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How Do Women Affect Politics and Legislation Among Distinct Nations?

Paulina Hatzipetrakos

University at Albany, State University of New York, phatzipetrakos@albany.edu

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How Do Women Affect Politics and Legislation Among Distinct Nations?

An honors thesis presented to the
Department of Political Science,
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Paulina Hatzipetrakos

Research Advisor: Victor Asal, Ph.D.

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Abstract

How does the increase of women in the political realm affect legislation? It is critical to discover the answer to this presented question as it allows academics to better understand the past, present, and future of politics. Understanding *why* more women are entering the political world, and *how* they can influence the rate of policy change, presents academics with a basis to further analyze the impact of women in various disciplines. This study will attempt to prove that an increase of women in high-ranking, legislative positions will prompt an increase in progressive legislation. Historically, the implementation of progressive policies has changed various societies. Therefore, an increase of women in government can drastically alter the current political world. This study examines the United States, Rwanda, Sweden, Germany, and Bolivia. It should be noted that each of the cases being investigated are described as developed democracies, with the exception of Rwanda. A Most Different System Design has also been applied to clearly examine the differences and similarities among the presented cases. At initial glance, these countries have little in common. However, through extensive research, it can be determined that each country has seen an increase of women political participation, and thus, share a similar outcome.

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1. Introduction

Throughout the progression of human evolution, correlations and variations have been studied between both genders: men and women. When in a position of authority, especially in regards to the political realm, contrasting genders have historically governed in different ways. Popular belief has led to the intertwining of sex and gender, though there are fundamental differences in their origins. Sex is a biological construct, as gender is a social construct. For the purpose of concise research and easy classification, gender and sex will be used synonymously for the remainder of this analysis. This research will focus on how women influence legislation; women will generally push more progressive legislation when placed in positions of power. Thus, the particular independent variable being examined is gender itself, that is, women in the field of politics. To produce condense results, legislation within Rwanda, The United States of America, Bolivia, Germany, and Sweden will be set side by side in comparison, rather than investigating the general scope of women in the world of politics. Mostly democracies will be investigated; Rwanda is the sole case being examined that does not possess a form of democratic government.

When examining the contrasting perspectives associated with each gender, politics and legislation among states will inevitably vary. A gender inclusive political world can surely establish beneficial results and thus, can be determined through a qualitative analysis. A literature review will be presented to examine why there has been a global increase of women entering legislative positions. The literature review will also identify what can be considered a progressive policy, and why more women push for them when implementing policies. The GDP rate, rate of political participation, rate of progressive legislation passed, poverty rate, and systems of government will all be compared and analyzed among the presented cases.

By examining these critical factors, a Most Different System Design (MDS) model can explain what occurs when more women are in government positions. A Most Different System Design (MDS) model is a qualitative form of analysis; it shows empirical relationships between two or more variables (Bennett, 30). By applying a MDS model to the presented cases, one can appropriately understand what may have caused a similar outcome, despite rising from dissimilar causes. This study will essentially examine the unique systems that compose each presented case: economic systems, government systems, social systems. After highlighting dissimilar systems, the MDS model shall suggest a similar outcome among the different cases: an increase in progressive legislation. To narrow the scope of this study, family, children, and women's rights legislation will be predominately examined in an attempt to support the argument that women invoke policy change.

2. Literature Review

Why are Fewer Women in the Political Arena than Men?

The scope of this study pertains mainly to analyzing different countries that hold democratic systems of government. By including women in positions of legislative power, a challenge is essentially being presented against the global, historical status-quo that paints women as inferior to their male counterparts. A country's economic system, political system, and social system are increasingly changing due to the influx of women as legislators. Lack of women political inclusion leads one to question if a country is truly democratic. As the democratic process entails the participation of all demographics, it can be inferred that a country is more democratic when more women are involved. The framework of democracy itself calls for

the inclusion of all citizens; human rights is also at the focal point of democracy, stating that both men and women should have equal political rights and opportunities to influence (Ballington and Azza, 24). If a political agenda does not call for the inclusion of various perspectives, it undermines the fundamental principles of democracy (Ballington and Azza, 24).

Why has there been a global increase of women venturing into the political realm? In 1995, approximately 11.3 percent of parliamentarians were women (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2018). By 2005, the global rate of women in parliamentary positions reached 16% (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2018) In November 2018, the Inter-Parliamentary Union reported that the global average for women in parliamentary positions reached 24.1 percent (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2018). Despite the 12.8 percent increase initially seeming low, it is critical to highlight that by 2018, a much greater amount of countries have reached 30 percent of women in single body legislatures, or within a country's lower house (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018). Currently, women are at their highest rate of political inclusion rate in global history (Ballington and Azza, 25).

The international recognition for political gender equality must heavily contribute to the increase of women in parliament (Ballington and Azza, 26). Global activism for gender equality has reached a peak, as women and their allies can quickly and efficiently mobilize faster than ever before (Ballington and Azza, 26). Due to a relatively new phenomenon, globalization, women's activism continues to progress among international agendas. Globalization is a concept that can be defined as a global effect rooted in the increased interdependency of nations (Global Policy Forum 2019). As nations are becoming more interdependent, gender equality activists have a much broader platform, making it difficult to dismiss the dire need for gender inclusion on the international level (Ballington and Azza, 26).

Despite currently holding the highest rate of parliamentary seats in history, Women of all socio-political background are still significantly underrepresented (Shvedova, 33). Why have women been historically underrepresented in the political realm? Today, do they still face the same obstacles that have historically limited their progression in reaching gender equality? Nadezhda Shvedova identified three diverging obstacles that hinder women's participation in parliamentary positions: political obstacles, socio-economic obstacles, ideological and psychological hindrances (Shvedova, 33).

When examining the political obstacles that women face, it is evident that most countries granted women the right to vote far after their initial political establishment (Shvedova, 34). As a point of reference, the United States admitted the 19th amendment to the constitution, the right for women to vote, in 1919. It was in 1920, nearly two centuries following the initial establishment of the United States constitution, that women could exercise political influence. Today, 95 percent of countries have granted women the right to participate in political elections (Shvedova, 34). Therefore, women still continue to face political challenges that limit their participation in the legislative process. Without the right to vote, women simply could not run for office; women did not have the official right to influence an election, thus they could not become candidates (Shvedova, 34). It can be inferred that this significant delay in granting women voting rights has hindered their progressive development in the political realm.

As previously presented as an example, in the United States women could not influence a political candidacy, or run for office, until 1920; the United States constitution was officially implemented in 1769. This left a large timeframe for men to politically develop, and foster a sense of masculinity in the political domain, quickly surpassing the voice of women. Similar to the United States, parliamentary systems that endured centuries without granting women the

right to vote have given men significantly more time to develop, and establish what a political system should and should not look like. The historical lack of gender inequality has fostered an unjust international, political structure that places women at the bottom. As men were solely responsible for initially establishing a country's political framework, this 'male-dominated' model of politics has defined how a country evolves and how politics works on a state and global level (Shvedova, 34).

The realization that men are the dominant actors in the political arena has led many women to avoid influencing the political world, either by simply voting or running as a candidate (Shvedova, 34). Shvedova presents the idea of a 'Masculine Model' of politics (Shvedova, 35). This model suggests that the political arena, that is, the domain where politics itself is defined and structured, has been systemized by solely male norms and male values, while neglecting the inclusion of women's distinct norms (Shvedova, 35). Viewing politics as a discipline restricted to men, fewer women perceive parliamentary positions as potential career options; they either avoid politics as a whole, or attempt to apply an atypical approach to the parliamentary process (Shvedova, 35). As more women reject politics, the number of women who run for office is typically smaller than the amount of men (Shvedova, 36).

Shvedova also highlights the lack of party support that women globally receive (Shvedova, 37). As men have historically dominated political platforms, the selection process within political parties favors candidates who possess 'male characteristics' (Shvedova, 37). This conclusion uncovers an embedded bias towards women that political parties hold (Shvedova, 37). It is typically the goal of a political party to endorse a candidate who has the strongest chance at victory. Due to the historical lack of gender inclusion, and the global stigma that depicts women as less competent than men, political parties more frequently provide financial

resources to male candidates (Shvedova, 37). A candidate that lacks party support essentially lacks the funds and resources that a large, notable party can provide for campaigns (Shvedova, 37). This prevents women from altering the male-dominated framework that has already been set in the political world, as they are not in a position of legislative authority to do so. Changing the framework of politics is a slow process for women; until the embedded framework of the political arena is changed, women can only slowly make progress in regards to gender equality (Shvedova, 37).

Socio-economic obstacles are also at the base of women's historical, political oppression. Shvedova suggests that a woman's social and economic positions present a perpetual threat to gender equality in democratic legislatures (Shvedova, 39). On a global average, women have a lower literacy rate than men at approximately 83 percent, whereas men have reached a global literacy rate of approximately 90 percent ("World Bank Group"). Despite global literacy rates drastically increasing as a whole since 1990, the gender gap between literacy rate has only slightly decreased; In 1990, women reached a global literacy rate of approximately 69 percent, in contrast to the global male literacy rate, approximately 82 percent ("World Bank Group"). This suggests that the gender gap in regards to global literacy rate has decreased from a 13 percent gap to a 7 percent gap. Shvedova argues that illiteracy and restricted education plagues a woman's political involvement (Shvedova, 41). She also suggests that the dual role of women, with special regards to mothers, in the domestic home and in professional work environments, restricts the amount of time a woman can dedicate to political involvement (Shvedova, 41).

Research has shown that by 2018, approximately 49 percent of women above the age of 15 had some form of full-time employment ("World Bank Group"). This particular condition, the rate of women in the workforce, will be considered within the following segments of this

study. Despite labor workforce rates increasing, women are still balancing time-consuming domestic tasks. Research has proven that the unpaid, domestic tasks that women perform amounts to twice that of men (Shvedova, 42). Shvedova suggests that women have been historically underrepresented, and continue to be underrepresented, in parliamentary positions because globally, they have less access to education, and engage in a dual-role where they must balance professional life with family needs (Shvedova, 43).

It can be inferred that many of the issues that have historically hindered women's political inclusion continue to affect the present-day rate of gender equality. Through Shvedova's analysis, it seems that the framework of politics itself must be revised to reduce the implicit biases that impact women. It remains critical that academics continue to study how the influx of women in parliamentary positions can affect legislation. If democracy is rooted in equality, then equal representation between genders should be promoted. Despite the unique obstacles that women continue to face in the political arena, they are currently at their highest peak of political involvement. Thus, academics should further examine how a women's voice shapes the traditional political framework.

What is a Progressive Policy?

In Western society, the term 'progressive' has political implications. Progressivism began as a social movement in the United States in the late 19th century, and stretched through the early years of the 20th century (West and Schambra, 1). During its initial establishment, progressivism provoked leading scholars and politicians to acknowledge the unique economic, political, and cultural issues that had recently been unveiled by the Industrial Era (West and Schambra, 1). Despite perspectives varying among progressive actors, they generally agreed that the

government at the local, state, and global levels must actively seek reformation and respond to the plethora of newly identified issues (West and Schambra, 1). Throughout the decades following the initial commencement of the Progressive Movement, the term progressive has evolved. Essentially, a progressive policy involves administering significant change to a country's traditional establishment. As cultures and societies vary among countries, what is considered progressive is unique to each individual country.

Evidently, women tend to advocate for progressive policies, or policies that change a country's political, social, environmental, or economic system. When applying Shvedova's analysis, it can be inferred that one of the reasons why women push progressive legislation is due to their rejection of the typical 'Masculinity Model' of politics (Shvedova, 35). Issues that are considered 'progressive' also hold gender and moral implications (Asiedu et al., 26). Legislation is regards to parental authority in divorce, domestic violence, and sexual harassment can generally be considered progressive among distinct countries, as they are implemented to invoke change (Asiedu et al., 26). Progressive policies can also involve legislation that benefits families and children; these issues show evident moral implications, and highlight the personal ties women have to the domestic sphere. Carol Gilligan, a predominate contributor to moral theory, presents a study fixated between interviews given to young boys and girls. She recognized that present theory can be easily applied to a boy's linear thought process (Gilligan, 25). However, understanding the thought process of young girls was much more difficult (Gilligan, 25). Gilligan argues that women understand dilemmas through relationships, whereas men are more likely to show examples of a formal, logical-thought process (Gilligan, 25). From Gilligan's study, it can be inferred that, because women are more likely to analyze dilemmas through

relationships, women legislators are more inclined to push for legislation that benefit social systems.

For the purpose of this study, legislation in the following cases have been examined and compared: The United States, Rwanda, Sweden, Bolivia, and Germany. These presented countries have seen an increase in the rate of women in the parliamentary process within most recent decades. Similarly, the rate of progressive policy implementation, or policies with moral implications, has increased.

Rwanda

The state of Rwanda's political gender inclusion rate has drastically increased from 1994 to 2003, only nine years following the infamous Rwandan genocide. 1994 engulfed the Rwandan people in a state of perpetual violence; an era in which Hutu extremists attempted to completely annihilate their Tutsi adversaries. During this time of absolute chaos, women held between ten and fifteen percent of seats in the Rwandan parliament (Bennett). The extensive era of violence had been presented nearly completely by men, and performed largely towards men (Bennett). Following the brutal genocide, the state of Rwanda consisted primarily of women; roughly seventy percent (Bennett). The rise of unequal gender demographics inevitably led to the increase of women in the Rwandan legislature. The need to reestablish the shattered country of Rwanda prospered from the fresh perspectives of women in politics. To appropriately mitigate the issues caused by the Rwandan genocide, the state of Rwanda strengthened socio-economic power and policies with regards to women (Nadjaldongar, 5). Following the 1994 genocide, women composed the majority of the country's population, and therefore, were active in every step of the reconstruction process (Nadjaldongar, 5).

A progressive growth in children and family rights was observed in a case study by Elizabeth Powley, as a result of the rise in the political participation of women in Rwanda. By 2003, roughly forty-eight percent of seats in the lower section of the Rwandan parliament consisted of women (Powley, 2). When empowered, women lean towards passing legislation that benefits both children and families (Powley, 2). As Powley and other researchers take a closer look at the long term development of women, it can be inferred that economic investments that may potentially benefit women have a profound correlation with what may positively affect the lives of children (Powley, 2). As stated by a representative of the Rwandan parliament, Speciose Mukandutiye,

In normal family life, you will find that [a woman's] first priority is children. When one of my children is sick, I am suffering too. So when we are fighting for women's right, we are fighting also indirectly for children's rights. When we are fighting for equality, it is not for us, but we are doing it for that little girl. There were things that we couldn't have, just because we were girls, so now we don't want that to happen to our children, our girls (Powley).

Mukandutiye's quote precisely conveys the mentality that many Rwandan women politicians advocate on behalf.

Similar to the Progressive Era in the United States, Rwanda experienced a post-crisis time period where new legislation was imperative to mending the new issues that arose following the Rwandan genocide. Despite the Rwandan genocide provoking a time period with severe fatality rates and chaos, it helped to stimulate legislation to benefit the wellbeing of women (Abbott, 17). Women's heightened political activism shaped the 2003 Constitution, which highlighted Rwanda's commitment to gender equality (Abbott, 17). Following the

implementation of the 2003 Constitution, Rwanda ratified many international and local laws that strengthened the rights of women (Abbott, 17). This included the acceptance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (Abbott, 17). Legislation with regards to a women's right to own and inherit property, and to share property ownership with a spouse, was established in the Matrimonial Regimes, Liberties and Successions Law of 1999 and in the Land Law of 2013 (Abbott, 18). Progressive legislation continued to increase with the rise of women in the Rwandan parliament; in 2009, the Rwandan legislature passed the Labour Law, which provides women with equal pay for completing the same work as their male counterparts (Abbott, 18). The 2008 Law on Gender Based Violence also empowered women, creating a progressive change for the wellbeing of all Rwandan women (Abbott, 18). The significant increase of women in the Rwandan parliament help explain why more progressive policies have been implemented.

United States

When investigating the Western World, the United States has also experienced an increase in the political participation rate of women. In the National Democratic Institute's case study, Why Women in Politics, research has concluded how legislation under a gender inclusive government benefits all demographics (that is, not solely women, but also men, children, minority groups, etc.). The United States has seen an upsurge in the promotion of peace, conflict resolution, and bipartisanship when including women in political decision making ("Why Women in Politics"). While men have statistically and historically swayed to utilizing methods of violence to resolve both external and internal issues, women have adopted a contrasting approach: negotiation and compromise ("Why Women in Politics"). 25 percent of women

politicians in the United States claim that women from the contrasting party have been major supporters of their individual proposed legislation. This is evidently higher than the 17 percent of male legislators, who show bipartisan support to other men (“Why Women in Politics”).

Working in a collaborative manner reduces the risk of potential polarization and thus, a stagnant legislative body.

Legislation passed by women representatives in the United States also tend to emphasize mending social issues. Women legislators in the United States also tend to prioritize youth education and healthcare. In the United States government, research indicates that 14 percent of women government officials designated healthcare as a top issue, in contrast to 6 percent of their male counterparts (“Why Women in Politics”). It can also be inferred that the goal of nearly all politicians is to accurately represent their constituents. However, an increase in congresswomen in the United States statistically have benefited racial and ethnic minority demographics (“Why Women in Politics”). Therefore, it can be deduced that women in American politics have provided the government with a more accurate representation of the general public.

Dr. Kira Sanbonmatsu also suggests in her analysis that, in the United States, in both state legislatures and in the federal Congress, legislation on issues that particularly influence women are much more likely to be introduced by women than men (Sanbonmatsu). Sanbonmatsu presents a study from 1988, which included a mail survey sent to legislators in 12 different states (Sanbonmatsu). It was discovered that women were more likely to prioritize progressive issues with regards to women’s rights, children’s issues, and family issues (Sanbonmatsu).

Sanbonmatsu also presents a study conducted by the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) from 1988 and 2001. The study involved using phone interviews to determine the various priorities among legislators (Sanbonmatsu). It was concluded that women legislators

were more likely than their male counterparts to list an introduced women's rights bill, or legislation benefiting the well-being of children and families, as a high priority within a political agenda (Sanbonmatsu).

Friends and colleagues of Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi have also confessed that extending health care benefits has become a high legislative priority of hers because, "she is a woman and a mother" (Volden et al., 7). House Speaker Pelosi has also stated, "It's personal for women... my sisters here in Congress, this was a big issue for us" (Volden et al., 7). Evidently, women legislators in the United States have a sense of personal connection to specific legislation. Past studies have shown that the introduction of legislation that has 'female', or progressive implications, extends beyond party lines; Republican women are more likely to present women related legislation than Democratic men (Volden et al., 8). Research conducted by CAWP also further suggests that it is a trend among women legislators to represent women constituents outside of their districts (Sanbonmatsu). Once entering a legislative position, a woman official is more likely to want to represent other women if she believes issues of disproportionate interest are not being prioritized (Sanbonmatsu).

Beginning in the Clinton administration in 1993, the White House Task Force on Health Reform was established, with First Lady Hillary Clinton as chair (Clinton, 153). The initial goal of Clinton's healthcare plan was to incorporate many ideas and perspectives encompassing a multitude of contrasting disciplines (Clinton, 153). Though incorporating various people and their viewpoints initially seemed beneficial, it is generally agreed that it essentially weakened Clinton's healthcare plan. Nevertheless, progressive legislation stemmed from the health care taskforce, as Former First Lady Clinton believed in expanding health care rights for families and children ("Kaiser Family Foundation"). The Vaccines for Children program was implemented,

providing states with federally purchased vaccines for children (“Kaiser Family Foundation”). By 1997, the State Children’s Health Insurance Program was formed (“Kaiser Family Foundation”). This program provided block grants to states to cover low-income children above the Medicaid eligibility level (“Kaiser Family Foundation”). Health care rights continued to expand following the Clinton administration; in 2000, the Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment and Prevention Act was enacted (“Kaiser Family Foundation”). This new form of legislation granted states the ability to provide women diagnosed with cervical or breast cancer Medicaid coverage, despite their income or resources (“Kaiser Family Foundation”). Again, there are moral and female implications tied to each presented form of health legislation. In 2009, under the Obama administration, the Children’s Health and Insurance Program (CHIP) was reauthorized, which provided states with additional funds and resources to provide approximately 4.1 million children with health care.

As previously stated, women legislators tend to advocate for issues that disproportionately affect them. The increase in healthcare legislation, with special regards to children, may be tied to the United States’ steady increase of women in government. Through meticulous perusing of current literature, it can be inferred that the gradual increase of women in high-ranking, government positions may be a result of an increased desire for women to be heard, and have their unique issues be addressed.

Sweden

Similar to Rwanda, women hold a very large presence in the government of Sweden. As of 2017, Sweden had a Gender Equality Index of 82.6 percent (“Gender Equality Index 2017”).

The Gender Equality Index is a model that the European Union (EU) uses to monitor gender equality progress among its nations (“Gender Equality Index 2017”). The model considers many conditions that contribute to gender equality: workforce parity rates, the gender gap in regards to wage, education rates, time, power, and health between sexes (“Gender Equality Index 2017”). The EU had an average Gender Equality Index of 66.2 percent (“Gender Equality Index 2017”). This suggests that Sweden is 16.4 percent more impartial than the EU’s average.

Researcher Viivi Brunila investigated the correlations between a high rate of gender inclusion within the government of Sweden and social benefits. In countries such as Sweden, women are seen as individuals who have the capabilities to enter the workforce, rather than be the sole homemaker (Brunila). The Swedish ministry is now fifty-two percent female and the Swedish Parliament is now at forty-three percent female (Brunila). Due to the large quantity of women government representatives, the political world somewhat branches out into various other disciplines. The increase of women in the Swedish parliament has also correlated with an increase in women in the Swedish workforce, producing a more gender proportionate labor pool. Considering the dual-income family model that Sweden utilizes, Sweden has one of the highest women employment rates within the European Union (Brunila). Due to this matter, Sweden possesses an extremely low child poverty rate (Alter). Brunila concludes that by considering the perspectives of women when undergoing political decision making, as opposed to solely the male mindset, equal opportunities for women throughout the nation rise (Brunila).

The culture disparities among the examined nations, in regards to gender, influence the rate of women in the workforce. Sweden is generally regarded as having a culture that bends traditional gender roles observed in most democracies. Sweden supports the belief that men and women should enjoy the same opportunities and rights in all areas of life (“Gender Equality in

Sweden”). Such areas include: economics, politics, education, and health (“Gender Equality in Sweden”). The culture in Sweden fosters the belief that the unique knowledge and experiences both men and women have should be used to stimulate progress in every societal aspect (“Gender Equality in Sweden”). In the field of education, the Swedish Education Act has established the bar for gender equality. The Swedish Education Act, which prevails over the education system in Sweden, states that gender equality should reach all levels of Swedish education, from pre-school to all levels of higher-education (“Gender Equality in Sweden”). In present day Sweden, two-thirds of university degrees are held by women; this is a steadily increasing statistic, as men once significantly outnumbered women in Swedish universities only a few decades ago (“Gender Equality in Sweden”).

Parental leave is also extensive in Sweden (“Gender Equality in Sweden”). In Sweden, parental leave legislation permits parents to share 480 days off from work when a child is born or recently adopted (“Gender Equality in Sweden”). For the first 390 days, the parents will receive approximately 80 percent of their pay (“Gender Equality in Sweden”). The expansiveness of Sweden’s parental leave policy promotes the dual-family model; men and women are both seen as equally capable of caring for the well-being of a new born (“Gender Equality in Sweden”). The flexibility of parental leave in Sweden also allows more women to remain in the workforce, while their husbands choose to take paternity leave. This contributes to the rate of women in the workforce.

In 2008, Sweden implemented an extensive Discrimination Act in regards to women and men in the workforce (“Gender Equality in Sweden”). A key aspect of the Discrimination Act requires private sector employers to proactively seek out ways to establish gender equality between women and men (“Gender Equality in Sweden”). This gender inclusive law also

requires employers to thoroughly investigate sexual harassment allegations (“Gender Equality in Sweden”). In 2017, the Discrimination Act was extended to provide preventative measures against discrimination in regards to gender, sexual identity, religion, ethnicity, and age (“Gender Equality in Sweden”). Despite Sweden’s recent attempts to foster an egalitarian society, pay differences still remain between men and women in the Swedish private sector (“Gender Equality in Sweden”).

The unique egalitarian culture that Sweden promotes has influenced the spread of progressive legislation. In 1998, Sweden implemented The Act on Violence against Women (“The Swedish Approach to Fairness”). This law views a woman’s history of abuse cumulatively; if an individual in close relation to the woman has subjected her to consistent acts of violence over a period of time, each form of degradation is acknowledged when issuing a sentence (“The Swedish Approach to Fairness”). If convicted of performing acts of violence against a woman, the offender can be sentenced to up to six years in prison (“The Swedish Approach to Fairness”). In recent years, Sweden has also introduced a new approach to handling the purchasing of sexual services. The Act Prohibiting the Purchase of Sexual Services was first enacted in Sweden in 1999 (“The Swedish Approach to Fairness”). The act was established to prohibit the purchasing of sexual services, without punishing the sex worker (“The Swedish Approach to Fairness”). By targeting the purchaser, rather than the sex worker, Sweden has paved the way for neighboring nations to follow its lead. In 2005, the act of purchasing sexual services was officially included in Sweden’s general penal code (“The Swedish Approach to Fairness”). By fostering a legal approach that does not condemn the sex worker, women are less likely to receive a disproportionate punishment because of the implementation of this act.

From the examined cases, Sweden highly promotes gender inclusion in all aspect of society. Sweden acknowledges that the pay gap between sexes still persists, and that men outnumber women tremendously in high-ranking, private sector positions (“The Swedish Approach to Fairness”). Despite these disproportionate areas of Swedish society, the high-rate of women in Sweden’s top legislative positions seems to be influencing the gender-inclusive culture that echoes throughout the nation. The influx of progressive legislation since 1990 can also contribute to the Swedish general egalitarian perspective.

Bolivia

As seen in recent decades, the government of Bolivia has incorporated electoral quotas to produce a more gender-inclusive legislature (Cordova, 5). The goal of the electoral quotas has been proven successful, as Bolivia is now one of the world’s leading nations in regards to a gender inclusive legislature (Cordova, 5). However, despite the increase of women in the political sphere, and the introduction of new, progressive laws, women in Bolivia still experience severe oppression. Due to the ‘macho’ culture fostered in Bolivian society, the increase of women in the legislature has resulted in an increase of explicit violence towards women (Cordova, 5).

Though society in Bolivia continues to suppress women, the influx of progressive legislation proactively attempts to diminish gender based discrimination (Cordova, 5). In 2012, Law 243 Against Political Harassment and Political Violence towards Women was introduced to acknowledge the intimidation, discrimination, and aggression inflicted upon Bolivian women leaders (Cordova, 5). Prior to this anti-discrimination law, the Law of Electoral Regime was passed in Bolivia in 2010 (Cordova, 6). This law essentially promotes gender impartiality in all

levels of Bolivia's government (Cordova, 6). Following the 2015 elections in Bolivia, women composed 47 percent of municipal councils throughout the Bolivian nation (Cordova, 6). The Law of Electoral Regime succeeded in empowering women to run for legislative positions, as the 2015 election suggests a high rate of women entering the legislature. In Cecilia Cordova's case study, *Gender and Politics in Bolivia: Violent Repercussions of the Political Empowerment of Women*, she states that Bolivia's backlash to gender-inclusive legislation suggest that women's "empowerment was more in form rather than substance" (Cordova, 6). By stating this, Cordova is implying that, despite legal precautions being made against gender discrimination, the culture in Bolivian society does not correlate with the progressive nature promoted in its legislature.

The challenges Bolivian women face are unique to the society in which they reside. Bolivia's civil society has organized itself into two different ways: traditionally, as its indigenous people grasp their original identities, or in the form of a trade union (Cordova, 8). In indigenous societies, women are viewed as only symbolic leaders, while their male counterparts influence decisions and opinions (Cordova, 9). The symbolic nature of women leaders in indigenous, civil society reflects the symbolic nature of the recent laws implemented to end gender-based discrimination nation-wide. It is essentially embedded within the culture of Bolivian, indigenous, civil societies to perceive women as less capable than men. This pre-conceived notion can partially be the cause of the backlash women in the Bolivian legislature receive.

Despite the masculine culture that Bolivian societies foster, progressive laws continue to thrive as a response to the persistent threats against women legislators. In 2015, the health ministry introduced a resolution advocating for the legalization of abortion when the mental health, rather than solely her physical health, is in danger ("Human Rights Watch: Bolivia"). This resolution attempts to expand the jurisdiction of women in regards to reproductive rights

and body autonomy. Bolivian law currently states that an abortion is not a crime when a pregnancy is the result of rape, or can jeopardize the mother's health ("Human Rights Watch: Bolivia"). However, expanding the law to acknowledge a woman's mental health strengthens women's rights as a whole in Bolivia.

Laws that discuss sexual orientation and gender identity have also been expanded in Bolivia ("Human Rights Watch: Bolivia"). The 2009 Bolivian constitution defines marriage as a union involving a man and a woman; despite this, in 2016, the Bolivian Plurinational Assembly introduced a law that permits Bolivian citizens the right to change the gender recorded on their identification documents ("Human Rights Watch: Bolivia"). This is evidently legislation with strong moral, humanitarian implications. Therefore, a correlation can be made between a high gender-inclusive legislature, and an increase of progressive legislation. Though women in the Bolivian government continue to attempt to make change, Cordova argues that the increase of women in the political sphere has prompted negative reactions (Cordova, 13). Men, and occasionally women as well, have expressed disapproval for a gender inclusive legislature through acts of violence and femicide (Cordova, 13). To truly empower women, there must be a significant cultural shift in Bolivian society.

Germany

In 2017, the European Union's Gender Equality Index concluded that Germany had a 65.5 percent rating in regards to overall gender parity ("Gender Equality Index 2017"). This is below the EU's 66.2 percent average index rating ("Gender Equality Index 2017"). Despite the increase of women legislators in Germany within the past decade, women are still underrepresented in decision-making (Botsch, 5). Similar to Bolivia, Dr. Elisabeth Botsch argues

that socio-cultural changes in regards to the perception of women must be produced to establish a more impartial nation (Botsch, 7). Botsch states that the German feminist movement reached its peak towards the end of the 1960s; the emerging feminist movement advocated for cultural changes in Germany that would eliminate the pre-conceived notion that women were lesser than their male counterparts (Botsch, 7).

Though the stigma that surrounds women in Germany still persists, legislative action within the most recent decades suggest that gender equality in law and policy has progressed. In 2006, the General Equal Treatment Act was implemented in Germany, setting a basis to further expand gender inclusivity (Botsch, 8). The act highlighted four key initiatives: The Racial Equality Directive, the Employment Equality Directive, the Gender Equality Directive for goods and services, and the Employment Gender Equality Directive (Botsch, 8). Each section was incorporated to protect citizens from various forms of discrimination, with special regards to discrimination in the workforce (Botsch, 8). Prior to the establishment of the General Equal Treatment Act, the Federal Equality Law was passed in 2001 (Botsch, 8). This particular legal document prompted an influx of women into Germany's federal public administration, federal courts, and federal administration institutions (Botsch, 8). It was essentially the primary document that introduced the idea of gender mainstreaming in Germany (Botsch, 8). Botsch concludes that the Federal Equality Law has increased the rate of women in Germany's administration, establishing a more gender proportionate legislature (Botsch, 8).

While Germany has recently witnessed an increase of women in high-ranking, legislative positions, it has also seen a shift in the focus of its legislation (Botsch, 5). Policies that benefit families have recently been at the center of German legislation; all-day schools have been partly authorized and child care facilities have drastically increased (Botsch, 9) Though laws that

involve gender equality have not surpassed the rate of family policies, Germany has still experienced an increase in progressive legislation. Since the dawn of the 21st century, laws that protect women against workplace discrimination, sexual violence, domestic violence, and human trafficking have been expanded in Germany (Botsch, 5). In 2011, Bundestag, or the German Federal Parliament, implemented the “Berlin Declaration” which advocated for the increase of women on advisory boards (Botsch, 13). This declaration saw a significant increase of women crossing party lines to support the principles highlighted in the document (Botsch, 13). The declaration called for a binding legal regulation of 30 percent women on all advisory boards of listed, public companies (Botsch, 13). The cross-party alliance of women who supported the “Berlin Declaration” of 2011 supported the claim, “we are not willing to continue to tolerate the violation of Article 3 Paragraph 2 Basic Law” (Botsch, 13). Article 3 Paragraph 2 states, “Men and women shall have equal rights. The state shall promote the actual implementation of equal rights for women and men and take steps to eliminate disadvantages that now exist” (“Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany”).

Along with an increase of women in legislative positions, the rate of women in the labor force has also significantly increased within recent years in Germany (Botsch, 16). Despite this positive step forward for women, women’s workforce integration has predominately influenced jobs that provide few working hours and low salaries (Botsch, 16). This could be a result of the modernized bread-winner model in Germany, or the idea that a father should seek full-time employment and mother should seek part-time employment. Despite its popularity among German families decreasing, about 30.7 percent of two-parent households still promote the bread-winner model as recorded in 1996. Though there appears to be a correlation between the

increase of women in the workforce, and the increase of women in the political sphere, it seems that women are still frequently viewed as inferior to men in Germany.

As previously stated, the increase of women legislators in Germany has correlated with an increase of progressive policies, or laws with moral implications, or women-related implications. Women in the Federal Government have prioritized combating violence against women (Botsch, 22). The Protection Against Violence Act of 2002 emphasizes the principle, “the one who does the hitting has to go” (Botsch, 22). Germany’s Federal Government has also implemented a two-principle action plan to eliminate domestic violence against women (Botsch, 22). The plan extensively describes a more efficient way to combat violence within the home, with special regards to migrant women (Botsch, 22). The German Bundestag has also taken action to combat human trafficking, aiming to protect women and children; this draft law was adopted in January 2015 (Botsch, 22) Stalking has also become a new legal offense in Germany, as of March 2006 (Botsch, 22). The law helps protect victims of stalking by enforcing timely interventions and investigations by police (Botsch, 22). It is evident that there has been an increase of legislation passed in Germany with the intentions of protecting women, and expanding their rights.

There is still a large portion of Germany that promotes a traditional perception of a woman’s role in society. Despite this societal set-back, the rate of women in the German government has steadily increased since 1990. The increase of women in the German workforce may contribute to the increase of women as legislators. It can be inferred that the increase of women in the legislature can result in an increase of progressive legislation, or legislation that alters the past German political establishment.

3. Research Methodology

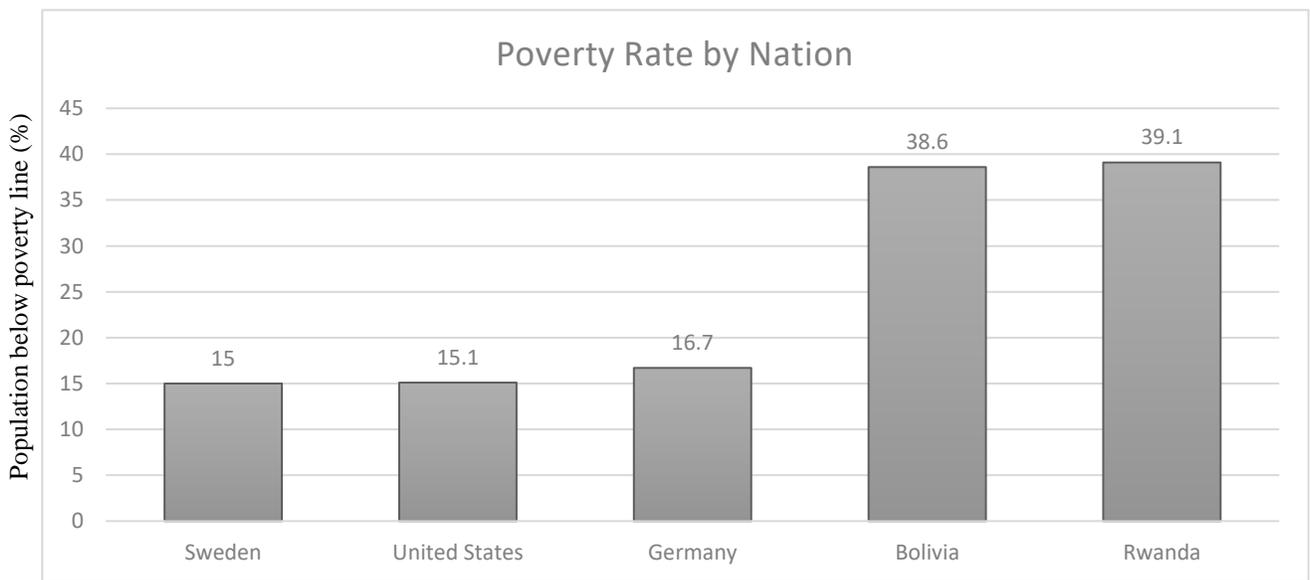
A Most Different System Design Model has been applied to this study to understand that, despite the United States, Rwanda, Sweden, Bolivia, and Germany being very different cases, they all appear to have an increase of an increased rate of women in parliamentary positions. This increased rate of women in government can be viewed as a critical explanatory variable for the purpose of this study. The increased rate of women in government can then help us potentially understand why there has been an increase in progressive legislation among these different nations. The progressive legislation being analyzed in this study is the rate of family, children, women's rights legislation passed. To thoroughly analyze how gender can affect politics and legislation among various states, I have produced an extensive Most Different Systems Design table that clearly organizes my research. Figure 1 can be viewed on the following page:

Figure 1:

Conditions	United States of America	Rwanda	Sweden	Bolivia	Germany	Similarity
Poverty Rate	Low	High	Low	High	Low	No
Government System	Democracy	Parliamentary System	Constitutional Monarchy	Democracy	Democratic, Federal Parliamentary Republic	No
GDP Growth Rate from 1990-Present	Steady Increase	Fluid	Fluid	Steady Increase/ Steady decrease	Steady decrease	No
Rate of Women in the Workforce	High	High	High	High	High	Yes
Rate of political participation Rate of women from 1990-Present	Increase	Increase	Increase	Increase	Increase	Yes
Outcome: Rate of family and Children Legislation Passed	Increase	Increase	Increase	Increase	Increase	Yes

The independent variable being studied within my established hypothesis is gender, particularly the benefits of the increased political participation of women (indicated in Figure 1). The dependent variables are therefore, the effects that the independent variable has on politics and legislation. A Most Different System Design (MDS) has been applied to classify the data recorded on the chart above. As shown in the chart, the United States, Rwanda, Sweden, Bolivia, and Germany endorse various government systems. Arguably, the United States, Sweden, Bolivia, and Germany have somewhat of a democratic system of government, whereas Rwanda has a dissimilar Parliamentary system. Poverty rates by country also vary profoundly:

Figure 2:



Source: CIA World Factbook

Figure 2 shows how the nations being examined vary profoundly in regards to poverty rate. Sweden, at the lowest poverty rate among the five nations, has a population where 15 percent of individuals are below poverty line (“CIA World Factbook”). Following Sweden, the United States has a poverty rate of 15.1 percent (“CIA World Factbook”). Germany, slightly above the

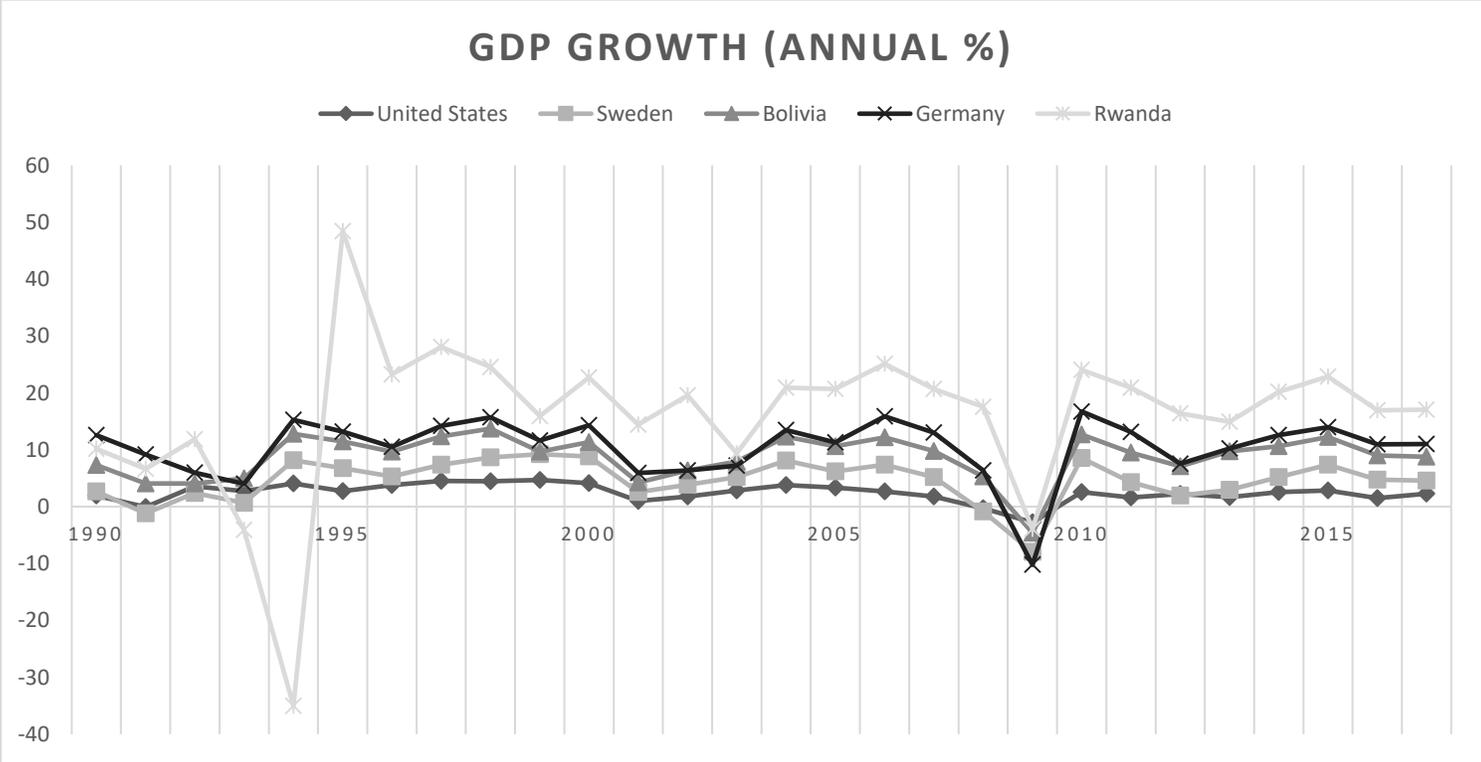
United States, has a poverty rate of 16.7 percent (“CIA World Facebook”). Bolivia and Rwanda are more similar in poverty rate, where Bolivia has a 38 percent population below the poverty line, and Rwanda has a 39.1 percent poverty rate (“CIA World Factbook”).

It can also be inferred that the GDP rate among the five different nations have differed tremendously since 1990. As seen in Figure 3, Rwanda reached a GDP rate of -2.4 percent in 1990, the country’s lowest rate in the past 30 years (“World Development Indicators 2018”). In 2000, only a decade later, Rwanda reached a GDP rate of 8.4 percent, a significant increase (World Development Indicators, 2018). Currently, Rwanda has a GDP rate of 6.1 percent, the highest GDP Rate among the five cases (“World Development Indicators 2018”). However, when examining Figure 3, it can be concluded that from 1990 to 2018, Rwanda’s GDP rate has been rather erratic, or fluid. Bolivia currently follows Rwanda with a 4.2 percent GDP rate as of 2017 (“World Development Indicators 2018”). This is only a slight decrease compared to 1990, where Bolivia had a GDP Rate of 4.6 percent (“World Development Indicators 2018”). Despite this comparison, Bolivia experienced a period of steady GDP annual growth from 2000 to 2013, as can be observed in Figure 3. However, since 2013, Bolivia has experienced a steady decrease in GDP rate.

In 2017, Germany, the United States, and Sweden had very similar GDP rates. Sweden’s annual GDP rate was 2.3 percent in 2017; the United States and Germany both shared a GDP rate of 2.2 percent in 2017 (“World Development Indicators 2018”). Since 1990, Sweden’s GDP rate has been rather erratic, or fluid, considering the significant GDP rate decrease from 2000 to 2009. By 2010, Sweden experienced its peak GDP rate at 6 percent, to then steadily decrease to -0.3 percent by 2012 (“World Development Indicators 2018”). By 2015, Sweden’s GDP rate increased to 4.5 percent, until steadily decreasing to its current GDP rate of 2.3 percent (“World

Development Indicators 2018”). Figure 3 also details the steady growth the United States saw in GDP rate between 1990 and 2000. The United States saw a significant decrease in GDP rate in 2009, before experiencing an increased spike in GDP rate until 2010 (“World Development Indicators 2018”). Since 2010, the United States’ GDP rate has been steadily increasing (“World Development Indicators 2018”). Germany’s GDP rate was at its peak in 1990, at 5.3 percent, before experiencing a steady degree until 2009. In 2009, Germany was at its lowest GDP rate within the past three decades, at -5.6 percent (“World Development Indicators 2018”). Figure 3 shows the significant GDP rate increase Germany experienced between 2009 and 2010, before again, steadily decreasing to its current GDP rate (“World Development Indicators 2018”).

Figure 3:

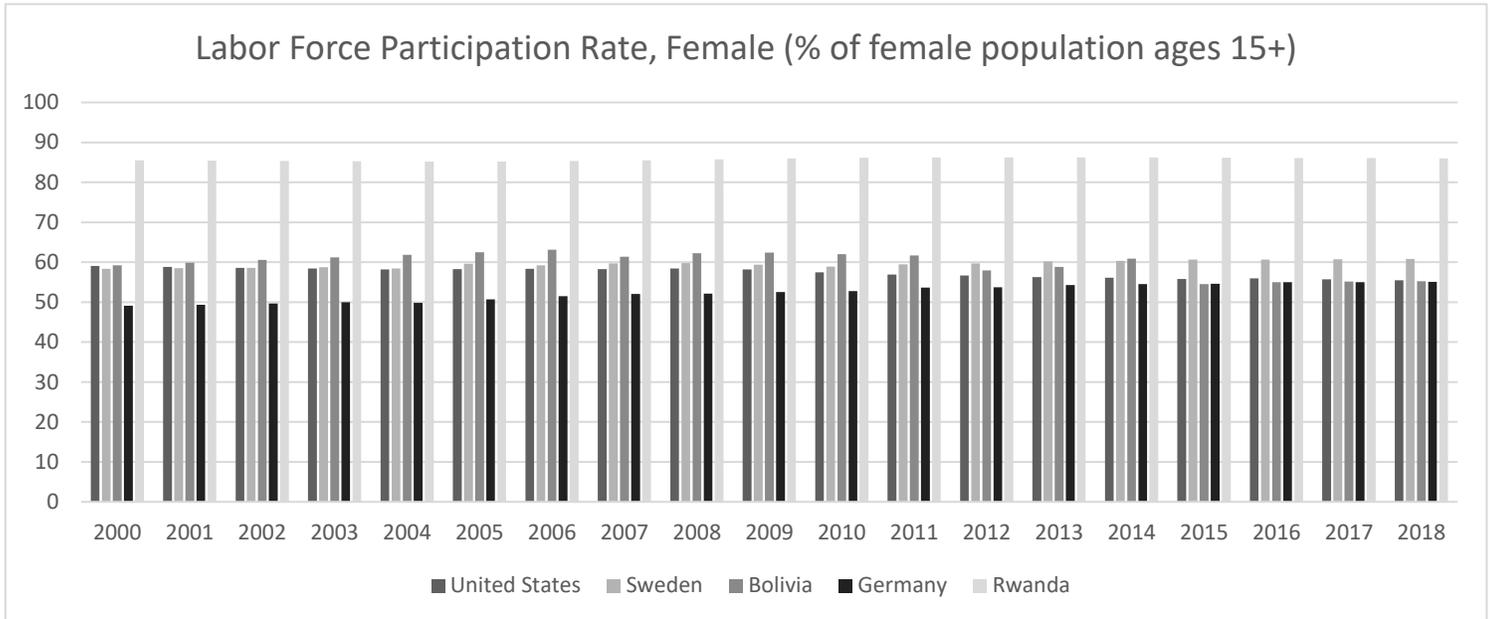


Source: World Development Indicators

Figure 4 highlights the disparities among nations in regards to women's labor force participation rate. The following data collected has been illustrated in Figure 4; from 2000 to 2018, the nations being examined all show high rates of women's labor participation ("World Development Indicators 2018"). In 2018, it was recorded that Rwanda had the highest labor participation rate among the five examined nations, at 86.1 percent ("World Development Indicators 2018"). The United States has had a steady decrease of women in the labor force since 2000, starting with a participation rate of approximately 59 percent, and gradually decreasing to 55.4 percent in 2018 ("World Development Indicators 2018").

Both Sweden and Germany have experienced a steady increase of women in the workforce since 2000 ("World Development Indicators 2018"). Women's labor force participation rate in Sweden evidently appeared stagnant as the gradual increase overtime was very minor. Despite appearing nearly stagnant, Sweden's women's labor force participation rate has increased by approximately 2 percent since 2000 ("World Development Indicators 2018"). Sweden, similar to the United States, Germany, and Rwanda, has experienced a rather steady rate of women in the workforce since 2000. Bolivia's rate of women in the workforce has been relatively steady since 2000, despite a sharp decrease of approximately 5 percent between 2014 and 2015. Bolivia currently has a women workforce participation rate of 55.3 percent as of 2018 ("World Development Indicators 2018"). Figure 4 concludes that each country within the scope of this study has at least half of its female population working outside of the home; comparatively, these countries currently have relatively high levels of women in the workforce.

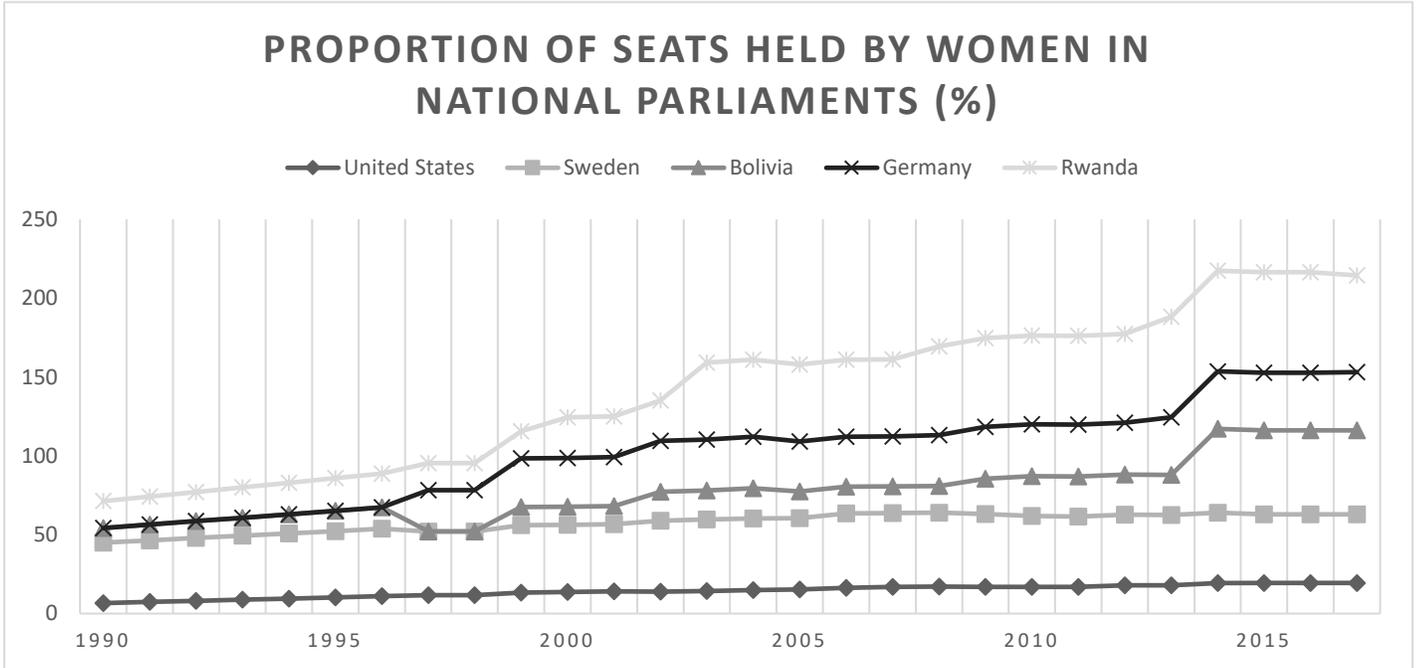
Figure 4:



Source: World Development Indicator

Figure 5 shows that each of the countries being examined have had an increased rate of women in national parliament from 1990 to 2017. As of 2017, Rwanda had the highest rate of women in parliament among the five examined countries, at 61.3 percent (“World Development Indicators 2018”). Bolivia had the second highest rate at 53.1, then Sweden follows at 43.6 percent, followed closely by Germany at 37 percent as of 2017 (“World Development Indicators 2018”). The United States has surprisingly the lowest rate of women in legislative positions, at 19.4 percent (“World Development Indicators 2018”). When examining Figure 5, one can see that the United States has had a steady, very gradual, increase of women in government since 1990.

Figure 5:



Source: World Development Indicators

4. Conclusion

By using a Most Similar Design Model, I was capable of comparing seemingly very different cases, Rwanda, the United States, Bolivia, Sweden, and Germany. Despite their various structural differences, such as poverty rate, government systems, and GDP rate, each examined case suggests that there is a correlational relationship between an increased rate of women legislative representatives and progressive legislation. This study provides the foundation to further examine the impact women have on legislation. Legislation essentially has the power to influence a multitude of societal elements, and thus, should be thoroughly analyzed through a feminist lens. As the term, 'progressive', has different cultural implications, it is difficult to formulate a narrow meaning for the term. However, through an extensive literature review, one can see that each analyzed nation has strengthened legislation to benefit families and children,

eliminate discriminatory hiring practices in regards to gender, or reduce sexual harassment and domestic violence.

This research shows that the greatest indicator for increased progressive legislation among the examined conditions is an increased rate of women in parliamentary positions. It is also worth noting that having a higher rate of women in the workforce can help explain an increased rate of women in the political arena. Rwanda, having an 86.1 percent rate of women in the labor force, also has the highest rate of women in parliamentary positions. A similar trend can be examined among the remaining cases as well; as women's workforce participation rate increases, women political participation rate increases as well. As it has been previously stated, women are more likely to pass legislation with moral and gender-based implications. Therefore, it can evidently be determined that when there is a high gender inclusion rate within a legislature, more progressive policies are passed. Legislation that is passed through a high gender inclusive government also tends to benefit various demographics. As the MDS chart, Figure 1, depicts, children and families are more likely to benefit under a government with higher rate of women's influence.

Though the United States has one of the lowest rate of women legislators among the examined nations, one can see significant benefits due to the increase in gender inclusion throughout the past two decades in the United States (Alter). By simply exploring the most recent federal election in the United States, one can already notice the positive results of electing a woman as the democratic nominee (Dittmar). Hillary Rodham Clinton, the United States' 2016 democratic presidential nominee, brought copious amount of attention to social issues that were previously disregarded. Clinton's explanation of the issues that currently plague the United States can also be used as a general consensus for the progressive policies many American,

female legislators emphasize, “Child’s care is a women’s issue, but it’s also an economic issue. Paid family leave is a women’s issue, but it’s also an economic issue” (Dittmar) Thus, a gender inclusive legislature in the United States potentially foreshadows the development of legislation that benefits both children and families. Clinton has somewhat mainstreamed gender in the United States by constantly restating her platform during speeches and throughout her campaign (Dittmar).

The distinct social differences between men and women strongly influence their legislative behaviors. Women are more likely to propose policies that directly involve women’s issues, children’s issues, and prioritize family issues (Sanbonmatsu). There is however, controversy involving the amount of women in government that is needed to establish a significant mass, and thus supporting an adequate voice. Yet, historically women who have and are still serving in government positions have contributed fundamental elements to critical pieces of legislation (Sanbonmatsu). This observation contradicts the idea that there must be a bigger percentage of women in global politics to build notable influence.

It can be accurately concluded that gender can impact how an individual formulates his or her political views. Gender can also affect the desired legislation one wishes to promote and pass. Researching and investigating the effects of gender in politics can produce positive results for the future of the humankind. When formulating a gender inclusive political system, new perspectives are considered and thus, a better representation of a state’s citizen population is incorporated into a legislature. To insure a progressive future for the humankind, a multi-perspective global governmental order must be founded.

It is critical that academics continue to explore the political disparities between men and women, as women were not always welcomed in the political arena. As women have not always

been present in politics, their historical influence has lacked significant examination by scholars. An increase of women legislators essentially leads to a government that better represents its citizens, and therefore, strengthens democracy; women compose approximately half the global population, their unique perspectives and issues must be adequately considered. By studying the influence of women in politics, academics have sharpened their abilities to accurately predict how national, and global, politics may shift within forthcoming decades.

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