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Discursive Inequity and the Internal Exclusion of Women Speakers

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Abstract
In today's democracies, disempowered group members are no longer formally barred from the political arena. However, there is a concern that the historical memory of political inequality and exclusion remains as internalized cognitive dispositions, shaping behavior even after laws are changed. Focusing on the legacy of women's political exclusion from the public sphere, I consider whether internal exclusions undermine women's ability to influence political discourse even under conditions of formal political equality. All else being equal, do women and men in Western democracies have the same discursive influence? Are women particularly sensitive to men's discursive authority? I help answer these questions using an experimental research design. The results of my study offer evidence that people are more willing to revise their opinions after hearing a man's counterargument than after hearing a woman's identical counterargument. This pattern appears to be driven by the way women respond to a man's counterclaim. I discuss how gendered discursive inequities reinforce existing patriarchal structures, and the role that women inadvertently play in their own subjugation. I conclude by offering suggestions for better approximating the ideal of discursive gender equality.

Keywords
democracy, deliberation, equality, gender, women and politics, political communication

Political systems are democratic to the extent that people are empowered to participate in political practices—voting, representing, deliberating and communicating, and resisting—that contribute to self- and collective rule (Beauvais and Warren 2018; Warren 2017). However, a problem arises when structural inequalities produce power asymmetries between social group members. Asymmetrical power relations can entail formal exclusions that prevent disempowered social group members from participating in or influencing political practices. Even among those nominally included in political practices, ongoing relational inequalities—inequalities of social authority, status, and standing (Anderson 2010)—can entail *internal exclusions* (Young 2000).

In this present work, I consider the problem of gender inequality for discursive (talk-centric) political practices and offer evidence that speakers respond to counterarguments in ways that produce unjustifiable asymmetries of discursive influence. Unjustifiable asymmetries of discursive influence—or *discursive inequities*—contribute to the internal exclusion of women speakers from communicative processes of opinion formation. Asymmetries of discursive influence can bolster existing patriarchal power relations: discounting the influence of women's voices and enhancing the influence of men's voices in communicative process of opinion formation means women exert relatively less influence in the discursive political practices required to modify social and political conditions.

This work links normative democratic theory and social psychology by introducing a theoretical framework for understanding the social psychology of internal exclusion, and by outlining how discursive inequities and internal exclusions undermine democratic practices and reinforce harms of oppression and domination. Although this work is theory-driven and oriented toward theory-building, the results of experimental research are presented as empirical evidence[1] for the normative concern that discursive inequities can contribute to women's internal exclusion from discursive practices.

In the first section, I describe how democracy begins with inclusion. I discuss, in general terms, how different forms of inequality entail exclusions that prevent political

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practices—including discursive political practices—from functioning democratically (Beauvais 2018; Warren 2017; Young 2000). In this first section, I introduce the problem of *discursive inequities*. Discursive inequities refer to when structural inequalities become internalized as cognitive disposition—patterns of thought and perception—that entail internal exclusions from political talk. In the second section, I describe the experimental methods I use to test the theoretical expectation that gender inequality structures cognition to contribute to the internal exclusion of women speakers.

In the third section, I present my findings. The results offer evidence for the theoretical intuition that people are more willing to revise their opinions after receiving a man's counterargument than after receiving an identical argument from a woman. Furthermore, I show that these effects appear to be driven by the way women respond to hearing a man's counterargument: women seem especially willing to change their minds after hearing a man's counterclaim. I then discuss how the internalization of patriarchal norms and resulting discursive inequities result in a situation where both empowered and disempowered group members contribute (often inadvertently) to the maintenance of social hierarchies (Jost, Banaji, and Nosek 2004). Specifically, I discuss how enhancing men's influence in communicative processes of opinion formation can reinforce gender-based hierarchies even in the absence of formal patriarchal structures. I outline avenues for future research on the social psychology of internal exclusions. I then conclude by reviewing strategies for combating discursive inequities and women's internal exclusion so that we might come closer to achieving the regulative ideal of discursive gender equality.

Equality, Inclusion, and Democratic Politics

Political systems are democratic to the extent that people are included in political practices (such as voting, talking, or protesting), can communicatively link personal preferences into collective opinions and agendas, and are empowered to turn collective agendas into collective decisions (Beauvais and Warren 2018; Warren 2017). It is important to note that democratic processes always *begin* with inclusion. This is because the aims of forming collective opinions and agendas, and making collective decisions are undermined if those affected by collective endeavors are excluded from participating in them (Beauvais 2018; Fung 2013; Goodin 2007; Young 2000).

The norm of inclusion requires a degree of equality. I understand equalities relationally, as equalities of social standing, status, and authority (Anderson 2010). Equalities distribute symmetrical empowerments that enable people's participation in forming individual and collective judgments, securing people's status as mutually accountable "self-originating sources of claims" (Rawls 1980, 546). I am interested in the problem of structural inequalities—systematic asymmetries of status, standing, or authority between social group members in a society—rather than idiosyncratic individual differences between individuals. Because "a group only exists in relation to another group," social groups are an expression of social relations, and structural inequalities between social group members denote inegalitarian social relations (Young 2011, 43). This present analysis focuses on gender inequalities; on inequalities of status and authority between men and women.[2]

The Problem of Inequalities for Democracy

Structural inequalities entail asymmetrical power relations that often function to exclude disempowered social group members. I understand power in terms of patterned asymmetries in "the network of social limits" defining subjects' perceived and experienced fields of action (Hayward 1998, 15). To take an obvious example, consider when relational inequalities are institutionalized as gaps in political rights (such as restricting voting to white, property-owning men). Gaps in legal political rights entail asymmetrical power relations and formal political exclusions. Limiting political participation rights in this way obviously enhances the political power of white, property-owning men relative to other social group members. Large income or resource gaps between social group members also entail asymmetrical power relations and external exclusions from political activities. For instance, the poor, who are unable to afford the cost of "pay-for-access" fund-raisers, are excluded from attending functions where they could meet politicians and other influential members of society.

Legal prohibitions preventing disempowered group members' lawful participation in politics and economic gaps between the rich and poor clearly entail exclusions that are "external" in that they preclude disempowered social group members from participating in politics at all (Young 2000). These inequalities prevent disempowered social group members from legally casting a ballot, affording a donation, or enjoying the resources necessary for associating with influential people. Most democratic theories consider the problem of external exclusion, and "call for limiting the influence of wealth or position on the ability to participate in a democratic process" (Young 2000, 55).

However, inequalities can also structure cognition to entail *internal exclusions*. This refers to when, even in the absence of formal political or economic asymmetries, cognitive structures shape how social group members view themselves and others—limiting the perceived fields of possible action in ways that produce systematic

asymmetries in political participation and influence (cf. Bourdieu 2000, 2001). Consider how those who have historically been excluded from the franchise—women, the poor, or people of color—may internalize a sense of "feeling out of place" in politics. People who feel out of place in politics are less likely to participate in practices such as voting or talking politics, even after formal prohibitions to their participation have been lifted. For instance, research shows that young women are less likely than young men to envision themselves running for office and that this impacts their political behavior as adults (Fox and Lawless 2011, 2014). Not only do women self-exclude themselves from electoral politics, women are less likely to participate in discursive practices in the public sphere (Beauvais 2019). Even when disempowered group members participate in politics, the internalized sense that women, the working class, and people of color are "out of their league" in political activity might mean others are more likely to dismiss or ignore disempowered group members' contributions.

Inequalities and the resulting external and internal exclusions can be thought of as systematic constraints on social group members that prevent them from developing or exercising their individual capacities and prevent them from participating in political practices to influence the norms and laws that affect them (Young 2011, 41). Under conditions of inequality and exclusion, political practices can contribute to oppression and domination. Continuing with my example of a restricted franchise, consider how, until the twentieth century, legal prohibitions precluded women from voting, and clear normative expectations regarding women's place in society contributed to their external exclusion from political participation and influence. These legal and normative prohibitions on women's participation in the public sphere[3] were designed to maintain asymmetrical empowerments (the domination of women) that entailed exclusions (the exclusion of women from influencing public affairs). Gendered variation in political and economic participation also contributed to systems of patriarchal oppression, binding women in relations of dependence and powerlessness, marginalizing them from public life, and enabling the exploitation of their unpaid sexual and emotional labor (Pateman 1988; Young 2011).

In today's Western democracies, formal prohibitions to women's participation in the paid labor market and politics have been removed. Employers are not allowed to openly discriminate against women when hiring, and men and women enjoy the same constitutional political rights. However, the historical memory of patriarchal power relations—the formally legal and explicit distinction between women's roles as caregivers, often in the private sphere,[4] and men's roles as providers and decision makers, especially in the public sphere—remain as implicit associations in schemes of thought that define perceived fields of action.

For instance, implicit, semantic associations, or *stereotypes* relating women to nurturing and emotional care and men to authority and decision-making, remain. In today's Western democracies, women are formally invited to participate in politics and paid labor but they are still punished when they violate implicit, stereotypic expectations (of the nurturing-caregiving woman) through norm-violating behaviors (such as by acting authoritatively) (Lakoff 1990). For instance, women university instructors who behave authoritatively, or who are perceived as not being nurturing or caring, elicit negative affect and receive lower teaching evaluations (Andersen and Miller 1997; Baldwin and Blattner 2003; Bennett and Entman 2001; Statham, Richardson, and Cook 1991). Authoritative women who violate the stereotypic expectation that women should be communal (thoughtful and sensitive to feelings) suffer a backlash effect, eliciting negative affect and evaluations from others (Rudman and Glick 1999, 2001). Women political candidates have a hard time even *emitting* norm-violating images: regardless of women candidate's positioning on "masculine" (military) or "feminine" (compassion) issues, women candidates are perceived as more competent on compassion issues (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Sapiro 1981) and as possessing traditional "feminine" strengths (Leeper 1991).

Internalized inequalities do not only impact how people react toward women, but also impact women's self-understandings and motivations for action. The legacy of women's political exclusion is internalized in cognitive schema that can manifest as a disinterest in politics during adolescence and lower political participation during adulthood (Fox and Lawless 2014). The historical legacy of women's external exclusion from politics continues as a "gender gap" in politics today, where women seem to know less about politics than men, are less interested in running for office, and are underrepresented in legislatures (Fox and Lawless 2014; Stolle and Gidengil 2010; Wängnerud 2009). There is strong evidence that when it comes to elected office, "when women run, women win"; yet, fewer women opt to run for political office in the first place (Lawless 2015, 353).

When inequality is internalized, cognitive schemes of perception and appreciation constrain women's perception of fields of possible action. This demobilizes women's political participation and generates unjustifiable asymmetries in women's political influence. Power is not only constraining but also *enabling* (Hayward 1998). Internalized associations between men and authoritativeness or between men and the public sphere can also mobilize men's political participation and unjustifiably amplify men's political influence.

This is particularly true in the case of *discursive* political practices. Discursive political practices include both everyday talk about matters of collective concern as well as deliberation. Nondeliberative, everyday talk about matters of collective concern refers to political talk that does not necessarily involve reciprocal reason-giving (Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini 2009; Mansbridge 2010; Walzer 1999). By contrast, deliberation is a rarer form of communication that involves addressing disagreement and misunderstanding through mutual justification (Chambers 1996; Habermas 1990). Both political talk and deliberation contribute in important ways to broader political systems (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019; Curato, Hammond, and Min 2018; Mansbridge et al. 2012; Warren 2017).

Formal inequalities—such as laws prohibiting certain group members' participation in political talk—obviously entail external exclusions that prevent the disempowered from participating in or influencing discursive practices. However, even when equalities are formalized in institutions—for instance, in the universal franchise—the legacy of inequality can structure cognition to entail internal exclusions. Cognitive schemes of perception and appreciation can function to de-motivate disempowered social group members' participation in talking about matters of collective concern and can generate unjustifiable asymmetries in communicative influence when disempowered group members do participate.

A review of the literature on small-group discussions shows that women political science students participate less in class discussions (Yaylaci and Beauvais 2017), that women are less likely to participate in group discussions in the public sphere (Beauvais 2019), and women attending group discussions often feel less influential when they do speak (Mendelberg 2002). Continuing with my example of women's political participation, the legacy of women's political exclusion embedded in cognitive schemes of perception and appreciation can lead women to perceive themselves (and lead others to perceive them) as less knowledgeable and influential in political conversations. When women and men talk politics, both women and men are more likely to perceive men conversation partners as more knowledgeable about politics than women, regardless of the conversation partners' objective political knowledge (Mendez and Osborn 2010). As Mendez and Osborn (2010, 270) note, "these differences have the potential to discount women's contributions to political conversation."

This paper uses the term *discursive inequities* to refer to those cognitive schemas that produce unjustifiable, systematic asymmetries of communicative participation and influence. Some asymmetries of communicative influence may be justifiable: for instance, it is justifiable to implicitly give more weight to a licensed medical doctor's advice than to medical advice written anonymously on an online message board. However, discursive inequities refer only to asymmetries that would not be viewed as justifiable by those affected. For instance, asymmetries of communicative influence stemming from nothing other than a person's social group membership—position in sexed or gender-based continuums, ethnicity, linguistic group, or other socially ascribed group identities—is unlikely to be explicitly endorsed as justifiable by those disempowered by communicative asymmetries.

Discursive inequities are disabling constraints that contribute to internal exclusions, undermining disempowered social group members' influence in conversations about matters of collective concern. Inequalities and both external and internal exclusions can reinforce existing systems of oppression and domination, because the disempowered cannot participate in—and may not be motivated to participate in—political practices to modify their social and political conditions. Discursive inequities also contribute to disempowered group members' internal exclusion by impacting how they perceive themselves and their own influence.

Social stereotypes and systematic variation in self-esteem are examples of discursive inequities—of cognitive schemes of perception and appreciation that engender variation in communicative influence—that contribute to internal exclusions. Because there are stronger stereotypical associations between men and attributes related to good decision-making (such as authority and decisiveness), people may give more weight to men's utterances. Systematic, group-based differences in global self-worth or self-esteem can also produce unjustifiable variation in communicative influence and contribute to internal exclusions. Self-esteem refers to the general "attitudes individuals hold about themselves, embracing what they believe to be their desirable (and undesirable) qualities and whether they like (or dislike) themselves" (Sniderman 1975, 44). Historically disempowered groups may be more likely to internalize debased or devalued self-identities (Allport 1954; Goffman 2009; Honneth 1995). For instance, women report lower levels of self-esteem than men on average (Kling et al. 1999). This finding is robust across cultures and over time (Bleidorn et al. 2015).[5] As a consequence, women may be more likely to doubt their own authority, particularly if they are contradicted by a man.

Discourses about the weakness or intrinsic inferiority of disempowered social group members "can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being" (Taylor 1997, 25). There is some evidence that gendered variation in self-esteem matters for discursive political participation: a study of small-group discussions of political science students shows that female students report lower levels of self-esteem and that self-esteem is related to frequency of verbal participation (Yaylaci and Beauvais

2017). Other researchers suggest that when avoidance is not an option in politics, low self-esteem individuals are more likely to conform to dominant views and behaviors (Gibson 1981; McGuire 1968). This lends further credence to the concern that women may be more likely to revise their opinions when contradicted by men.

Studies of small-group discussions and political conversations offer reason to suspect discursive inequities impact the uptake of arguments in discourse. One of the strongest predictors of a person's influence in a discursive interaction is whether other participants in the conversation perceive them as more expert or competent in the task at hand (Bottger 1984; Kirchler and Davis 1986; MacRae 1993; Mendelberg 2002). Studies of jury deliberations show that higher status jurors tend to be perceived as more accurate, even though social status does not correlate with accuracy (Hastie, Penrod, and Pennington 1983). And, as mentioned, women and men talking politics are more likely to perceive men conversation partners as being more knowledgeable, regardless of their actual political knowledge (Mendez and Osborn 2010).

I use a survey experiment to identify whether discursive inequities contribute to asymmetries of men's and women's discursive influence. The expectation is that, ceteris paribus, a person who receives a man's counterargument will be more likely to express a willingness to change their mind as compared with a person who receives a woman's identical counterargument. I also expect to find evidence that there is an interaction between the gender of the participant and the gender of the person presenting the counterargument. Because of the aggregative effect of (on one hand) stereotypic associations between men's authoritativeness and women's lack of authoritativeness and (on the other hand) gendered asymmetries in self-esteem, the expectation is that women will be particularly sensitive to hearing men's counterclaims.

Method

Research Design

Undergraduate students were engaged through the University of British Columbia's (UBC) Public Opinion Laboratory to participate in online vignette experiments (n = 601).[6] Subjects completed the online experiments remotely, from their personal computers. Study participants were asked their opinion on a nonsalient policy question and then were randomly assigned to receive identical counterarguments from either a fictional woman or a fictional man. A nonsalient, nonpartisan policy issue (related to car insurance) was chosen to try and ensure at least some respondents would be willing to revise their initial stance after receiving a contrary counterargument. Respondents were asked if they thought car insurance should be mandatory (required for everyone to drive on the road), or optional (those who prove they can cover the costs of accidents do not have to pay for car insurance) (see Supplemental Material for question wording). British Columbia, the province where UBC is located, has operated a universal compulsory automobile insurance scheme since the early 1970s, and there has not been any public (including partisan) debate or media coverage regarding eliminating the mandatory insurance requirement in British Columbia (Legislative Assembly of British Columbia 1973).

Regardless of study participants' initial position on car insurance, respondents were shown a vignette presenting a counterargument to their initial position. The treatment was the gender—denoted by a name, no picture—of a fictional person giving the counterargument. Half the sample was randomly assigned to receive the counterargument from "Jessica," and the other half was randomly assigned to receive the counterargument from "Michael."[7] I hypothesize that respondents who receive Michael's counterargument will be more likely to say they are willing to change their minds as compared with respondents who receive Jessica's identical counterargument (Hypothesis 1 [H1]). I also hypothesize that participants' gender interacts with the counterargument condition (Hypothesis 2 [H2]). That is, I expect that female respondents[8] will especially be open to changing their minds after hearing a man's (Michael's) counterargument.

Data and Analysis

The primary dependent variable is respondents' response to the question "Given [Jessica's/Michael's] counterargument, what is the likelihood you will change your mind about car insurance?" The outcome variable is a dichotomous measure indicating whether respondents are willing to change their minds or not (willing to change their mind = 1; see Table 1 for variable distributions).

The primary independent variables in the analysis are respondent gender and counterargument gender condition. Because the survey experiment asked respondents about their gender (if they identified as female, male, or transgender) rather than if they identified as men or women, I refer to the respondents as being male or female (none of the study participants self-identified as transgender). Because none of the participants identified as transgender, respondent gender is a dummy variable indicating if the respondent self-identifies as female (female = 1). McDermott and Hatemi (2011, 89–90) note that "when political scientists refer to 'gender' in a survey, they are referring to and conflating several overlapping and meaningfully distinct underlying constructs" including "biological sex" and "traits of masculinity or femininity" and call for researchers to draw sharper distinctions between

Table 1. Variable Distributions.

Variable	Observations	*M*	*SD*	Minimum	Maximum
Willing to change mind? (Yes = 1)	601	0.27	0.44	0	1
Initial position (Mandatory = 1)	601	0.68	0.47	0	1
Counterargument (Michael = 1)	601	0.50	0.50	0	1
Gender (Female = 1)	601	0.56	0.50	0	1

biological sex, gender roles, and sexuality. However, a concept of "gender" that conflates notions of sex and masculinity/femininity is preferred because it fits with the broader concept of women as women+, a concept that is inclusive of women, transwomen, nonbinary folks, and two-spirit folks who identify as women. I refer to the "Jessica" counterargument as the woman counterargument and the "Michael" counterargument as the man counterargument (Michael counterargument = 1). I also include a variable indicating respondents' initial position on the car insurance policy question (car insurance should be mandatory = 1). Missing values were dropped using listwise deletion.

I first present the results of a simple difference of means test (two-sample *t* test), both for the main effect of the counterargument condition as well as the difference between counterarguments among male respondents and among female respondents. The reported *p* values represent two-sided tests of significance. Note that most respondents—68 percent—indicated that car insurance should be mandatory (the more easily justified position) and so faced a relatively weaker counterargument.[9] To address the concern that respondents' initial position on car insurance could be related to both their gender and their willingness to change their mind, I also present the results of a logistic regression controlling for respondents' initial position on the policy question.

Results

All else being equal, do women and men have the same discursive influence? And are women particularly sensitive to men's discursive authority? I first compare the mean scores (using two-sample *t* test) on the outcome for respondents who received Michael's counterargument and those who received Jessica's identical counterargument. Recall that because the outcome—willingness to change one's mind—is a dummy variable, the mean score represents the proportion of the sample indicating they are willing to change their mind after hearing the counterargument. I also consider the difference between counterarguments separately among male and female respondents (Figure 1; see also Table S1 in the Supplemental Material).

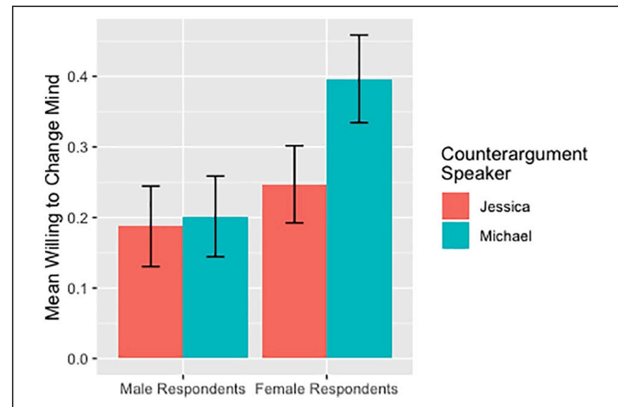

Figure 1. Difference in willingness to change mind, by counterargument condition and respondent gender.

Comparing the means between respondents who received a counterargument from Michael and those who received a counterargument from Jessica, there is a significant difference of .09 between the man and woman counterargument ($p < .05$). That is, of the respondents who received Michael's counterargument, 9 percent more respondents indicated they were willing to change their minds as compared with the respondents who received Jessica's identical counterargument. However, comparing differences between the counterarguments by respondent gender reveals a striking pattern (Figure 1). Comparing male respondents who received a counterargument from Michael with male respondents who received a counterargument from Jessica, there is no substantive or significant difference in either group's willingness to change their minds (the difference of means is .01, $p = .78$). By contrast, comparing female respondents who received a man's counterargument with female respondents who received a woman's identical counterargument, there is a significant difference of .15 ($p < .01$). That is, 15 percent more female respondents who received Michael's counterargument indicated they would reconsider their prior opinions, compared with female respondents who received Jessica's identical counterargument.

I also estimated a logistic regression model, controlling for original position. This allows us to identify the independent effect of the counterargument condition, accounting for the effects of the other variables. I first

Table 2. Logistic Regression Results.

	Model 1	Model 2
(Intercept)	−0.77*** (0.22)	−0.53** (0.26)
Original position (mandatory = 1)	−1.55*** (0.20)	−1.56*** (0.21)
Counterargument (Michael = 1)	0.35* (0.20)	−0.08 (0.33)
Respondent gender (female = 1)	0.87***(0.21)	0.50* (0.30)
Female respondent receiving Michael's counterargument		0.68* (0.41)
n	601	601
Pseudo R^2	0.11	0.12

Standard errors in parentheses.
*$p \leq .10$. **$p \leq .05$. ***$p \leq .01$.

estimated the main effects of gender and counterargument condition (Table 2, model 1) and then estimated an interaction model (Table 2, model 2).

The results reveal similar patterns. Respondents who heard a man's counterargument appear to be more open to changing their minds as compared with respondents who heard a woman's identical counterargument. However, it should be noted that the coefficient for counterargument condition falls short of conventional levels of significance ($p = .08$). I also consider whether female-identifying respondents are particularly sensitive to hearing a man's counterargument by including an interaction between respondent gender and the gender of the speaker giving the counterargument, controlling for initial positions (Table 2, model 2). The interaction term between respondent gender and counterargument condition is in the predicted direction, although also fails to reach conventional levels of statistical significance ($p = .10$). Holding the other variables constant at their means, there is a 27 percent predicted probability a female-identifying respondent is willing to change their mind after hearing a woman's counterargument, and a full 39 percent predicted probability a female respondent is willing to change their mind after hearing a man's identical counterargument. This represents a 12-percentage point difference in predicted probability a female respondent is willing to change their mind after hearing a man's counterclaim as compared with hearing a woman's identical counterclaim. Note, however, that the higher p values mean these results should be interpreted with caution and that future research should endeavor to replicate these findings with a larger sample.

Discussion

The results of my experiment offer suggestive evidence that, all else being equal, people who receive a man's counterargument are more open to changing their minds than people who receive a woman's identical counterargument. In particular, people who identify as female appear to be particularly sensitive to men's surplus discursive authority. This suggests that a man and woman can make the same claim and—all else being equal—the man will have greater discursive influence, particularly when he is speaking to a female-identified person. This asymmetry—this greater openness to men's utterances—contributes to the internal exclusion of women participants in discourse (Young 2000).

It should be acknowledged that women are more open to changing their minds than men in general, which—according to most accounts of democratic theory—is desirable. The argument here is not that women should emulate men's resistance to counterclaims. If anything, the socialization process that motivates women's (general) openness to hearing counterclaims should be generalized. What is normatively troubling about these results is *not* that female respondents are more open to changing their minds (which in general is a good thing). What is normatively troubling about these results is that there is a *difference* between female respondents' willingness to change their minds after they hear a counterargument from a woman and after they hear the same counterargument from a man.

There are benefits and drawbacks to using online survey experiments to study discursive processes. One of the primary drawbacks with survey experiments is the potential cost to external validity. There is a concern that "the artificially clean environment of the survey question makes treatment easier to receive" (Gaines, Kuklinski, and Quirk 2007, 16). The concern here might be that the source cue—in my experiment, the gender cue denoted by the speaker's name—is easier to receive. However, many of the factors that the experimental design controls for *further advantage men*. Men typically possess other attributes associated with authoritativeness, including the tendency to be taller than women (Blaker et al. 2013; Egolf and Corder 1991; Hamstra 2014) and the tendency to have louder and deeper voices (Carli 2001; Strand 1999). In real-world, face-to-face conversations, these cues should further advantage men speakers. In the present study, the "pristine experimental setting" (Barabas and Jerit 2010, 238) likely *underexaggerates* the effect of

being a man, making a survey experiment a harder test for the hypotheses.

Furthermore, the present study represents an excellent example of a growing and increasingly important form of interaction: posting and reading online comments. On social media platforms such as Twitter, media sharing platforms such as YouTube, and news sites, speakers have the option of posting an opinion and may receive a response to their position in the form of a short, written vignette. Like in my study, very often, the only source cue is the interlocutor's name. The finding that women are sensitive to receiving online counterclaims from interlocutors with men's names is particularly important considering the rapid growth of the online public sphere.

Some researchers have also raised concerns about the external validity of using student samples (Sears 1986). While student subjects were recruited for this experiment, this concern does not apply. Student subjects do not pose an intrinsic threat to the external validity of studies. Although student samples often differ from general populations on certain criteria—notably age—these differences only threaten external validity when a heterogeneous treatment effect is theorized, and there is no variance on the moderator (Druckman and Kam 2009).[10] Furthermore, as Druckman and Kam (2009, 24) argue, "the range of heterogeneous, non-theorized cases may be much smaller than often thought" because student samples do not differ significantly from nonstudent samples with respect to most politically relevant variables.[11]

A more relevant concern relates to the limited scope of the findings. According to classical interpretations of deliberative democratic theory, discussants should have more time to reciprocally exchange reasons for their positions and should be able to hear from anyone affected by deliberative outcomes (Chambers 1996; Habermas 1990, 1998). Respondents in this study merely articulated a policy preference, were presented with one counterargument, and were asked to indicate whether they would reconsider their initial preference. As such, the findings presented here may be less applicable to very high-quality deliberation, particularly the kind that takes place in small-scale, institutionally bounded civic forums where trained moderators and rules of discourse prevent internal exclusions from undermining conversations (Beauvais and Bächtiger 2016; Grönlund, Herne, and Setälä 2015).

However, political theorists and researchers are increasingly advocating systemic approaches to the study of communication and deliberation, which considers how a range of communicative practices—including informal, communicative practices in civil society—contribute to the deliberativeness of broader political systems (Curato and Böker 2016; Curato, Hammond, and Min 2018; Habermas 1998; Mansbridge et al. 2012; Niemeyer 2014; Parkinson 2012). The findings presented here are more relevant for communication that takes place outside of the institutionally bounded deliberations taking place in well-organized civic forums. This research is more applicable to cases where neighbors, coworkers, or strangers briefly exchange viewpoints on matters of collective concern in unstructured, informal settings both face-to-face and—increasingly—online.

The findings presented here are also likely relevant for informal communication that takes place within political institutions, but outside of formal contexts. For instance, consider politicians' unmoderated exchanges online or in the halls of public assemblies between debates or formal committee meetings. Consider also civic forum attendees' unmoderated exchanges during breaks from formal deliberations, such as over lunch or coffee, or on social media. These kinds of unstructured exchanges shape both elected and citizen decision makers' opinions, and can feed back into more formal deliberations where moderators and formal rules normally help neutralize discursive inequities.

Three other methodological shortcomings of this research point to avenues for future research. First, respondents in the study were asked their opinion on, and heard a counterargument about, a single policy issue (car insurance). However, there is evidence that men and women are stereotyped as being authoritative in different fields (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Leeper 1991; Sapiro 1981). It would be interesting to replicate this research to see how discursive influence varies across domains to clarify whether women enjoy greater discursive influence than men in traditionally "feminine" domains (such as policies related to education or childcare) or whether men exert greater discursive influence across domains because of the stereotypical association between leadership and decision-making with masculinity (Lakoff 1990). Generalizable deference versus topic-specific deference is an important question that should be addressed by future research.

Second, to increase power, participants were randomly assigned to one of two categories—reading a counterargument from either "Michael" or "Jessica"—and were not assigned to a third, neutral group (for instance, to reading a counterargument without any name). While many well-cited studies use this same research design (e.g., Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010; Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997; Sapiro 1981; Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior 2004, to list a few), it is possible that there are undetected asymmetries in how male and female respondents respond to men's and women's counterclaims that are not fully captured with this two-group research design. Future vignette experiments testing men's and women's discursive influence might use a three-group research design and include a control condition with no name attached to the argument to identify potential asymmetries in male and female respondents' reactions to men's and women's counterarguments.

The final limitation of the study pointing to avenues for future research is the question of how gendered identities intersect with other identities to impact speakers' discursive influence. Speakers' influence is undoubtedly related to people's status within broader gender categories (e.g., as cisgender, transgender, or Two-Spirit women or men, or as nonbinary folks). Furthermore, relational gender inequalities also intersect with race, Indigeneity, class, (dis)abled identities, and sexual identities. Future research might try to identify how different intersections play out in terms of systematic variation in discursive influence. Future work should consider whether—or when—the intersection of gender and other identities that have been devalued in social hierarchies act as aggregative barriers to political influence, or if—and when—these intersections can act as empowerments. The Movement for Black Lives and #MeToo movements were founded by black women (including a queer black woman), and the Idle No More movement was founded primarily by Indigenous women (including a Two-Spirit Indigenous woman). The intersection of different identities may empower women's political action by divesting women who experience these intersecting identities from social hierarchies that use people of color and nasty women to demarcate where the bottom is.[12]

Of course, one of the central benefits associated with studying gendered asymmetries in discursive influence using a vignette experiment is that by indicating a respondent's gender by only their name—with fewer cues signifying race and no cues signifying education, social class, or other potentially relevant factors related to persuasion—alternative causal factors are controlled for, isolating the independent effect of speaker gender. Although this project cannot speak to intersectionality, I can convincingly show that two otherwise identical "speakers" and their counterarguments carry different weight depending on whether they are perceived as being a man or a woman. Future research should consider how gender intersects with other identities to see whether and under what condition intersections of different identities shape discursive influence.

Experiments are also considered useful for speaking to theory and speaking to policy makers (Druckman et al. 2006; Roth 1995). These survey experiments speak to Young's (2000) theoretical concept of internal exclusion, which refers to the way certain group members' perspectives, ideas, or opinions come to dominate the outcomes of discourse even when discussion groups are characterized by diversity. My research speaks to policy makers and practitioners in the field of democratic engagement by offering convincing evidence for what many women already know to be true: that even though women are formally allowed to talk politics in Western democracies, their utterances often have less effect than their men colleagues', friends', and family members' identical utterances. And that part of this inequity arises from women's own feeling of being out of place in masculine spaces, and our resulting willingness to defer to men's authority. By offering suggestive evidence of ongoing gaps in communicative influence, my findings will hopefully do important political work by convincing skeptics that discursive inequity is an ongoing problem that needs to be addressed. In addition to speaking to policy makers, my research contributes to consciousness-raising, by drawing women's attention to the way our implicit reactions to men's authority can help reconstitute systems of patriarchal oppression and domination.

Conclusion

We know that group-based differences in legal and political participation rights create external barriers that prevent disempowered group members from participating in politics, creating asymmetries in political participation and influence. The goal here has been to show that even after formal prohibitions to political participation are removed, the legacy of political exclusion remains embedded in cognitive schemes of perception and appreciation. The historical memory of political exclusion remains as discursive inequities, contributing to women's internal exclusion from communicative processes of opinion formation.

Discursive inequities help maintain existing patriarchal hierarchies, as women exert less influence in the discursive political practices required for changing oppressive social and political conditions. Men and women may have different opinions on issues of collective concern, particularly as redistributing empowerments to women often means men lose some of their traditional privilege. Empowering women to say no to men's sexual advances and increasing women's ability to report instances of harassment mean limiting what men can do or say to women. Empowering women's labor participation means men who want to reproduce will have to participate more equally in childcare, or at least be willing to help pay for childcare (themselves, or through public taxation to support the provision of public childcare). Empowering women in academia and politics means more time will be spent debating, researching, and drafting policy on issues women consider important, which may require men attend to topics they had previously relegated to the sphere of private or personal matters (or in the case of academia, "subfield topics").

If discursive inequities mean both men and women give less weight to women's arguments, and women are especially quick to reconsider their opinions after hearing a man's counterargument, then discursive inequities act as a conservative counterweight preventing discursive

challenges to the status quo from receiving uptake. This means that discursive inequities can contribute to a situation where both disempowered and empowered social group members inadvertently contribute to maintaining existing patterns of structural inequality (Jost, Banaji, and Nosek 2004). The results of the research presented here point to the role that disempowered group members can play in processes that contribute to their own oppression and domination. By deferring to men's opinions, women help make the probable—replicating patriarchal social hierarchies—a reality.

By alerting readers to the consequences of the ways in which gendered hierarchies are internalized, particularly by disempowered group members, this research plays an important role in consciousness-raising. This is important because part of the solution for addressing discursive inequities is for those who are responsible for discursive forums—such as policy makers, practitioners organizing deliberative and participatory forums, or instructors in university classrooms—to take steps to neutralize asymmetries in discursive influence. Organizers may consider diversity or implicit bias training, which can be effective at improving implicit biases against women in certain contexts (Jackson, Hillard, and Schneider 2014). Of course, in the unstructured, mass public, there are not always organizers present to provide hands-on, implicit bias training. By drawing women's attention to biases that they may be unaware of—biases that may actually stand in opposition to their own normative commitments—this research will hopefully help motivate self-reflection and self-awareness to counter discursive inequities.

Micro-campaigns related to implicit bias training and consciousness-raising are an important reaction to the way structural inequalities become internalized in patterns of perception and appreciation. However, it is also necessary to change the structural inequalities that give rise to discursive inequities in the first place. Macro-structural changes are made possible by the kind of empowerment that arises in the coming together of people (Arendt 2013). For instance, consider the coming together of women and feminist allies in the feminist movements who developed concepts to describe their experiences—words such as marital rape and sexual harassment—and lobbied to have these transgressions criminalized. Many people, disproportionately women and particularly women of color, who faced sexual assault or harassment continued to be afraid to raise complaints even after the acts were criminalized. For decades, discursive inequities meant that those who did speak up found themselves silenced, sidelined, and discredited. The coming together of women and allies in feminist collective action—notably in the ongoing #MeToo movement—have helped empower those who have experienced sexual assault and harassment to come forward and be heard by giving force to their claims.

Of course, there is some danger that the power inherent in the shared intentionality of people coming together dissipates when people stop acting in concert (cf. Arendt 2013). For instance, there is a danger that the power of the #MeToo movement will dissipate if the movement loses momentum. Permanently changing the way inequalities are internalized in cognitive structures requires changing the social and material realities that give rise to these cognitive patterns in the first place. The shared intentionality of #MeToo participants must be given permanence by inscribing their intentionality in institutions and norms. Preserving the empowerment of people who faced sexual assault and harassment that was created by the coming together of women and allies in the #MeToo movement requires implementing new policies and procedures for addressing assault and harassment that are attentive to discursive inequities even under conditions of formal equality.

Eliminating discursive inequities also requires articulating new social norms, or new expectations for how people should act in social situations. For instance, the social stereotypes that associate men with authority and decision-making are largely a product of the co-occurrence of men in positions of authority and decision-making. Despite women's increasing participation in the public sphere, the stereotypical association between men and public life and women in the private sphere is maintained by the tendency for media to skew coverage of public issues in favor of men and male-related topics (e.g., by covering men in business and politics but not women, or covering men's sports teams while ignoring women's sports teams; Shor et al. 2015). As Shor et al. (2015) show, the reason the media focuses disproportionately on men is not because of media bias. Rather, media outlets focus nearly exclusively on the highest strata of occupational hierarchies, where women are poorly represented. Countering stereotypic associations between men and decision-making or between men and the public sphere/women and the private sphere requires not only enabling women's participation in public life but also promoting women's presence in the highest strata of occupational hierarchies—thus promoting the co-occurrence of women and positions of authority and decision-making.

The findings about how discursive inequities structure argumentation do not mean we give up on discursive political practices any more than studies showing how inequalities structure women's likelihood of running for office mean we give up on representative democracy. Power is always unavoidably at play when we use language. However, as Mansbridge (2015) argues, the closer we get to an absence of power, the better discursive political practices are on normative grounds. My hope is that—by identifying discursive inequities that threaten discursive political practices—this work will help motivate both micro-campaigns of self-awareness and self-reflection and will motivate the

imagination and implementation of new practices and institutional arrangements that will help us more closely approximate the regulative ideal of equal discursive participation and influence.

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Notes

1. A note on quantitative research and feminist analysis: quantitative research requires the use of categories such as man (and male/masculine) or woman (and female/feminine), and categories themselves can be harmful. However, my work follows the school of feminist-intersectional research that recognizes there is a trade-off between scale (i.e., the complexity of social identities) and coherence (i.e., operationalizing concepts as measurable variables) (K. Davis 2008; McCall 2005). I ascribe to the belief that there are more effective strategies for resistance than rejecting categories out of hand, or than rejecting methods appropriate for the task at hand (in this case, quantitative and experimental research). The provisional use of categories in quantitative research can respect the demand for complexity inherent in feminist studies. Society and social inequality are "dynamic, complex, and contingent," and yet—despite this complexity and contingency—the social world is still "amenable to explanation" (McCall 2005, 1794). Data and replication materials can be accessed at www.edanabeauvais.com/data.
2. A note on terminology: I use the concepts of "man" and "woman" inclusively to refer to the continuums of culturally contingent masculine and feminine characteristics and behaviors ("gender roles") often associated with sexes and the continuums of male and female physiological attributes ("sexes"). Using the term *woman* inclusively to refer to these sets of overlapping concepts is sometimes written as women+ and includes any persons identifying as women regardless of their physiological attributes or the gender roles they play. This concept is inclusive of, for instance, women, transwomen, nonbinary folks, and Two-Spirit folks who self-identify as women. I also use the term *man* inclusively in a similar sense. I recognize that gender intersects with other identities—such as race and ethnicity, Indigenous identities, sexuality, and (dis)ability—in important ways. When appropriate, I draw the reader's attention to some of the ways these intersections impact people's social experiences to avoid positing cisgender, white, heterosexual, able-bodied person's experiences as the norm.
3. It is important to recognize that women of color and white women have different experiences of oppression because of the way systems of patriarchal oppression intersect with systems of racial oppression and colonialism. For instance, in the United States, the gendered separation between public and private spheres was more complete among white Americans because slavery and the legacy of slavery often forced black women to work on par with black men (A. Y. Davis 1981). However, white racism typically works in conjunction with patriarchal systems to exclude both women and people of color from participating in the (historically white, male) public sphere and from having influence in the labor market. I speak of women (in general) as serial collectivity: recognizing that many women face analogous constraints under patriarchal structures, without implying all women have a common identity or identical experiences (Young 1994).
4. To reiterate, the concept of the housewife is a *racialized* category, historically excluding black women (A. Y. Davis 1981). However, black women are also stereotyped as "mammies" and "matriarchs" in the private sphere (or alternatively, as "bad" women; see Collins 2000).
5. To clarify: the claim here is *not* that lower self-worth is some intrinsic, biological feature of women's being. The claim is that patriarchal norms and expectations defining women's and men's places in social hierarchies—constructions of women as incomplete men, or as complementary and subordinate to men—become internalized and manifest as systematic, gendered variation in self-worth.
6. Two experiments were conducted, in December 2015 and April 2016. To increase power, the results are pooled in the main body of this paper. The separate results for the two experiments are presented in the Supplemental Material; see Table S2 and Table S3. For each separate experiment, the results are in the predicted direction (lending confidence to the replicability of the results) but alone, each is underpowered. A small number of subjects completed both the first and second study but in instances where subjects participated twice, only their responses to the first study were included in the analysis (i.e., if a subject participated in the December 2015 study and the April 2016 study, only their responses to the first study are included).
7. Two of the most popular names in the mid-1990s (when most of the study participants were born). Participants would be familiar with many men named Michael and many women named Jessica.
8. In the survey, respondents were asked about their gender identity: female, male, or trans-identified. As such, study participants are referred to as "female" or "male" (none of the study participants self-identified as transgender) while the fictional speaker in the vignette is referred to as a "woman" (Jessica) or "man" (Michael).
9. Ideally, I could have picked a debate where both sides have similar merit. However, I wanted to choose a topic that was not salient or politicized. Perhaps unsurprisingly,

it is difficult to find policies represented by two sides of a debate, where both sides have roughly equal merit, and which are characterized little or no debate. That this debate is one-sided should not matter for testing the theoretical claim that asymmetries of status and confidence manifest as discursive inequities contributing to women's internal exclusion.

10. I do not hypothesize heterogeneous effects for age. Furthermore, I do have variance on this variable: participants' ages range between eighteen and fifty-three years. While most (nearly 90%) participants' ages range between eighteen and twenty-one years of age, more than 10 percent of participants' ages range between twenty-five and fifty-three years, and there is no evidence that age moderates the effect of gender on willingness to change one's mind.
11. Student samples are indistinguishable from nonstudent samples in terms of ideology, partisanship, degree of following and discussing politics, views on homosexuality, the importance of religion, the contributions of immigrants to society, social trust, belief in limited government, and overall media use (Druckman and Kam 2009).
12. Of course, whiteness is a social category and source of identity, and stronger identification with this empowered group identity also mobilizes political action (Jardina 2019). The questions of how different identities—those (dis)empowered in social hierarchies—intersect to (dis) empower political action and what this action looks like is a rich topic for theorizing and researching.

Supplemental Material

Supplemental materials are available with the manuscript on the *Political Research Quarterly* (PRQ) website. Data and replication materials for this article are available at www.edanabeauvais.com/data.

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