

## **Update on Presidential Task Force on Women's Advancement in the Profession**

### **Co-chairs: Mala Htun and Frances Rosenbluth**

The purpose of this Task Force is to understand career path differences between women and men in the profession of Political Science and the factors shaping women's advancement. Despite increasing gender parity in PhD programs, women are more likely than men are to take part time and temporary teaching positions or non-academic jobs upon graduation. Women who pursue careers in research universities still face lower chances of getting tenure than their male counterparts. Women of color have issues all their own around critical mass, mentorship, and the marginalization of their research interests. Our aim is not to valorize a single career path, but to understand how and why they differ by gender and/or race. We plan to identify best practices and then propose recommendations for APSA, disciplinary practices, and departmental and university policies.

The Task Force's four working groups have developed research designs for studying different aspects of gendered careers in the profession. The appendix contains their reports to date.

#### **1. Cohort Study:**

Members: Kira Sanbonmatsu, Laura van Assendelft, Page Fortna, Claudine Gay, and Lisa Garcia-Bedolla.

This group has designed a cohort study to gather original data, via online and in-person surveys, of graduate school cohorts across five programs who entered graduate school in the early 1990s and are currently mid-career. This study will provide qualitative evidence about how individuals make career decisions, how climate and experiences within departments and in the profession shape career trajectories, and how and why individuals choose to leave the profession. The cohort study results will be analyzed in conjunction with APSA member survey data and other existing datasets about the profession. The five graduate programs included in the study will represent a mix of public and private institutions and regions and will tap into some of the networks represented on the TF, thereby enhancing the response rate.

This cohort study is greatly enriched by APSA's own data collection and analysis efforts spearheaded by Betsy Super. Transforming the old departmental surveys, which suffered from somewhat spotty response rates, Super has created a Qualtrics instrument that departments can more easily complete and clearly displayed comparative departmental demographics from which departments will benefit.

#### **2. Designing an Intervention:**

Members: Tali Mendelberg, Lisa Argyle, and Jens Hainmueller

Based on extensive research about interventions used in other disciplines, this working group has designed a mentoring plan to be administered as a randomized, controlled trial. All untenured women in the profession will be invited to apply to the program, out of which some will be

randomly selected for a year of periodic mentoring by senior members of the profession. If NSF funding comes through, we will be able to study the effects of different *kinds* of mentoring (career versus substantive feedback and in combination, for example). We expect this study to produce measurable and scalable results that could transform the way departments undertake mentoring of graduate students and untenured faculty.

### **3. Publications:**

Members: Nadia Brown and David Samuels with participation from Mala Htun, Brittany Ortiz, Dawn Teele, and Kathleen Thelen as well as members of editorial boards of the discipline's top journals

*Comparative Political Studies* editor and Task Force member Samuels has completed a report on gender bias in the journal's editorial process for editors of other journals associated with the task force to consider in terms of conducting their own internal audits. A roundtable on gender in editorial processes is scheduled at the San Francisco APSA meeting with editors of 5 leading journals, after which the Task Force plans to bring in a much broader set of journals and editors. The working group is also gathering data on gender balance in book publishing in political science 2004-15, to conduct analysis building on Teele and Thelen's PS article on "Gender in the Journals."

PGI editor and task force member Brown is working with Thelen, Htun, Ortiz, and Samuels to create a "supply-side" survey that will ask respondents about attitudes toward journals and perceptions of success. This survey, seen as a compliment to Samuels' study, will analyze differences in attitudes by gender, race, ethnicity, and methodological approach.

### **4. Outreach and Inclusion**

Members: Mala Htun, Jenny Mansbridge, Sara Parker, and Dianne Pinderhughes

Mala Htun, as chair of the Committee for the Status of Women in the Profession, plans podcasts highlighting the scholarship, activism, and views of women in every corner of the discipline. Sara Parker has launched a column on the CSWP website to offer her insights as a scholar who chose a career in a community college. This subcommittee, with participation from all Task Force members will seek to broaden the conversation about what choices women and men make in their careers based on what constraints and opportunities. Jenny Mansbridge and Dianne Pinderhughes, as former APSA presidents with formidable levels of experience in the profession, have offered to help advise and plan new forms of outreach.

### **5. Rolling Out the Results: Workable Solutions**

Members: Alvin Tillery and Lisa Baldez

Once the Task Force has completed its work in all its parts, we plan to make the results available to the discipline in a variety of venues and formats. Alvin Tillery will be coordinating these efforts, bringing sensitivity about the importance of validating all career choices, without at the same time glossing over the gendered constraints within which choices are made in the first place. The emphasis of this phase of our project will be to help departments understand why political scientists make the choices they do at every stage of career, and to identify resources needed for individuals to be able to make unconstrained choices to the extent possible. They will develop a system to disseminate the TF's recommendations, monitor their implementation, and hold APSA, departments, and other stakeholders accountable for their commitments.

**Presidential Task Force on Women's Advancement in Political Science  
(approved by APSA Council in September 2016)**

Task Force Members:

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