would have required "the physical presence of any physician scheduled to perform an abortion at the site of the abortion procedure on the day prior to the abortion procedure," ostensibly to provide counsel to patients. The bill's anti-choice intent is clear, however, in its refusal to permit other doctors in the service provider's practice to counsel the patient and in its requirement that the provider be present for the full two-hour window of a scheduled consultation, even if the patient fails to appear for the meeting. The bill failed in committee by four votes to three, with an even split between Democrats and Republicans voting against the bill and two Republicans and one Democrat voting for it.

Other legislatures in the states of the Eighth Circuit, however, remain unfazed by the defeat of Referred Law 6 and Initiated Measure 11. Most notable in this regard is North Dakota House Bill 1572, a "fetal personhood" bill that would grant citizenship rights to an embryo from the moment of conception and outlaw abortion procedures as a violation of an unborn child's right to life. Although the bill states that "the right to life is a more fundamental right of a preborn child than



the mother's right to liberty or pursuit of happiness, which does not include the right to kill other people," it provides women, but not doctors, immunity from felony prosecution for abortion (North Dakota House 2009, HB 1572 (3)(a)). The bill was scheduled for a hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee on 16 March 2009, ten days before the end of the legislative session. Were the Senate to pass the bill, North Dakota Governor John Hoeven would likely sign it into law. However, because North Dakota has a veto-referendum process, pro-choice groups could petition to have the ban put on a ballot measure for a statewide vote later this year. Such a battle would prove costly and would certainly engage many of the same political actors who played a role in the debates in South Dakota, including Planned Parenthood of Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota. Regardless of the outcome, the debate over abortion in North Dakota will hold tremendous implications for abortion rights legislation across the country.

In South Dakota, Murschel and NARAL Pro-Choice will continue to hold "Talking About Choice" workshops, where people learn how to develop their own pro-choice message and get the practice needed to confidently discuss their views. "There are many people out there who just haven't really had the inclination or comfort level to say out loud that they are tired of this divisive battle and they're ready to move on—we want to give them the tools to be able to communicate that," Murschel said (2008a). Since the program started a year ago, NARAL Pro-Choice has held workshops for small groups outside of Sioux Falls, as well as for the National Women's Political Caucus and candidates from the Minnehaha County Democratic Party.

The long-term view of reproductive rights in South Dakota looks promising despite legislators' continued attempts to restrict abortion rights. The South Dakota Campaign for Healthy Families will remain active as a progressive coalition, focusing primarily on reproductive rights issues, while pro-choice groups work to develop a sustainable pro-choice discourse. To remain effective, and to reach out to as many women as possible, SDCHF and its constituent organizations will need to hold themselves accountable to a progressive pro-choice agenda that welcomes more women's voices into the public abortion discourse in South Dakota.

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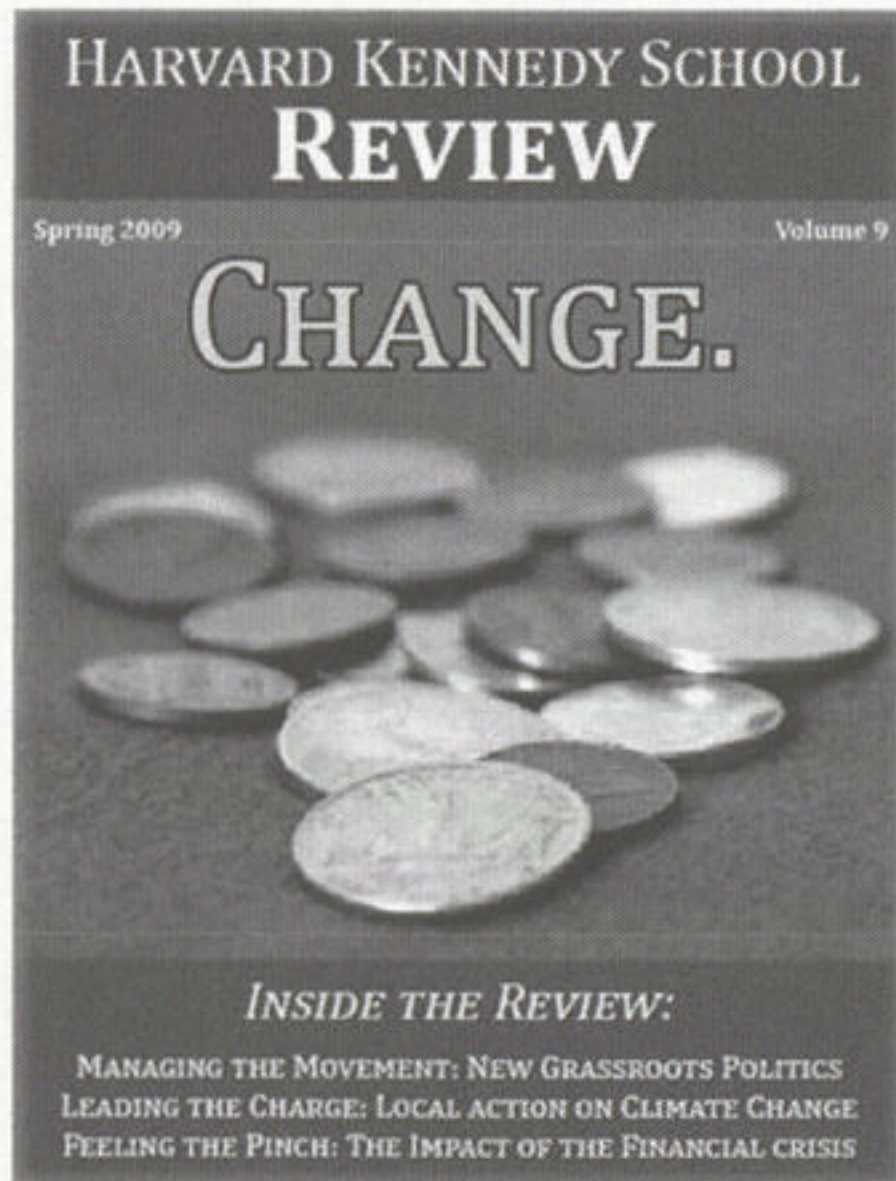
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### *Endnotes*

<sup>1</sup> See *Planned Parenthood Minn. v. Rounds*, 2009 U.S. Dist. (D.S.D. 7 January 2009) and *Planned Parenthood Minn., N.D., S.D. v. Rounds*, 530 F.3d 724, 2008 U.S. App. (8th Cir. S.D., 2008).



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# POLICY AND CULTURE: THE WOMEN IN COMBAT FIGHT

*by Angelia D. Farnell*

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The assignment policy of women in the military, in particular the combat exclusion clause, is one of the most analyzed and debated policies of the U.S. Army. This policy receives constant criticism for repressing women in the military and is considered one of the main roadblocks to women attaining the highest military ranks, including positions as the service chief and the chair of the joint chiefs of staff. Although it is the focal point of countless articles, editorials, books, congressional hearings, and other media venues, there is no fully accepted resolution to the argument about “women in combat.”

The interpretation and implementation of the women’s assignment policy is exceedingly complex. Differences in phrases and definitions of words and the fact that the Army policy is similar to, but not the same as, the U.S. Department of Defense’s (DoD) policy also add to the complex nature of this policy. One example is the variation in the definition of direct combat. According to the 1998 U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) report “Gender Issues: Information on DoD’s Assignment Policy and Direct Ground Combat Definition,” DoD defines direct ground combat as engaging “an enemy on the ground with individual or crew served weapons, while being exposed to hostile fire and to a high probability of direct physical contact with the hostile force’s personnel.” Moreover, the policy states that “direct ground combat takes place well forward on the battlefield while locating and closing with the enemy to defeat them by fire, maneuver, or shock effect” (GAO 1998). The Army’s definition in Army Regulation 600-13 — Army Policy for the Assignment of Female Soldiers is very similar but uses the phrase “physical contact with the enemy’s personnel and a substantial risk of capture” and states that “direct combat takes place while closing with the enemy by fire, maneuver, and shock effect in order to destroy or capture the enemy, or while repelling the enemy’s assault by fires, close combat or counterattack” (1992).

The explicit language in the policy reveals the complexity of interpreting and implementing this policy. The way the DoD defines direct ground combat links it to a particular location on the battlefield, using the term “well forward,” whereas the Army links it to a task, using the terms “while closing with” and “while repelling.” All services have the latitude to supplement any DoD policy and make it more restrictive, a practice that is evident in the additional phrasing in the Army’s policy. The varying interpretations and definitions of “direct ground combat” lead to disagreements—not only within the military and political leadership but also in the civilian sector—over the exact meaning and



implementation of the policy. This struggle attests to the complexity and confusion over the policy's true intent.

In reports and various statistical studies on women's assignments and combat from the RAND Corporation, GAO, and other independent agencies, culture is never fully addressed and little, if any, reference is given to where society places the role of women today relative to the past. Culture, like policy, is complex, powerful, and yet often subtle if not delicate. It cannot be changed immediately, and it varies based on individual and family values that are passed from one generation to the next. Because of the complexity in assessing values, the multiple dimensions of individuals and families, and constant societal changes, there is little concrete statistical data on culture. Therefore, it is never fully addressed in any argument.

A number of arguments make a case one way or the other about the policy and its implementation. One argument often used is the effect women have on readiness. Some believe that women have a negative effect on unit readiness due to culturally rooted mothering issues. A study conducted by the RAND Corporation, at the request of DoD, concluded, however, that the integration of women had no major effect on readiness. Single mothers were compared to single fathers regarding the impact each had on the unit. The study found that numerically, single fathers were more common in the military and that "single parents regardless of the gender placed a burden on the unit and impacted readiness" (Harrell and Miller 1997). Only two of 934 participants felt that gender had any effect on unit readiness.

Nevertheless, arguments, facts, and statistics presented over the years have done little to get at the core cultural issue; they have merely served as fuel to continue the policy fight while failing to address the culture issue. Values, beliefs, and personal preference are at the core of and are the essence of resolving the cultural issue. In short, much of the energy and study that go toward changing the policy need to be redirected toward changing culture.

So, why has there been no change or revocation of the policy, which would allow women to serve in any capacity? Why are there continued debates and fights for and against the policy and virtually none on culture? And, what will it take to ensure a future female service chief or chair of the joint chiefs? Winning the policy fight will not lead to a change in women's leadership in the military; a win is needed on a two-front war over policy and culture. Only then will more women have access to high-ranking leadership positions, including the service chief or chair of the joint chiefs of staff—positions historically filled exclusively by men from units and positions with direct combat missions.

### **DoD's Policy and Culture**

The DoD and the Army policies appear for the most part to say the same thing and to have the same intent: to preclude the assignment of women to units that have a mission of direct combat on the ground. Reviews of a number of researchers and countless studies show that the two policies are interlinked. The DoD and the Army, however, do not agree on the interpretation and implementation as it pertains to the definition of direct ground combat and the



implication of collocation. These two differences have caused consternation and considerable debate over how women are currently viewed and utilized in the military. The differences surfaced in the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) debate in 2005 on the issue of the assignment of women in or near direct combat on the ground.<sup>1</sup>

Both policies allow women to serve in any position that does not go against the exclusion clauses, which appear to say essentially the same thing, but because of cultural biases, institutional norms, and the lack of consideration for societal norms, the letter and spirit of the policies are not as clear as one might expect. There is little consensus among senior defense officials, political officials, and the American public about the objectives, implementation, and oversight of the policies. Thus, policy debate continues while the root of the issue—culture—is never addressed.

As far back as early Western history, women were viewed as intellectually inferior to men, as the weaker sex, as a source of human life, and also as a major source of temptation and evil, as illustrated in Greek mythology where a woman, Pandora, is blamed for opening a forbidden box that brought plagues and unhappiness to the world. Women have consistently been viewed as emotional, unable to control themselves, and overall less capable than men in most everything. No compelling statistical or factual data exists to sustain these views, however, and research published by RAND, Alliance for National Defense, Women Research and Education Institute, and others present compelling cases, evidence, and facts that dispel these views. Though women make up a large portion of the population, cultural views regarding women and their proper societal role continue to be passed from generation to generation.

Artificially imposed cultural restrictions continue to last for many generations and cause women to be degraded and disrespected in many societal aspects, including business, politics, and leadership. A large portion of this imposed cultural sanction “on the fairer sex” is evident in many forms including advertisements, societal expectations, and domestic and workplace stereotypes. This cultural bias, intentional or unintentional, has survived many generations and continues to exert powerful influence leading to an inability of many to recognize the truth that men and women have equal value and commensurate capabilities.

### **Women in the Military from a Historical Perspective**

Throughout U.S. history, women have played a pivotal role in supporting and defending the nation. They served in nearly every capacity that their male counterparts did. They demonstrated even during our early history that women are fully capable of defending our nation on and off the battlefield, yet they were seldom recognized, and because it was culturally unacceptable for a woman to serve in the military sometimes served by pretending to be men (Hall 1993).

By the end of World War II, roughly 280,000 women were in uniform (Holm 1993, 100). Though many returned to being homemakers after the war, some continued to serve as allowed by law, which primarily restricted women to auxiliary roles such as nurses, administrative personnel, and other traditionally female roles, largely dictated by cultural norms. Prior to World War I, tradition



and culture kept women out of the military service. Between World War I and World War II, law—generally based on societal norms and culture—kept women out of the military except as provided for by legal exceptions. Nursing was a conspicuous exception as nursing was and continues to be considered a normal, traditional role for women in accord with societal and cultural expectations.

The Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 was the first major step in making women a permanent part of the military, although exceptions to duty assignments remained. The exceptions were that women would not serve on Navy ships and aircraft that had combat missions. The law also specified a 2 percent ceiling on the number of women allowed in the military, prohibited women with dependent children from serving, and provided for only one female O-6 (Navy captain or colonel) in each service. All of these exceptions can be linked easily to the way society and culture depicts the roles women ought to play in the military. Women were not viewed as equals to men. It was not until 1967 that the ceiling was lifted and the rank restriction was removed. The National Organization for Women, an organized group founded by feminists in 1966 with the purpose of ending sexual discrimination, especially in the workplace, may have aided in the lifting of legislative restrictions, although the evidence is largely of an anecdotal character.

The number of women in the military increased when the force changed to an all volunteer force in the mid-1970s. This change resulted in new opportunities for women to serve their country in greater numbers. Women were eager to serve, and, additionally, the number of men volunteering proved insufficient to meet national needs. The mid-1970s witnessed a major societal and cultural change, a change largely driven by the necessity for more volunteers. The number of women has continued to rise, and women now constitute 15 percent of the military force. As the requirements and needs of society changed, we saw a slight shift in societal norms. Circumstances made it necessary to have more women and served to drive corresponding changes in institutional culture.

### **Women in Today's Military**

Our military is the most powerful, best equipped, and most well trained in the world. Very few countries approximate our capabilities, and women are an increasingly integral part of the force. They are playing an active role in direct combat activities, although officially they remain excluded from assignments to direct combat units.

In the contemporary asymmetrical combat environment, however, there is no clear distinction between being assigned to a direct combat unit versus being assigned to a support unit whose primary mission is something other than direct combat. In short, there is no front line on the contemporary battle space. Moreover, future combat missions are not likely to have a front line either. The linear battlefield of the past is now asymmetrical, with high potential for direct combat and imminent engagement with the enemy.

Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan encompass peacekeeping, humanitarian, and direct combat missions, and all are equally important to the war effort. Given the indigenous, Islamic culture in the region, women soldiers, rather than men, are often required to assist at local checkpoints, searching women and domestic



households where only women are present. These duties entail exceptional risk and frequently necessitate engaging with or being engaged by the enemy. Women also serve as clerks, nurses, doctors, gunners, convoy leaders, attack pilots, trainers, and in numerous other capacities in defense of our nation. Many have paid the ultimate sacrifice along with their male counterparts to protect and defend the nation and the U.S. Constitution.

### **Perceptions and Reality**

The perception that women do not have the ability, skills, or mental capacity to perform the same duties as their male counterparts, unfortunately, continues to linger in many quarters. Consider the duties performed by the Special Forces and Ranger units, for example. Typically these units seek to engage the enemy and often require extended periods in a field environment where everything needed is carried on the members' backs. Any service woman with field experience is fully aware of the physical demands and hygienic requirements of carrying everything needed. Critics argue that it is too difficult for women to operate for an extended period of time in the field. In fact, this is no easy task for the men either. Women's requirements can be quite different from those of their male counterparts when it comes to prolonged field duty. The differences, however, are not all related to physical strength. It takes more than simple brute strength and stamina for women to remain healthy and fit to fight in the setting just described. It requires training, skill, commitment, and competence—just as it does for men.

There are some biologically linked differences between women and men that may impact a woman's ability to endure the excessive and prolonged ground missions of the type experienced by some special force units. Men and women are not the same in every respect, but the differences are more modest than is generally taken to be the case. Some might perceive this to be no big deal and that women and men are the same, but this perception is a myth and has little bearing on reality.

There are a number of perceptions about women and what they can and cannot do and why. In *Through the Labyrinth*, Alice Eagly and Linda Carli discuss everyday psychological processes and foster the creation of common perceptions about women, perceptions that often lead to discrimination against women (2007). They describe the psychology as subtle and not intentional, stating that people do not actually aspire to discriminate or use stereotypes when viewing women in certain roles. This point is highly debatable, however.

Regardless of the perceptions or reality, women have always been, and will continue to be, some of the most technically competent, well-trained, and talented soldiers serving our country today. The truth is that women and men are professionals, and, as long as they are trained and qualified to do a job, they are perfectly willing to work side by side supporting and defending our great nation. Current and future wars will continue to show that the reality of the fight about the policy is that it is not as big of an issue as it may seem. Women serving in combat zones often find themselves in direct combat, and they perform heroically alongside their male counterparts.

The people that write, legislate, and enforce the country's policies and laws to support and defend our nation all come from modern society, the same society that



is still culturally rooted in the many misconceptions about women and their place and capabilities. It is no wonder we are still debating the assignment of women. The mentality of society still has great difficulty dealing with women and men working together and being viewed as equals.

### **Recommendation**

The military and the American people have to collectively educate and reinforce the principle that men and women are equal with regard to virtually all matters, especially with respect to supporting and defending our country. To do this, the first step is education, which includes teaching our current and future generations about the value of women, ensuring that they recognize that some past cultural views and perceptions of women are not accurate, and teaching them that women can and are fighting and leading just as their male counterparts are doing. Perceptions do not always correspond with reality. This education must be enforced positively from all levels of our society, thus building more social capital in women overall and conveying that women are not inferior to men.

The perception that women are inferior to men and are not able to lead in combat must not be passed to the next generation; the focus must be placed on the current and future generations, capitalizing on the strides the current generation is already making pertaining to the roles of women and men. For the most part, the current generation does not have issues with the equality of men and women—they see people—and now is the time to reinforce that view.

The second step is to get the media onboard to help dispel some of the old perceptions and facilitate society seeing women serving in the military in a more positive light. The media needs to stop emphasizing how many women have been killed in combat and focus on the many great things women are doing along with their male counterparts. Women and men are serving their country, saving lives, and getting killed in battle. Yet somewhat more curiously nonmilitary women living normal lives in the United States suffer more frequent and more violent deaths than do women in the military. The media must be encouraged to focus on the positive impact women have in service to their country. Women and men are a team—one team—fighting for the same cause to protect our freedoms and support and defend the U.S. Constitution.

As for the policy—and the way it is currently written by both the DoD and the Army—it should be revoked and a new policy issued. The new policy should allow soldiers, regardless of gender, to volunteer to serve in all specialties. Policy expectations must be rooted in capabilities, not gendered stereotypes and antiquated cultural perceptions.

### **Conclusion**

Women are an integral part of the military; they are no longer background support, filling in so that men can serve forward. Women are forward. They are well-trained, well-established, and performing magnificently, receiving the same honors and awards for valor as their male counterparts. Though current policy continues to support outdated battlefield mentality, women are serving and will continue to serve in combat situations due to the nature of the contemporary asymmetrical battle space. Women fully understand and accept their military roles;



they take the same oath as their male counterparts. That they are women does not preclude volunteering to defend our freedom; women and men both are making the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

As noted earlier, merely winning the policy fight will not change culture. It will not change the way women are perceived and will not put them any closer to being viewed as equal to their male counterparts and being fully recognized as "soldiers" and not just "female soldiers." Winning the war on both policy and culture will afford women their rightful place in military history and eventually make it possible for a woman to ascend to the most senior of leadership positions: service chief and ultimately chair of the joint chiefs of staff.

The integration of women into the military occurred gradually over an extended period of time. Women are currently serving effectively and with honor in exceptionally dynamic combat zones. A policy change will entail many cultural and military implications, but regardless of the implications, military women will continue to serve honorably and will do so increasingly in combat.

The societal culture is changing, albeit slowly, and military culture will change as well. Elected politicians, senior military officials, and the American people need to recognize this change is coming and that it serves the best interests of the nation and those who serve. The demands of contemporary combat largely dictate how we will prepare for, train for, and fight the wars of the future. These demands coupled with our changing society will play a vital role in facilitating a victory for both culture and policy, thus settling the long-standing fight over the women's assignment policy.

*The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Government or the Department of Defense.*

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<sup>1</sup> This 2005 HASC debate was mainly focused on congressional oversight of the assignment of women in the military policy as well as concern that the precedents being set by the Army in its assignment of women to forward support companies (typically collocated with units whose mission is direct combat) appeared to be in direct violation of the DoD regulation. There was further concern that the current DoD collocation rule was being redefined and repealed without Congress or the American people having a say, which could potentially result in females being assigned to units with routine direct combat missions, which is presumably against the intent of both the current Army and DoD policies.



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# THE LISBON AGENDA AND GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LABOR-MARKET OUTCOMES

*by Martina G. Viarengo*

*Martina Viarengo is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University at the Program on Education Policy and Governance and the Women and Public Policy Program. She is on leave from the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics where she works as a Research Economist with the Education and Skills Program. In the past several years, Ms. Viarengo has been examining education policy and labor market outcomes in the European Union. Specifically, she has devoted her academic research to understanding how to improve access to quality education in order to reduce poverty and inequality. In addition to her Ph.D. received from the London School of Economics, she holds a master's from Northwestern University and a bachelor's in economics from the University of Turin.*

## **Abstract:**

This article examines how far Europe is from meeting the targets set forth in the framework of the Lisbon Agenda with respect to the gender employment gap. It also reviews some of the key policies undertaken by European governments to meet the objectives by 2010.

## **Introduction**

In order to make Europe “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” (European Parliament 2000), European leaders set a very ambitious agenda at the Lisbon European Council in March of 2000; this agenda is known as the Lisbon Strategy or the Lisbon Agenda. Among the resulting targets that should be reached by 2010, those related to the role of women in the labor market are prominent.

Women's labor force participation has greatly increased in the last fifty years in most Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. Interestingly, girls' higher-education enrollments and graduation rates have expanded, and the gender college gap has been closed and has even reversed in most European countries.

As the 2010 deadline approaches, it is important to understand how far European countries are from reaching the agreed targets. Namely, it is important to examine whether adequate policies have been undertaken to provide women with improved labor-market opportunities. This article provides an analysis of the goals, the current state of women's labor force participation rates, and the main policies undertaken.

The article begins by reviewing the background and the agenda for employment in the European Union set in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy with a



particular focus on the objectives set for women. It then examines the state of the gender employment gap before presenting some of the fundamental policies undertaken by European countries to foster female labor-market participation. The article closes by offering some concluding remarks.

### **The Lisbon Strategy: Background**

The Lisbon Strategy (also known as the Lisbon Agenda or the Lisbon Process) was adopted by the European Council in Lisbon in 2000. The Lisbon Strategy, which sets a framework for action until 2010, aims specifically for economic as well as social and environmental renewal. The strategy seeks to increase European competitiveness by investing in a knowledge-based and highly productive society. The general goal of the Lisbon Agenda is to make Europe the most competitive, knowledge-based economy in the world, while at the same time preserving or even improving social cohesion and maintaining environmental sustainability.

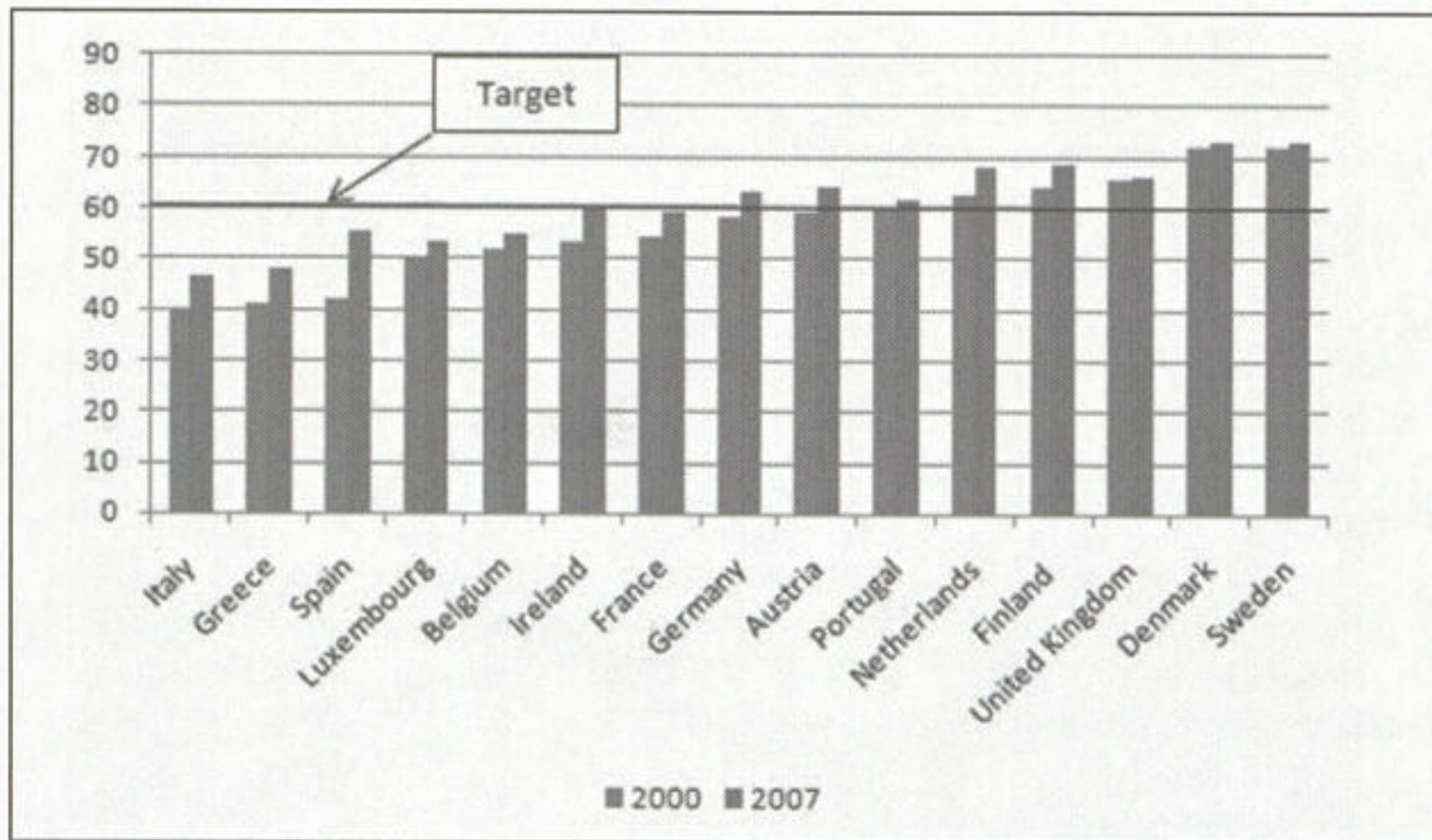
The objectives of the strategy are: an overall employment rate of 70 percent by 2010; an employment rate for women of more than 60 percent; an employment rate of 50 percent among older workers; and annual economic growth of around 3 percent. One of the motivations behind the agreement on the Lisbon Agenda was the fact that Europe was lagging behind the United States with respect to the development of the knowledge economy and overall productivity and growth rates.

The main purpose of the Lisbon Agenda is to track national achievements and compare them with the European average to encourage underperforming countries to raise their standards where they underperform. In this regard, the council also adopted the open method of coordination between member states—at different levels of decision making—as a means of achieving these objectives. The method is defined as “open,” partly so that outlined European principles can be adapted at a national level. Moreover, objectives set in the framework of the Lisbon Agenda are related to the outcomes and do not really identify the methodology to reach those objectives. That is, member countries have to set their own targets for each indicator adopted at the European level. The structural indicators are one of the operational foundations in the Lisbon Agenda for economic and social renewal. They can be used as a reflection on the Lisbon Agenda and its policy objectives and can also be used in the member states as a means of measuring performance.

The implementation of the Lisbon Agenda was later examined, and on that occasion it became clear that some of the objectives had not been met. Specifically, the Wim Kok report identified a lag between the Lisbon targets and the policies implemented by the European states (Kok 2004). Some of the objectives were revised and, interestingly, the aims shifted to the medium-run outcomes such as increasing labor force participation (Johansson et al. 2007). This revealed that the success of the Lisbon Process relies on the optimal formation and usage of the stock of human capital. Human resources are the main determinant of the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge essential for increased productivity, the creation of jobs, and the increase in labor-market participation necessary for the sustainability of the European economic and social model.



Figure 1: European Union, 15 Countries' Female Employment Rates, 2000, 2007



Source: Data extracted from the OECD Labour Statistics 2000, 2008.

If we focus on the current situation and the progress that has been made so far by the current twenty-seven members of the European Union (see Table 1), we observe the great heterogeneity that exists across countries. Specifically, in some Southern European countries and Ireland, female labor-force participation significantly improved, whereas some of the new members are still lagging behind.

Table 1: European Union, 27 Countries' Female Employment Rate in 2007 and Progress Over 2000-2007

Progress 2000-2007	Low	Close to Average	High
2007 >59		AUT, DK, FIN, GER, POR, SWE, UK	NLD, IRE
55-59	CZ	BEL, FRA	SPA
<55	GRE, HUN, SVK		ITA, LUX

Note: AUT: Austria; BEL: Belgium; CZ: Czech Republic; DK: Denmark; FIN: Finland; FRA: France; GER: Germany; GRE: Greece; IRE: Ireland; ITA: Italy; LUX: Luxembourg; NLD: Netherlands; POR: Portugal; SVK: Slovakia; SPA: Spain; SWE: Sweden; UK: United Kingdom.

Data is missing for Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, and Slovenia.

Source: Data extracted from the OECD Labour Statistics 2000, 2008.

### The Role of Policy

Among the main determinants of the female labor-force participation identified in the existing literature, we find posttax wage rates (Jaumotte 2003; Saczuk 2004); the possibility of work-time flexibility and part-time employment (OECD



### **Women and Employment in the Lisbon Agenda**

Increasing labor-force participation is one of the key priorities set by the European Union in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy. Among the ambitious targets set by European leaders is the goal of increasing total employment rate from 63.5 percent to 70 percent and female employment rate from 54 percent to 60 percent by 2010.

In order to achieve these objectives, all the member countries have also agreed on a common European Employment Strategy to coordinate their labor-market policies in order to meet the Lisbon targets. That is, the coordinated action was undertaken to attract and retain more people in the labor market, improve labor-market flexibility and adaptability to meet the needs of workers and enterprises, and implement effective reforms through better governance (European Employment Taskforce 2003). In this regard, predefined guidelines include: the improvement in matching of labor-market needs, an increase in human capital investment, and an increase in labor-market flexibility combined with a reduction in labor-market segmentation.

### **The Employment Gender Gap**

Women's labor-force participation rates have always been lower than that of their male counterparts (OECD 2009). From Figure 1, it is possible to observe that in 2000 only seven countries were above the target of 60 percent of female labor-force participation. Among these, prominent are the Nordic countries—Finland, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway—with rates above 65 percent. Among the Anglo-Saxon countries, the United Kingdom has rates similar to that of the Scandinavian countries, whereas Ireland is more similar to the countries of continental Europe. In this regard, France, Belgium, Germany, and Austria have participation rates below the Lisbon target but above 50 percent. At the other end of the spectrum we find Southern European countries (Italy, Greece, Spain) with participation rates close to 40 percent. As suggested by Christopher Pissarides et al. (2003), the employment gap is mainly due to inactivity, and only a small difference is due to unemployment rates (especially for Italy, Greece, and Spain). Overall, the average in 2000 for the fifteen countries in the European Union was equal to 54 percent, against the OECD average of 55 percent and the U.S. rate of 61 percent (OECD 2008).

In 2007, ten out of fifteen European countries were above 60 percent. It is important to note that the expansion of female labor-force participation has varied across countries. In Nordic countries, participation rates have slightly increased, and, on average, the male-to-female ratio is close to one. The greater increase in female labor-force participation has been experienced by some of the countries that were lagging behind: Spain and, to a lesser extent, Ireland. Interestingly, the three Southern European countries remain far below the 60 percent target. Overall in 2007, the average of these fifteen European countries was slightly below 60 percent, but if we also consider the new members of the European Union, the average for these twenty-seven European countries was approximately equal to 54 percent.



2004; Chagny et al. 2001); and the overall state of the economy (Darby et al. 1998; Genre and Gomez-Salvador 2002); as well as cultural attitudes and social norms (Jaumotte 2003; Saczuk 2004).

In this regard, recent research has shown that the EU policy has been particularly effective in reforming tax/benefit systems as well as public employment services (Thouloniac 2005; Pissarides et al. 2005; OECD 2008). On the other hand, reforms have had mixed results in promoting child care to increase female participation, as well as in strengthening active labor-market policies. Reforms so far have not been effective in addressing the gender pay gap and in improving and sharing investment in human capital, specifically in increasing participation in training of the low-skilled and in reducing the dropout rates of students from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

### **Conclusion**

This article has shown the main improvements in female labor-force participation achieved by the fifteen European countries that agreed on the Lisbon goals and on the overall strategy to make the European Union one of the most competitive knowledge-based economies in the world. Labor-market reforms have been implemented with mixed results across countries. Overall, the results achieved so far show that these countries are on track to meet the deadline set by the Lisbon Agenda. On the other hand, the new member countries will need to undertake major reforms to meet the 2010 targets.

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<sup>1</sup> Johansson et al. (2007) show various indicators such as expenditure in R&D, publication records, and number of Nobel laureates as well as the rate of information and communication technologies.



# STORYTELLING AND THE POWER TO SHAPE

## *An Interview with Lois Lowry*

*Lois Lowry's work is canonical in young adult fiction: she has written more than thirty books, among them *The Giver* and *Number the Stars*, and has twice been awarded the Newbery Medal, the most prestigious award in children's literature. Originally a journalist and photographer, she began writing children's literature in 1977. Through her beloved books, she has tackled not only the many issues of growing up but also adult questions and problems.*

*In February 2009, Carrie Schuettepelz and Alexandra Edwards, both candidates for a master in public policy degree at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, sat down with Ms. Lowry at her home in Cambridge, Massachusetts. They were particularly interested in discussing her use of strong female protagonists in young adult literature and tackling larger social questions in a unique and accessible way*

### **WPJH**

When you started writing books did you imagine what the process would look like? How is reality different? What didn't you anticipate?

### **Lowry**

I'm not sure that I know a lot of this. Writers tend to sit in their little room all by themselves and not be out there participating in the politics of publishing. And right now, incidentally, publishing, like so many businesses, is in financial disarray, which makes people like me very nervous. Because what happens when the publishers cease to exist?

So my first book was published in 1977, which was, what, thirty-two years ago? But, unlike many, or perhaps most, writers, I didn't go through the process of writing a book and then trying to sell it to a publisher or trying to find an agent.

Right now, times are very tough. And that may have been true, to a lesser degree, when I was starting out in 1976. But, what happened was a publisher came to me in 1976 or '75, perhaps, because they had read things I'd written in magazines. And they asked me if I would write a book for young teens.

So, I was very innocent of all the behind-the-scenes stuff. As an example, I lived in Maine at the time. I sat in my house and started writing a book. And I'd gotten four or five chapters into it, and I realized something wasn't right about it. And it took me a long time to figure out what, and I did figure out what. And I rewrote those chapters and got beyond that hurdle.

But I had no idea that I could have shown those chapters to an editor who would have given an opinion about it. It would have made the whole process easier, although I think it probably served me well to figure things out for myself. So anyway, I wrote that first book and sent it to them, and they liked it and published it. And so, the same publisher has published all of my books since then. I think I've done thirty-five books.



So I never have had to go through a difficult process that most writers do, and certainly beginning writers do. So, in a way, I've had it somewhat easy. But I also have not, except to a superficial degree, been privy to what's going on behind the scenes. I see things toppling and all of that, but I don't know the back story of any of that. I've been, as I think many writers are, fairly removed from the actual process out there in the world of business, which is the way I like it. But it does make me exempt from a lot of knowledge that other people have.

### **WPJH**

So does the process feel different to you now?

### **Lowry**

You know, I was unique in another way. Not only did I have the same publisher for, now, thirty-five books, but astoundingly, I've had the same editor for thirty-three books. And he just retired the year before last. So, I mean, it was him and me. And nothing ever changed, except that we both got older and more grumpy, I suppose. But now, for the first time with his retirement, I am starting to deal with other people. But it's still too new for me to know how that's going to work.

So, I have lived in this kind of bubble. And I know a lot of writers have not. And, as these publishing companies flounder and re-group, as they are now doing, I have friends who have books under contract, and suddenly the publisher seems financially wobbly. Or suddenly, the editor they were working with has been fired. So it's very frustrating and scary for them; slightly, so far, less, though, for me.

There was a period of time when we had a quite conservative government. And...[that] period of time—Reagan/Bush—encouraged the conservative groups and fundamentalist religious groups in this country to rise up with goals of censorship. And I've certainly been affected by that.

My books, in particular, a couple of them, have been challenged again and again. And my book *The Giver* has been on [the ] American Library Association's list of most challenged books in the United States for ten years. Whether that will change, now, under a new administration, I don't know. Or maybe that is just going to stay there, because certainly, those large groups of conservatives and fundamentalists are not going to go away.

They sort of took the government as license to bring their views to play. And that affected many writers. And it affected publishers, too, because as much as those of us who write, and publishers who publish, with integrity, as much as we would like to say that we wouldn't be swayed from our honorable views by this fear of censorship, the truth is that if you write something and it doesn't sell, or if it's removed from libraries, [and] nobody reads it, then there's not much point for either the publisher or writer.

So, I wrote a book, for example—the first *Anastasia Krupnik* book—published in 1979. Jimmy Carter was president. And the only reason that I remember that is because his daughter was about ten years old. And when I was writing that book in which the child was ten, I was picturing Amy Carter in my mind, who was, and who has continued to be, something of an iconoclastic child—a little rebellious. And she was always publicly having tantrums and things. And her parents were always rolling their eyes.



[This is] compared to the presidential children I grew up with: Nixon was vice president when I was a kid. And his daughters were my age and my sister's age. And my father was their dentist. So I was privy to the Nixon children. I never met them, those daughters, but they were so well-behaved and polite and brushed their teeth every minute.

So Amy Carter kind of appealed to me, I think, in contrast to that. And that's where I can base the writing of that book. Okay, so that book was published in 1979. I wrote it. I gave it to the publisher. They didn't ask me for any changes, and it was published, got good reviews. And then, as years passed, and things began to change slightly, suddenly that book—and some of its successors—were held up for censorship.

That very first book has the word "shit" in it. The publisher never noticed or questioned. I never thought twice. It's said by an adult in the book. And the child reacts startled by hearing it. But, nonetheless, there it is in a book designated for children in fourth through sixth grade. And so, that book, published in 1979, has now been around for thirty years. And now, suddenly, less recently, it was removed a couple years ago from schools in a county in Florida.

So that, obviously, reflected a changing political climate. And, as that began to happen, the publishers began to be more aware and more concerned. And I can remember writing a book—I'd have to check and see the date of it, but it would have been in the late '80s—called *The One Hundredth Thing About Caroline*. It's for the same age group. The child, Caroline, in the book is eleven, and her brother is thirteen.

And there is a scene in the book where it's a single mother, and the mother is out, so the two kids are in their apartment in New York by themselves. And they're talking. And so, the girl, age eleven, is cooking frozen TV dinners—what we used to call TV dinners, frozen dinners, chicken dinners—that their mother had left for them in the microwave. And so, during the conversation, she serves these two dinners to herself and her thirteen-year-old brother. And, at one point, the brother says, "This chicken sucks. It's ice-cold."

So, when I'd written the book and given it to the publisher, that was the one thing they got nervous about. They said that the word "suck" might cause problems. So I argued with them about that. When I said, "What do you want to change it to?" they said, "Well, 'This chicken stinks. It's ice-cold.'" And it didn't sound like a real thirteen-year-old boy to me. So I argued with them, and they left it in. And, in fact, that particular book has never been challenged. But it's evidence that they were beginning to worry about everything.

Nonetheless, when *The Giver* was published, which would have been in 1993, there was no bad language in it. Because of the nature of the society in the book, there's nothing that would lend itself to that. [I had] no idea that that book would become one of the most challenged books in the United States. So, what is that about? I have never really been able to figure it out.

People object to the book and become very emotional in their terrible school board meetings with people yelling and holding up this terrible book. And there's a Web site that called me the Antichrist because of the book. What they pull out of context is two scenes, one in which a twelve-year-old boy is bathing an elderly



woman. He's working [as a] volunteer in the old people's place. And one of his jobs is to bathe them. There's no sexual connotation whatsoever. In fact, I think it's kind of a sweet scene that a boy very tenderly bathes this very elderly woman. Okay, but they pull that out as this terrible scene of nakedness. And then there's a scene, late in the book, when the boy becomes aware that his father's job requires his father to euthanize—to kill. But, they take this out of context. I'm not sure sometimes they've even read the book. I mean these Web sites, like the one that calls me the Antichrist, tells people what to do, how to make an objection, and "go to your school and demand that this book be removed." So, in many cases, I think they haven't read it. But, they take that as the author promoting euthanasia. You know, the reverse is true if you read the book with any intelligence.

So, those are the things they object to. But, what I try to figure out is, what is the underlying objection, not these little scenes that they have been told to be horrified by? But I think the basic thing about that particular book reflects the fact that in the book, a boy—or children—is being brought up in a society that has very strict rules. And all the children obey these rules. And it makes for a cohesive, comfortable society, because everybody knows what the rules are, and they all obey the rules.

And then, this one boy perceives of the hypocrisy that lies behind these rules. And he disobeys and sets out to change or topple this kind of hypocrisy, to change the society. I think that's what frightens them: the fact that a young person is going against the existing very strict norm. So anyway, that's what I've had to battle for some years, the censorship of that book, which is already out there, so the publisher isn't going to change the book now.

But I wonder if they would have published it today had they known that... I suppose, in the long run, that the amount of publicity it gets every time it's challenged probably sells copies of the books. But I don't think the publisher would invite that, would purposely want to sell books through that mechanism, nor would I.

### **WPJH**

Have you seen a change in the types of books being written for girls over the years?

### **Lowry**

When I was writing the *Anastasia* books, I had two kids in college and two in high school. So by then, my kids were past the age of reading children's books of that sort. And I never read the *Baby-Sitters Club* or any of those that were popular at the time. I sense there have always been different types of children's books, even when I was growing up. I went back and looked at some of these recently because I had to speak to an audience here in Cambridge which was going to be primarily elderly women.

I was looking back at some of the books that were around when I was a kid. And I bought several used from Amazon and actually reread them. Although I was reading kids' books in the '40s, the books I was reading often had been published in the 1920s. They were series like *The Bobbsey Twins*, and to go back and reread those now is horrifying. They're sexist and racist.



One of my favorite *Bobbsey Twins*' books of all time, when I was a little girl, was *Bobbsey Twins and Baby May*, where they find a baby on their doorstep. Well, what little girl doesn't want to have that happen? It's wonderful. But I looked at that book, and there's even a picture of them finding the baby. And standing behind the children is Dinah the cook, who has a bandanna around her head. She looks like Aunt Jemima, and she says, "Oh, sho-'nuf. Dat dere baby." It's just embarrassing to read.

Those were the kind of books published in the 1920s. They would never be published now, but I was still reading them in the '40s. And, when I moved out of the United States in 1948, we donated them to the public library. So kids were probably reading them well into the '50s. So that's a different kind of political issue with children's books. But even with recently published books, there seems to be room across the spectrum for all kinds of books for young people.

### **WPJH**

Well, in preparing for this, I decided to go back and reread your books as a twenty-five-year-old, which was a different experience. Something I didn't really pick up as a nine- or ten-year-old, but that I did this time around, was the presence of these really strong female protagonists and the moral and social consciousness that people have in the books. Was that a conscious decision on your part?

### **Lowry**

The first book [*A Summer to Die*] deals with a female protagonist, because it was autobiographical. And then the *Anastasia* books have a female protagonist who is growing up in a family where the father teaches at Harvard. The mother works. They're a very contemporary sort of family, even though it was written in 1978-79.

I don't think I wrote a book with a male protagonist until there began to be spin-offs from the *Anastasia* books with her brother. But those are for younger kids. And then *The One Hundredth Thing About Caroline* had two sequels. And one of them called *Your Move, J.P.!* focuses on the older brother. He's the protagonist. And I think that's the first book I did, aside from the "Sam" books, with a boy protagonist.

And then, the next one probably would have been *The Giver*, a book in which I could have made the protagonist either male or female, and I don't have any memory of whatever thinking process caused me to make it a boy. In that book, *The Giver*, himself, is male. But recently, that book has become a play. I didn't write the play, but it's performed in cities around the country.

And I went out to a city in Michigan as their guest when they were doing that play. The man who was playing *The Giver* had become ill. And so, at the very last minute, they had brought in a local woman who was an actress. And she played the role as a female. And I realized, watching it, it didn't matter. That character could have been either male or female. I think I made it male because I had that photograph I used on the cover.

Overall, I do think it comes more naturally for me to use a female protagonist because my own memories are of that.



**WPJH**

How conscious of a decision was it for you to really embed the social themes into your books? I'm thinking specifically about *Number the Stars*, which is about Danish resistance during the Holocaust.

**Lowry**

I chose that particular set of circumstances, in part, because I have a very close friend who is Danish and had told me that story. But the reason I chose that particular setting is because Denmark is really the only country that showed that kind of extemporaneous integrity. And I was not aware that it had been written about for kids. Since that book has been published, I think there have been other books written about the same set of circumstances. But I think *Number the Stars* was the first one for kids.

Then, *The Giver*, when I wrote that in 1993, was this world situation. The origins of that book were not political, really, but more because I was fascinated with the concept of human memory. My father was alive then, but he was losing his memory. He was in a nursing home, and I would go to visit him in Virginia about every six weeks.

He always remembered me until he died at ninety-one. But, in going through old photographs, there would be pictures of my sister who was three years older. There were his two little girls. And he would look startled and say, "Whatever happened to her? What was her name? I can't remember her name." My sister had died young. And it was very troubling, to me, that my father had just forgotten her.

On the other hand, that was probably the most painful experience of his life—watching his child die. It certainly makes your life more comfortable if you don't have to live with that memory. So again, thinking about that . . . was really the origin of the book, the creation of a group of people who had found a way to remove—selectively remove—human memory. So people had no memory of anything that was troubling.

And then, in order to create that society, as it were, I had to decide what they would have forgotten and what they no longer suffered from. And so, there went poverty and divorce and drugs and alcohol and automobiles and warfare and cancer. And then, when you start getting into those things, then the political issues arrive that people now see in the book and that eighth-grade kids debate after reading the book, which is terrific.

But they were, to me, tangential. I was just writing the story. And then suddenly I began to be aware that those things have become part of it. I'm not sure when I gave the manuscript to the publisher that they saw the political implications. I had no idea that it would become such a controversial book for so many reasons.

**WPJH**

Do you think it's a different experience for girls to read the books as opposed to boys? Do you think that boys react differently to a strong female protagonist?



**Lowry**

Take *Number the Stars* as an example, where the protagonist is a ten-year-old girl. It is a book that is typically used in third, fourth, and fifth grades. Boys at that age do not want to pick up a book that has a girl on the cover. However, when it's used as part of the curriculum, as that book is most often, then they like it when they discover that it involves soldiers and warfare. There's certainly a difference in taste between boys and girls at that age. I think that's always been true. *I don't think boys read The Bobbsey Twins and Baby May.* I know my brother didn't.

Then further along with *The Giver*, which is most often and best used in seventh and eighth grade where teachers have great success using it as a vehicle for debate and discussion and issues, girls have never had a problem reading a book with a boy protagonist. So that doesn't present a problem to them. And boys, of course, at that age, they can get right into it, because it's a boy in the book.

Sitting down to write a book, I don't know that it would be a point that I would consider. To me, when I start writing a book, a plot feels right for a particular protagonist. And so, either a female or a male will come to mind. And I don't waste a lot of time thinking, "Would this book work better if I . . . ? Would it sell more? Would it be used in schools more if I changed the gender of the protagonist?" Some just seem to fall naturally to one side or another.

**WPJH**

It seems like the books now might be reflecting the same gender themes of the children's books of the '40s or '50s.

**Lowry**

The very first book I wrote, *A Summer to Die*, was a fictionalized autobiography. In it, there are two girls who are thirteen and fifteen, and they drew very much on the personalities of me and my sister—I being the younger of the two. And there is a section where the younger girl describes herself in relation to her sister. And her sister is a cheerleader and has a boyfriend. And she, the younger girl, is an introvert and wants to be a photographer. And those differences are made very clear. And that was so—and it's always been true within families—but that was my sister and me. She was May Queen at high school the same year I won the Latin Prize. She majored in home economics in college. All she ever wanted to do was get married and have babies. And that's true of the girl in that book. So I was just drawing on actual experience then. But I think I was fortunate that I was the kind of personality of that younger girl. Well, if I'd been my sister, I wouldn't have grown up to write books.

**WPJH**

Did you steer your children or regulate their reading when they were young?

**Lowry**

No, my kids grew up in a house where there were a billion books. And they were always taken to the library. And I don't recall ever—I mean, I read to them, but as far as their reading themselves, I don't recall ever—I must have paid attention, but I certainly never worried about what they were reading.



My girls were readers from early on, but the boys were not. They were athletes and outdoors all the time. And they didn't become readers outside of school assignments until probably college age. And then both of them became readers. But I was never concerned about what they were reading.

I think, though, that nowadays, there are many books for what publishers call "young adults," as opposed to kids from sixth grade to high school kids. They're very explicit and outspoken about sexuality. And those books I don't think were around when my kids were growing up. I think they went from kids' books, which were fairly pure, to adult books. I don't think there was that middle section until Judy Blume wrote *Forever*, and it suddenly made it okay.

**WPJH**

Have you had a lot of interaction with other authors?

**Lowry**

I have a lot of friends who are authors. And I tend not to read their books, because I don't read kids' books very much. But one author who's a very good friend of mine is named Phyllis Reynolds Naylor. She won a Newbery Medal for a book called *Shiloh* years ago.

But the books that are the most popular of hers—and there are a lot of them now—are a series. They're about a girl named Alice, and in the series she grows from eight years old until probably eighteen. And a lot of what those books have to do with, Phyllis tells me—I haven't read them—is emerging sexuality.

And her publisher has set up a Web site where kids can write to Phyllis. And she reads all those letters. The questions in some of the letters she gets are quite astounding. I don't know why I should be astounded by them; but the fact that they go to an anonymous author but they feel so close to her because they've read these books.

Phyllis has a contract to write four more Alice books. She's getting kind of tired, but she is quite comfortable doing those books. That's not something that would appeal to me, and *Anastasia* never got into that. I stopped writing *Anastasia* books; I had let too much time go between them by writing other books. And so, it came time when I felt it was time to write another book, and they said, "No, the time has passed. We don't want any more *Anastasia* books." So I've always regretted that.

**WPJH**

Have you seen changes in the kind of feedback that you've been getting over the years from readers?

**Lowry**

You know, a change comes mostly from something not having to do with the books. I do get a lot of feedback. I get a lot of letters. I have a stack of unanswered ones right here now. But now mostly I get e-mails, because as soon as I set up a Web site that allowed people to click to e-mail me that became so easy for them. And so, I get fifty to sixty e-mails a day, some from adults but most often from kids.



But the change that I've seen is that the anonymity that e-mail provides and the immediacy of it allows them to say whatever they want. And so, some of them—not a large number, but some of them—use it as license to be very rude. No kid is going to sit there and write a letter and put a stamp on it saying “You suck. You look like a lesbian” and mail it. But, if they can send an e-mail like that, they will. So those I just don't answer.

But, the availability of e-mail has, first of all, made the number of kids who contact me grow a lot, because it's a lot easier to send an e-mail than to write a letter. And sometimes, without being rude, sometimes they're very intimate in their feelings in an e-mail. It's like they like having somebody to talk to that they don't have to sit and look at. And so, I value that.



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# ONE QUESTION, MANY VOICES: THE MOST PRESSING WOMEN'S POLICY ISSUE TODAY

*compiled by Baylee DeCastro*

*Traditionally, the Women's Policy Journal of Harvard has selected a few people and asked them a series of questions about women's policy, gender issues, and their particular fields of specialty. This year, we decided to ask several people just one question. What we received in response was a wealth of issues, ideas, and perspectives. Here are seven answers to the question: What is the most pressing women's policy issue today, anywhere in the world, and why?*

## **Elaine McGrath**

*Elaine McGrath is Operations Director in the Executive Office of Health and Human Services for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. She has a bachelor of arts degree in mathematics from the University of Massachusetts and is currently pursuing a master in public administration at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.*

Despite the United States Equal Pay Act of 1963, United States women still earn only 77 percent of men's wages. Two years ago, this was probably one of the most cited statistics in the Department of Labor census report. And a comparable gap exists throughout the developed world, where many countries passed similar acts. This does not include developing countries where much of the work output is within the hidden economy.

Shortly after the data was released, a woman wrote an article in the *Washington Post* explaining that the gap is largely due to the choices women make in order to lead a balanced life between work and family. Given the growing number of women that are heads of household and the large number of children living in poverty in those households, it bothered me, to say the least, that the need to do it all was classified as a preference. To many of us, it is not a choice, it is a necessity.

The wage gap ignores many factors in women's lives that affect their choices. As well, it ignores the enormous amount of work produced by women that is not paid. While it is hard to gather the same statistics in developing countries—where much of the traditionally paid output occurs in the hidden economy—worldwide there is also a female hidden economy. The reality for many of us is that the choice about why we do or don't "work" is around the facts of life that require us to manage our households, raise our children, and take care of the sick and dying. In almost ten years of hospice work, only one of the fifty or more volunteers I have worked with has been male. In other words, there is an enormous amount of unquestionable work that goes unpaid and that is predominately performed by women.

The wage gap in the States has narrowed considerably (almost twenty percentage points) since the Equal Pay Act was passed. That statistic speaks compellingly to the power of government and the need to regulate "fairness" in the market.



### **Katherine Ellis**

*Katherine Ellis is currently pursuing a master in public administration at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Most recently, she was general manager of the Reach Foundation, a nonprofit youth development organization serving young people throughout Australia.*

An enormous amount of female leadership talent gets channeled into “women’s issues,” yet these are really “human issues,” demanding thoughtful, far-reaching, and sustainable solutions for the sake of everyone in our societies. Conversely, most leadership positions that hold the power to shape our strategic future—the economy, foreign policy, security—are in the hands of men. Where are the women in the big picture? We need more women’s voices joining the men’s at the power tables where the big decisions get made. With 100 percent of our best leadership talent utilized, with our best men and women engaging equally and meaningfully on key issues, we can look forward to a better world for each of us.

### **Joe Angelo**

*Joe Angelo received his master in business administration in international business from the University of Miami. Most recently, he was south regional manager for Florida Power and Light. From 2004 to 2008 he served as commissioner to the City of Wilton Manors, Florida. Currently, he is pursuing a master in public administration at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.*

President Obama [recently] announced that women in this country continue to earn just 78 cents for every dollar their male counterparts are paid. The good news is that this is 9 cents more on the dollar than in 1975 when the sum was only 69 cents. In addition to the monetary discrepancy, this “discounting” of women subjects them to adverse secondary effects in our larger community.

It wasn’t surprising to me, for example, when I learned that a top rap artist was brazen enough to physically abuse his celebrity girlfriend. How did he rationalize the abuse? How did she respond? As terrible as his treatment was, it is unlikely the media reports on the subject would have surfaced were it not for the star status of the case.

The lesser earnings of women in the market do not carry that brand of celebrity shock appeal. Lesser earnings are not only an accepted norm but rationalized as the effect of women’s supposed new entry to the workplace. The rationale is new hires come in at a lower pay. Those lesser earnings both reveal and contribute to the diminution of women’s overall status in our society. That standing however, is not the result of a lack of ability or achievement.

Women have been credited with monumental accomplishments and contributions in every field of study, and they are responsible for many successes that outpace those achieved by men. Yet, as the earnings discrepancy reveals, women in this country are persistently relegated to the ranks of second-class citizens. Market norms trigger social responses that undermine women’s merit and equality.

It is this very status that I believe emboldens those most dismissive of the plight of women to expect and accept, if not perpetuate, the many social injustices so often visited upon them. Confronting this injustice is a daunting proposition.



Social battles, waged by many and won by few, too often leave only remnants of livelihoods, professions, and families in their wake. But the rewards can be far more profound—if not enduring. Moreover, they can help tear down the walls of division that prevent a natural equilibrium and pave a way for others to more safely traverse.

We may never know what former Harvard President Lawrence Summers felt in his heart of hearts when he made his remarks at MIT that incensed so many people and ultimately contributed to his resignation. We do know, however, that since then, Harvard has significantly increased the number of women leading the university, many serving as “first ever” in positions from the presidency on down. It is uncertain to many that Harvard would have made those inroads had it not gone through the painful internal examination that grew out of Summers’s time in office.

The pay inequity between women and men requires this same heightened level of public examination and individual introspection. Society must demand an end to this inequity, and women must be empowered to accept nothing less. Closing the salary gap between women and men will go a long way in advancing their broader status, and perhaps that of the rest of society as well.

Women in leadership positions must lead the way in sounding the clarion call to action and empower others to take up that same challenge. Only when this injustice is remedied can we begin to hope for social parity. President Obama promised change for us all. The time has come to acknowledge that women may have come a long way, but they deserve still more.

### **Naye A. Bathily**

*Naye Bathily is a Mason Fellow currently pursuing a master in public administration at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. She was born in the United Kingdom, grew up in Senegal, and received her bachelor of science in international business from the University of Maryland. Most recently she lived in Paris working for the World Bank as a parliamentary liaison. Ms. Bathily speaks four languages fluently—Wollof, French, Soninke, and English—and she is proficient in Arabic.*

Career and family [are] not to be negotiated!

Across borders, across countries, women should no longer have to negotiate between a career and building a family. Being primary caregivers is the one thing that’s held women back since time immemorial. One should not be put first and the other one second as they are equally important to the well-being of our societies at large. However in reality still this is the case.

Parenthood is still associated [with] womanhood. In all parts of the world, women are the primary caregivers and most of the time solely responsible for raising children and managing their homes. Women with families have two full-time jobs; once they leave the office a new shift begins for them at home.

Hence, today in the 21st century, many, too many, professional working women are not having children because it hurts their careers. Further, the difficulty of balancing work and personal life is forcing women to leave high-skilled professions such as engineering and science at a much greater rate than men.



This is also one of the primary reasons why women are underrepresented in senior leadership positions in most fields; [for] those women who choose to have children . . . the timing of child rearing coincides with the most demanding periods of their careers. Too often does motherhood equate hitting that famous glass ceiling. Women's absence in technical fields, though they have demonstrated excellence in technical subjects, is because most career-driven women avoid fields in which an absence will cause a larger penalty and further defer their career growth. In liberal arts or humanities, for instance, taking some time off to bear children is acceptable, whereas in quickly evolving technical fields, a similar sabbatical can be a huge career setback. The situation means that many educated women are now childless and not in a relationship. A recent survey revealed that one out of five women in their thirties and forties is without children. And the rate is still climbing.

[There is a] need for immediate action.

We need societal transformation with regards to career and family. As to parenthood, shared responsibility should be enforced. A paradigm shift which entails simple but concrete family-agreeable policies such as flexible work schedules, telecommuting, paid family medical leave, compulsory paternal leave, subsidized day care close to office places, and large innovative ways of working using the high-tech advanced technologies, i.e., videoconference, should be implemented and enforced. But most of all what we need is a revolution in mentalities. Stereotypes such as images constantly portrayed in movies, for example, women as stay-at-home mothers or personal assistants...ought to be gradually banned.

To paraphrase one female leader quoted in a study: One of the best training grounds for leadership is motherhood, if you can manage a group of small children you can manage the world. Let us allow mothers to fully join in managing this world!

### **Barbara Kellerman**

*Barbara Kellerman is the James MacGregor Burns Lecturer in Public Leadership at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. She was the founding executive director of the Kennedy School's Center for Public Leadership from 2000 to 2003, and from 2003 to 2006 she served as the center's research director. Ms. Kellerman has held professorships at Fordham, Tufts, Fairleigh Dickinson, George Washington, and Uppsala universities. She also served as dean of Graduate Studies and Research at Fairleigh Dickinson and as director of the Center for the Advanced Study of Leadership at the Academy of Leadership at the University of Maryland.*

The answer to this question is: It depends. Where you stand always depends on where you sit, and how one would reply to the above question is no exception to this general rule.

That is, women in, for example, Afghanistan, face entirely different issues than do women in Canada. This is not to argue that there is absolutely no overlap; rather it is to point out that what's salient in one circumstance is not necessarily salient in another.



Nevertheless there is one point to be made that is overarching: Nearly everywhere in the world women are less favored than men, even into the 21st century. For all the progress made by and for women during the last several decades and certainly during the last two centuries, most obviously perhaps in the West, there is still a yawning gap between the benefits bestowed on women and those bestowed on men. At the most obvious levels men take advantage of women in ways best described as extreme. But, even at levels less obvious, there are inequities that prevail and persist. For instance, American men still get paid considerably more than American women for equal work. Moreover, for a range of reasons that include persisting gender stereotypes, men have far greater access to positions of power, authority, and influence than do women, particularly at the top.

Bottom line: Nearly everywhere in the world women continue to have their work cut out for them. How rapidly further progress is made depends in part on objective factors and in part on subjective ones such as the personal readiness and willingness by women to do political work on their own behalf.

### **Erica Lewis**

*Erica Lewis received her graduate diploma in legal practice from the Australian National University. Most recently, she served as assistant director of the Education Services for Overseas Students International Quality Branch in the Department of Education. She was also a policy and research officer at the Australian Young Women's Christian Association. Ms. Lewis is currently pursuing a master in public administration at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.*

The most pressing issue in women's policy remains the challenge that started the women's movement: gender inequality. It is why girls continue to be taken out of school, why women continue to be paid less, and why women and girls continue to be the victims of violence and sexual assault. It is also the most challenging of social policy problems: how can policy and programs help communities to negotiate new traditions and values, and how can men be engaged in this project?

Engaging men is a key challenge in overcoming gender inequality. Men control many of the resources needed to change practices harmful to women: whether that is the decision as the head of a household to continue to send a girl to school; the decision on how much to pay comparable workers; or in being a role model and advocate of nonviolent behavior. We need to not only convince men that gender equality is good for the women in their lives, but good for them as well—so that boys feel validated as excellent readers and caring friends, and fathers want to take paternity leave and balance their careers alongside active parenting.



### **Martin Gross**

*Martin Gross has worked with issues of global health for over a decade. Most recently, he served as the Program Development Director for the University of California San Francisco Women's Global organization. He is currently a candidate for a master in public policy from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.*

The most pressing issue in women's policy today is the lack of economic opportunity and independence among women and girls in developing countries and among poor communities in rich countries. This is not only an issue of social justice or equality, but quite literally an issue of life and death.

Women and girls represent more than half of HIV infections globally, and in the most affected regions of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, the HIV pandemic is almost 60 percent feminine. Throughout sub-Saharan Africa, girls aged fifteen to twenty-four are the population most at risk for contracting HIV and are six-times more likely than boys of the same age to become infected. This overrepresentation of women and girls among the HIV-infected reflects, in very large part, the fact that women have fewer economic opportunities than men and are thus reliant on men for their economic survival. Women's sex is, in many settings, their only tradable asset. These dynamics restrict women's capacity to control the terms of their sexual relations or to demand condom use and leave them extremely vulnerable to disease.

While economic growth and development may change these dynamics over time, the world cannot wait, given that women are needlessly dying. Policy solutions are urgently needed to build and enforce legal frameworks in all countries that guarantee women's property and inheritance rights to enable asset generation and independent wealth creation. Policies should stimulate governments, civil society, and the private sector to scale up programs that provide women with economic opportunities and girls with free education. Policy makers should also advocate that strengthening women's economic opportunities becomes an essential component of national and multilateral AIDS programs.



# WOMEN'S POLICY JOURNAL OF HARVARD JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

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