

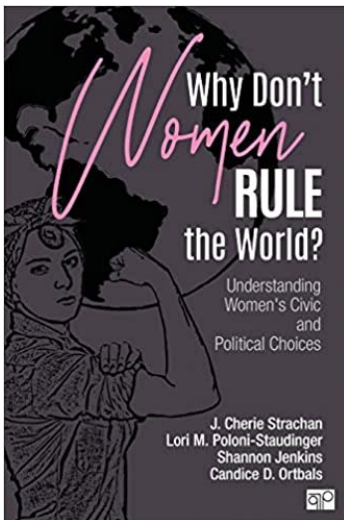
# WHY SOCIAL SCIENCE ?

## Because Misogyny Is Still Alive and Well and Women Still Don't "Rule" Equally to Men

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Fifty years after Ruth Bader Ginsberg worked to secure constitutional equality for women, misogyny is still alive and well in the American political system. We only need to look at the Vice Presidential debate between Kamala Harris and Mike Pence to see the way in which [gender](#) is used to undermine the ability of women to lead. Women candidates like Harris are often talked over and [interrupted](#) repeatedly by their male opponents. Unlike men who are interrupted, they can't redirect the flow of conversation with a sharp reprimand (or a "[just shut up, man](#)"), but must find ways to do so while maintaining likability. When they act publicly, women politicians are often denigrated, as we heard [Trump](#) do to Senator Kamala Harris after the VP debate.



Why does this matter? [Research](#) shows that when women candidates are belittled or their credibility or electability is questioned, it dampens other women's political ambitions. While we saw a "blue wave" of women candidates in 2018, [far fewer women than men aspire to elected office](#). Social scientists point out that American women are still shaped by traditional gender socialization, or raised to embrace traditional family roles. Unlike men, women [rarely assume future partners will fully share these responsibilities](#); nor do they expect that future partners would quit a job or relocate to support the women's professional aspirations. Many educated, professional women who seem appropriate for a political career work a "[second shift](#)" after returning home — and feel too time-crunched to run for office. American politics, long dominated by men, has a [masculine ethos](#); women and men alike perceive political success as being linked to masculine traits such as self-promotion and fighting, and many do not think to encourage women to run for office. [Women themselves often do not envision pursuing such a male-coded profession, which could make them appear to be more aggressive than nurturing](#). Additionally, women tend to be more [election- and risk-averse](#) than men and can be discouraged by barriers that men do not face, including sexist media coverage, intrusive questions about their life choices, overt sexual harassment, [online misogynist abuse](#), or accusations of [lying](#).

Concerned about the ambition gap among young women, our book [Why Don't Women Rule the World?](#) was hatched over cocktail conversations at conferences and outlined in a cramped café during the 2017 Women's March. The title is a tongue-in-cheek response to a serious question. We know girls achieve as well as boys (often better) in school. We know that some of the traits considered "feminine", such as collaboration and listening, work well in leaders. We also know that women are underrepresented in positions of power throughout the world. As women in the male domain of academia and in leadership positions, each author also has her own experiences with misogyny—questioning our reproductive choices, calling into question our right to be in the room of decision-makers, having ideas ignored only to be repeated by a male colleague, being told to fall in line and not critically evaluate decision-making, and yes, "mansplaining." So

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why don't women rule, and why don't they have more influence over the way the world is structured? More importantly, what can we do to ameliorate the ambition gap?

Currently, women [make up only](#) 23.2 percent of the House of Representatives, 26 percent of the Senate and 29.1 percent of U.S. state legislatures. [When women run for political office, they are just as likely to win as men](#), research finds. But proportionally fewer women hold elected office, in part because fewer women run to begin with.

We know that young men's political ambition begins to outpace young women's ambition in late high school and early college. Thus, we structure research-based ambition activities at the end of each chapter of the book specifically related to the chapter material and prompt readers to think about their gendered assumptions of power and privilege, their role in reifying patriarchal structures, their own political ambition, and the ways they can address gender inequalities in their personal lives and in the broader world. We promote strategies known to bolster women's political ambitions. For example, women can practice a tactic called "name it, shame it, pivot" to respond to an overt sexist attack; they can also learn how to avoid internalizing coded attacks and microaggressions that leave them feeling like impostors. Those at colleges and universities can ask college-age women to plan to discuss how household and caregiving chores will be shared with a partner and can encourage them to re-frame political activism as a way to care for others.

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Why social science? Attacks on women's political ambitions, whether subtle or overt, will continue — and will discourage potential officeholders. Traditional gender socialization and the masculine ethos of politics will not disappear overnight. The cumulative effects of these factors can be overcome, but only if tackled directly by

teaching women to anticipate and respond effectively, using research-based strategies that promote rather than decrease women's political ambition.

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