Gender Discrimination in the U.S. Foreign Service

David Lindsey (CUNY)
Matt Malis (Texas A&M)
Calvin Thrall (Columbia)

Presented at APSA, 7 Sep 2024

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Secretary of State Antony Blinken, 2021:

> *[State's] greatest strength at home, but also abroad, is our diversity...[Y]ou're going to see over the next few years as well a real focus on making sure that we have a diverse workforce. We're going to recruit, we're going to retain, and we're going to be held accountable for that.*

Overview

This paper:

- ▶ Introduce original dataset on U.S. embassy personnel
  - ▶ most comprehensive data (to our knowledge) on any diplomatic corps
- ▶ Application: identifying gender discrimination in U.S. diplomatic appointments

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Main finding:

- ▶ Women face substantial promotion penalty at all levels
- ▶ Not explained by gender (in)equality within host countries
- ▶ Not likely due to preferences/self-selection

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Implications:

- ▶ Misallocation of diplomatic resources
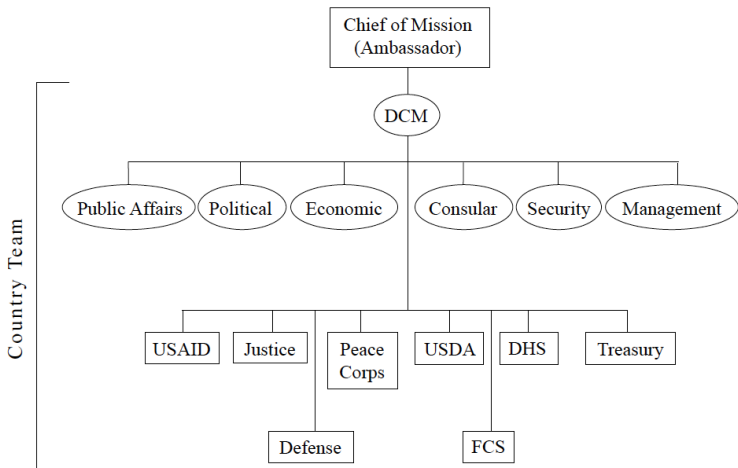- ▶ Undermining global perceptions of U.S. leadership

Data

Figure 6.1
Organization of a Typical Mission

United States Department of State

Key Officers of Foreign Service Posts

Guide for Business Representatives

January 1991

MOROCCO

RABAT (E), 2 Ave. de Marrakech; P.O. Box 120; APO N Y 09284;   Tel [212] (7) 622-65; Telex 31005

|			
AMB:	E. Michael Ussery	RSO:	Peter Stella
DCM:	Richard L. Jackson	AGR:	Andrew A. Duymovic
POL:	Michael C. Lemmon	AID:	Dennis Chandler
ECO:	David S. Robins	PAO:	Edward T. Penney
CON:	George W. Brazier III	ODA:	Col James E. Murphy USMC
ADM:	Alphonse Lopez	MLO:	Col Thomas E. Burch USAF

CASABLANCA (CG), 8 Blvd. Moulay Youssef; APO NY 09284 (CAS); Tel [212] 26-45-50

CG:	Timberlake Foster	ECO:	Allen S. Greenberg
LAB:	William H. Owen	CON:	Suella Pipal
POL:	Peter McDevitt	ADM:	J. Patrick Truhn
COM:	Samuel D. Starrett	BPAO:	Elizabeth Thornhill

MARRAKECH (US Information Service), Ave Echchouada, L'Hivernage B.P. 240; Tel [212] (4) 472-83

BPAO:	Franklin Huffman

Officer Positions
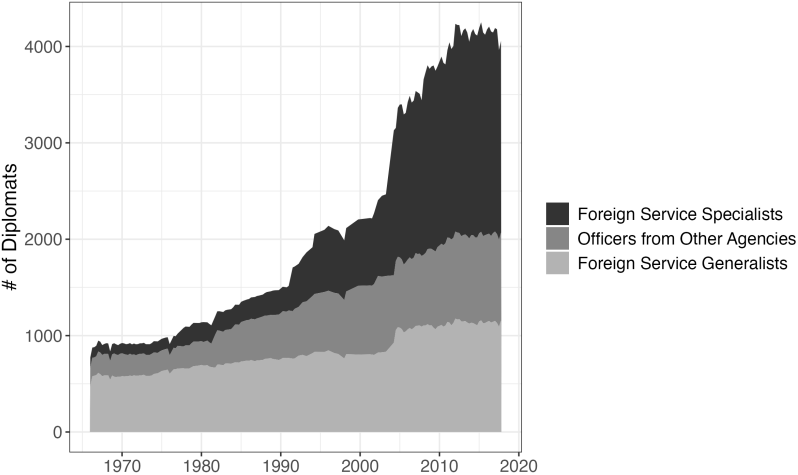
Officer Positions

| Generalists		Specialists		External	
Political	22584	Administration	49315	Military	17151
COM	21758	IT	27314	Law Enf.	16973
Consular	20404	ICASS	19664	USAID	11592
DCM	19909	Security	13983	Agricultural	10001
Public	19797	Operations	8324	Commercial	9995
Economic	17059	EEO	5460	Labor	4988
Management	8338	AFSA	3554	Scientific	3211

- ▶ "COM" = Chief of Mission (Ambassador, Charge, or Principal Officer)
- ▶ "DCM" = Deputy Chief of Mission

Note: "Section Chief" = Generalists, excl. COM and DCM (for our purposes)

Application: Gender Discrimination

▶ use Mullen (2021)'s R package `gender` to code officer gender from first name

▶ investigate nature and extent of gender disparities in appointment, promotion, and retention

Under-representation in the aggregate
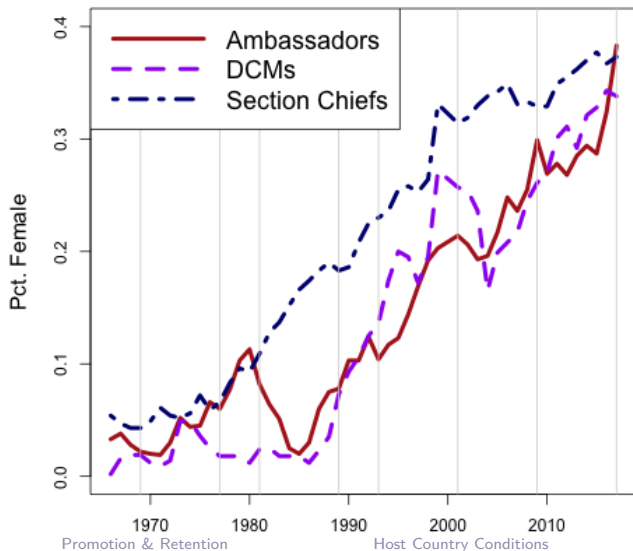
Promotion & Retention

Internal politics of U.S. diplomatic appointments

At what stage of the diplomatic career pipeline can we identify discriminatory appointment practices?

▶ Has this changed over time?

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Focus on movement across ranks in embassy positions

▶ specialists:
  ▶ Administration, IT, Operations, Maintenance, HR, Security
▶ (generalist) section chiefs:
  ▶ Political, Economic, Public, Consular, Management
▶ DCMs (including POs at CGs)
▶ ambassadors

Appointment process

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Everyone else:

- ▶ internal assignment panels, bidding/matching process

Promotion and Retention

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- ▶ outcomes:
  - ▶ **promotion**: position occupant holds higher position sometime in the next five years
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    - ▶ **leaving**: position occupant does not appear in the data after five years from now
- ▶ treatment: position occupant is female
- ▶ position-level (or country-level) covariates
- ▶ heterogeneity over time:
    - ▶ interact treatment (and covariates) with "decade" dummies
    - ▶ "80s" = 1982–1991, "90s" = 1992-2001, "2000s" = 2002–2012

Promotion – Section Chiefs

▶ DV: promoted (to Amb or DCM) within 5 years   (mean $= 0.11$)

	(1)	(2)
female	-0.022**	-0.006
	(0.008)	(0.008)
female $\times$ 90s		
female $\times$ 80s		
Num.Obs.	60 212	60 212
FE: qy	X	X
FE: pos_dec	X	X
FE: mission		X
Controls		X

$+ \ p < 0.1,$ * $p < 0.05,$ ** $p < 0.01,$ *** $p < 0.001$

▶ position-quarter year obs, among **section chiefs**, 1982–2012
▶ controls: # officers, UNGA dist., log(CINC), FCR, danger/hardship pay

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	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
female	−0.022**	−0.006	−0.035**	−0.022*
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.010)
female × 90s			0.019	0.021
			(0.019)	(0.020)
female × 80s			0.047*	0.058**
			(0.020)	(0.020)
Num.Obs.	60 212	60 212	60 212	60 212
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Leaving – Section Chiefs

▶ DV: last appearance in data is within 5 years   (mean = 0.48)

	(1)	(2)
female	0.036*	0.036*
	(0.014)	(0.014)
female × 80s		
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Num.Obs.	58 487	58 487
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	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.018)	(0.018)
female $\times$ 80s			-0.050	-0.044
			(0.031)	(0.032)
female $\times$ 90s			$-0.060*$	$-0.046+$
			(0.028)	(0.027)
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Promotion & Exit – Specialists

- 1pp promotion penalty (outcome mean = 0.01)
  - largest in 1990s
- 9-10pp more likely to exit (outcome mean = 0.44)

Host Country Conditions

Candidate explanation: host-country conditions

One plausible explanation:

▶ many patriarchal countries around the world where female
  diplomats could not operate effectively
  $\implies$ U.S. responds by appointing fewer female diplomats

Candidate explanation: host-country conditions

Reflects conventional wisdom:

- "[Pakistan] was the place I really wanted to go... [but] the word came back that neither the ambassador nor the DCM nor the political counselor felt that it was a reasonable assignment. **A woman could not do substantive work in Pakistan**."

- "I chose ... to go as a consular officer to Medan, Indonesia, where we had a consulate. I was turned down by the panel. At that time, the 'panel' was supposed to be a secret process, but I learned subsequently from someone who had been a member of the panel that the argument against my assignment had been that was **I was a woman, it was a Muslim country, I could not be effective, even as a very junior officer**, so I didn't get the job."

- "A lot of Indians felt very uncomfortable dealing with a woman and made no bones about it. The first time I met the Chief of Police he stared and said, **'I can't believe the United States of America would send a woman to do this job!'**"

Candidate explanation: host-country conditions

We consider two measures of host-country gender conditions:

- ▶ Pct. of women in executive cabinet (Whogov)
- ▶ Women, Business, and the Law (WBL) Index (World Bank)

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Gender of U.S. diplomats:

- ▶ **not** well-predicted by host-country gender variables

Internal Quotas

Internal Quotas?

Charles Stuart Kennedy, diplomatic historian and former DCM:

> *This has also been one of the stumbling blocks about the ambassador and DCM relationships. You really shouldn't have two women there.*

Theresa A. Healy, Amb. to Sierra Leone, 1980–1983

> *The thing that was most disappointing is that the assignment to Saigon fell through, and fell through, I am convinced, because a woman was not wanted in the job. I have no proof of this, but from comments made to me by an acquaintance, comments which I still remember, to the effect that **there are two female officers in Saigon and Saigon thinks it has its quota**; it doesn't want another woman.*

Internal Quotas?

DV:	DCM is female		Prop. female generalist section chiefs	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Female ambassador	−0.044*	−0.043*	−0.016	−0.024*
	(0.020)	(0.019)	(0.012)	(0.011)
# officers	−0.002+	−0.001	−0.002***	−0.001
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Num.Obs.	17 975	17 975	19 118	19 118
FE: qy	X	X	X	X
FE: country		X		X

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Thank you!

- David Lindsey (Associate Professor, Baruch College)
- Matt Malis (Assistant Professor, Texas A&M University)
- Calvin Thrall (Assistant Professor, Columbia University)

Key Officers data available soon at Measuring American Diplomacy

- https://measuringdiplomacy.github.io/

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Promotion – DCMs

▶ DV: promoted (to Amb) within 5 years   (mean = 0.17)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
female	0.042*	0.078***	0.029	0.074**
	(0.020)	(0.018)	(0.025)	(0.024)
female $\times$ 80s			0.059	0.044
			(0.066)	(0.062)
female $\times$ 90s			0.030	−0.010
			(0.045)	(0.042)
Num.Obs.	16 712	16 712	16 712	16 712
FE: qy	X	X	X	X
FE: pos_dec	X	X	X	X
FE: mission		X		X
Controls		X		X

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▶ position-quarter year obs, among **DCMs**, 1982–2012
▶ controls: # officers, UNGA dist., log(CINC), FCR, danger/hardship pay

Promotion & Exit – Recap

Female Section Chiefs and Specialists (in the 1990s–2000s)

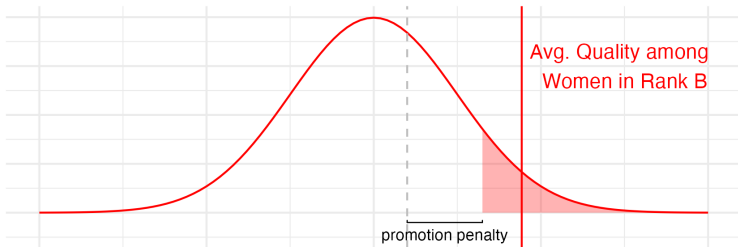- ▶ less likely to be promoted
- ▶ more likely to exit

Female DCMs:

- ▶ more likely to be promoted

How can we reconcile these findings?

Quality of Men in Rank A who reach Rank B

Avg. Quality among
Men in Rank B
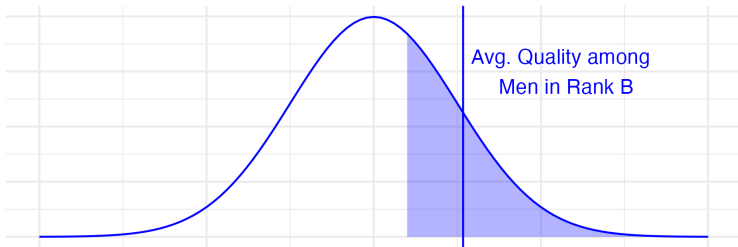
Quality of Women in Rank A who reach Rank B

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promotion penalty

Suppose that this is happening at the SC $\rightarrow$ DCM stage

And, suppose non-discriminatory selection at DCM $\rightarrow$ Amb stage

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- ▶ female Ambs assigned to "more important" embassies, on avg.

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One proxy for embassy "importance": embassy size ($\#$ officers)

Embassy Size and Ambassador Gender
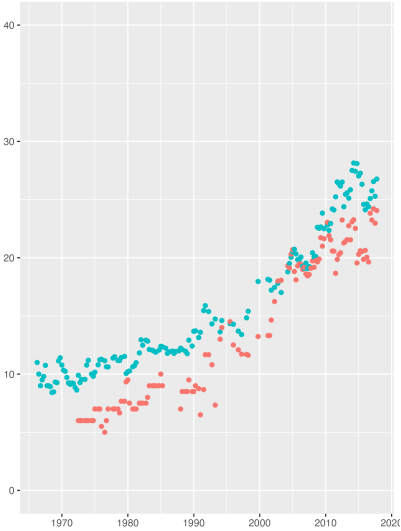

Emb Size by Amb Gender
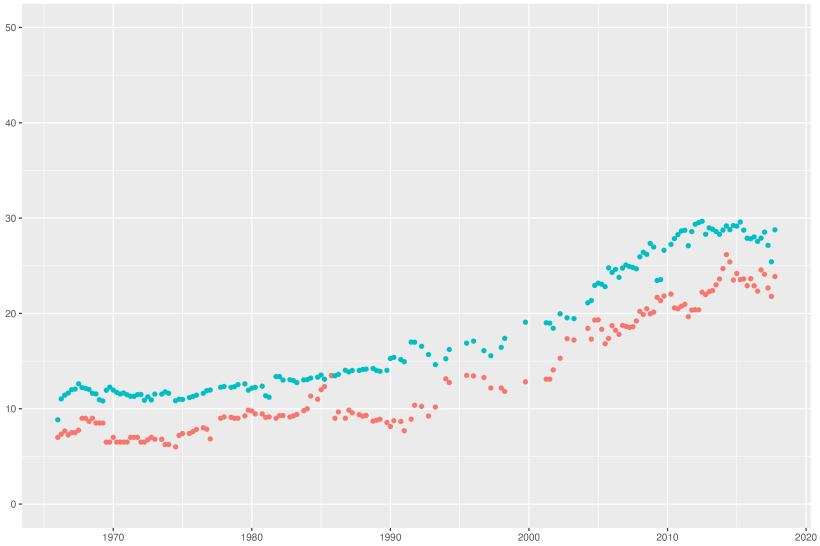
Embassy Size and Ambassador Gender

Former DCMs

Political Ambassadors