Why Do Women Remain Under-Represented in International Affairs? The Case of Australia

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International affairs has a gender problem. Despite a rise in feminist-informed foreign policy in some corners of the globe, gendered (and racialised, heteronormative, classist, and so on) power structures continue to impact women's representation internationally. This paper seeks to know *why*. Using Australia as a case study, it explores four premier international affairs agencies, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Defence (inclusive of the Department of Defence and Australian Defence Force), Department of Home Affairs, and the Australian Federal Police, to answer: Why do women remain under-represented in international affairs? Using feminist institutionalist theory, this article argues that three core reasons underline women's under-representation: (1) historical legacies that maintain masculine supremacy in the field; (2) contemporary layering and duplication of gendered challenges across individual, agency, diplomatic field, and society contexts; and (3) the compounding effect of challenges at different stages of women's careers, lives, and posting cycles. In addition, this paper reveals surprising findings, including that more militaristic agency structures result in more proportional representation of women compared with more bureaucratic agency structures, inverting conventional theory on militaries as the most male-dominated and patriarchal spheres of the state.

International affairs has a gender problem, with women remaining marginalised and under-represented across the field.[1] Yet, in some corners of the globe, women are breaking beyond "firsts" in leadership positions, representing shifting norms in the field. Australian international affairs is at one such critical juncture:[2] women verge on parity in sectors of diplomatic leadership for the first time in history.[3] Australia more than doubles global averages for women in senior diplomatic leadership positions, a significant achievement against a backdrop that has seen women's almost complete

[1] Elise Stephenson, "Am I Ambassadorial Enough? Gender and Australian International Representation," in *Gender Politics: Navigating Political Leadership in Australia*, eds, Zareh Ghazarian and Katrina Lee-Koo (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2021), pp. 122–32; Ann Towns and Birgitta Niklasson, "Gender, International Status, and Ambassador Appointments," *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 13, 3 (2017), pp. 521–40; Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014).

[2] Sonia Rossetti, "Changes for Diplomacy Under the Lens of Feminist Neo-Institutional Theory: The Case for Australia," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, Vol. 10, 3 (2015), pp. 285–305.

[3] Elise Stephenson, "Domestic Challenges to International Leadership: A Case Study of Women in Australian International Affairs Agencies," *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 73, 3 (2019), pp. 234–53.

marginalisation and exclusion over time.[4] Yet crucially, contemporary progress on gender in diplomacy is not always linear nor guaranteed,[5] with some portfolios across Australian international affairs witnessing a regression in women's representation, others stagnating, and all at the mercy of not just formal gendered rules and institutions, but persistently gendered informal norms and behaviours too.[6]

Until recently, scholarly literature on Australian international affairs has almost entirely overlooked women's identities and experiences of leadership as a relevant lens through which to understand international relations (IR). Melissa Conley Tyler, Emily Blizzard, and Bridget Crane began to explore Australia's "missing" women in international affairs in their 2014 paper,[7] which tests theories that women are less motivated[8] or lack interest in "hard" international affairs.[9] Instead, they offer four reasons for women's under-representation: direct discrimination; indirect discrimination; family commitments; and socially constructed gender norms. Rosetti[10] argues that Australian diplomacy has deeply institutionalised gendered differences, while Stephenson[11] highlights that gendered institutions in the field have resulted in women experiencing more and worse discrimination domestically or within agencies, rather than when posted internationally. Westendorf and Strating[12] reinforce that while Australian women are interested and engaged in international affairs in almost equal measure to men, structural challenges undermine their international representation and their career progression. Across the growing literature globally on the subject, significant gaps remain in understanding women's representation and experiences in the field, requiring empirical evidence and debate that this article seeks to provide.[13]

After interviewing over eighty women in international affairs leadership and analysing over thirty-four years of data on women's representation across the case agencies, despite an increase in women's participation overall, women remain chronically under-represented, particularly in leadership. For agencies, their opportunities for representation have not improved in almost twenty years. Many of the most damaging gendered rules, norms, and practices holding women back in international affairs — like a reliance on unpaid spousal labour that only women appear willing to do — continue to be part of the foundations of Australia's international footprint. Women interviewed reported keeping lists of predatory men to avoid in their departments, detail incredible abuses of power that indicate persisting sexual and

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[4] Towns and Niklasson, "Gender, International Status."

[5] Jennifer Cassidy, *Gender and Diplomacy* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

[6] Georgina Waylen, *Gender and Informal Institutions* (London: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2017).

[7] Melissa Conley Tyler, Emily Blizzard, and Bridget Crane, "Is International Affairs Too 'Hard' for Women? Explaining the Missing Women in Australia's International Affairs," *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 68, 2 (2014), pp. 156–76.

[8] Samuel Roggeveen, "Reader Riposte: Where Are the Interpreter Women?" 2009. *https://archive.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/reader-riposte-where-are-interpreter-women*

[9] Rodger Shanahan, "Women and the Commentariat," 2011, accessed 24 January 2019, *http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2011/08/30/Women-and-the-foreign-policy-commentariat.aspx*

[10] Rossetti, "Changes for Diplomacy."

[11] Stephenson, "Domestic Challenges to International Leadership."

[12] Jasmine-Kim Westendorf and Rebecca Strating, "Women in Australian International Affairs," *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 74, 3 (2020), pp. 213–27.

[13] Karin Aggestam and Ann Towns, "The Gender Turn in Diplomacy: A New Research Agenda," *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol. 21, 1 (2019), pp. 9–28.

physical abuse, and provide accounts of decades of discrimination that, in some cases, have intensified, not reduced, in recent years. It is clear that even despite improvements, women remain marginalised and under-represented. The question that remains is *why*, particularly in the face of recent rapid and dramatic gendered changes.

This article therefore presents leading research on the question of *why do women continue to remain under-represented and marginalised in international affairs?* It follows Enloe[14] and Neumann's[15] appeals for research on gender and IR, exploring findings from a three-year comparative case study on senior executive service (SES) and executive level (EL) level (or equivalent level) women leaders across core Australian international affairs agencies. It focuses on women in the case agencies of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Defence [inclusive of the civilian Department of Defence (DoD) and military Australian Defence Force (ADF)], Department of Home Affairs (Home Affairs), and Australian Federal Police (AFP).

Using feminist institutionalist theory, this paper argues that there are three key elements to why women remain under-represented in the field: (1) the historical legacy of old gender norms; (2) the layering and duplication of gendered challenges across individual, society, agency, and diplomatic field contexts; and (3) the compounding effect of gendered rules at each stage of women's career, life, and posting cycle. Through this analysis, a framework for analysing gendered institutions in international affairs is developed. Furthermore, surprising findings are revealed, including that more militaristic agency structures result in more proportional representation of women compared with more bureaucratic agency structures, inverting conventional theory on militaries as the most male-dominated and patriarchal spheres of the state.

This paper will first explore the status of women in global and Australian international affairs, prior to covering the research methodology, statistics on women's representation, and a discussion on why women remain under-represented. Through doing so, the article establishes the degree or extent to which women remain under-represented, as well as a nuanced exploration of what explains their under-representation.

The Status of Women in International Affairs

Diversity in international affairs has been accredited to everything from lowering the propensity for interstate war, to increasing collaboration and consensus, improving development outcomes, resulting in a more "feminist" foreign policy, and more accurately representing the state and its interests.[16] Women's inclusion in Australian international affairs follows along the same lines, underpinned by two core arguments. First, there is the strategic benefit women bring to the field,[17] with strengthened capabilities a core tenet behind many Australian international affairs agencies' recent proactive stance on women's inclusion (see for instance the DFAT's *Women in Leadership Strategy*). Second, the argument is made on moral grounds. That is,

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[14] Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*.

[15] Iver Neumann, "The Body of the Diplomat," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 14, 4 (2008), pp. 671–95.

[16] UN Women, "In Focus: Women, Peace, Power," 2020, *https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-peace-security*; Hilary Charlesworth, "Are Women Peaceful? Reflections on the Role of Women in Peace-Building," *Feminist Legal Studies*, Vol. 16, 3 (2008), pp. 347–61; Valerie Hudson and Patricia Leidl, *The Hillary Doctrine: Sex & American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

[17] Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982).

including women in international affairs is "right" and is part of fulfilling the representative nature of Australian democracy and ensuring its national interests overseas.[18] Indeed, Conley Tyler[19] argues that women and other marginalised groups' inclusion in diplomacy results in improved function and better representation, while Callum notes that in intelligence, diversity helps "by lessening the impact of shared, common biases," as well as limiting unpredictability by forecasting multiple, different futures.[20]

The impact of inclusion is therefore marked in international affairs, where diplomatic and national security agencies form the premier governmental bodies tasked with maintaining state security, sovereignty, and national interest. Their leaders "articulate the meaning within which others from around the world work and live," shaping social and governance norms, framing what is deemed important and marginalised, and prioritising and taking action on state interventions to trade relations and more.[21]

Yet, until recently, women have remained largely invisible in the field of IR and have remained widely excluded from leadership.[22] Enloe notes that men are presumed to be the diplomats, and Tickner states that women's leadership has historically been constrained by the widely held principle "that military and foreign policy are arenas of policy-making least appropriate for women".[23,24] Historically, women occasionally served in formal diplomatic roles, particularly when royal courts reigned supreme.[25] Yet, following the professionalisation and bureaucratisation of the service in the twentieth century, women's exclusion became deeply institutionalised — "women were expressly and officially barred as a sex from holding diplomatic positions".[26]

Within security agencies, women were completely barred from combat positions, and where they were found, was generally within gender-segregated units (during war times) that at times have been dismantled completely (post-war). In Australia, the Commonwealth Marriage Bar considerably restricted women's advancement until it was abolished in 1966, and only in 1973 did women receive equal pay under law, flexible working hours, and paid maternity leave.[27]

Changes are now afoot, with growing attention to diversity and inclusion in Australian international affairs. In 2015 DFAT's then-Secretary Peter Varghese launched the *Women in Leadership Strategy*, a cornerstone strategy looking into the reasons why women's career progression within Australian diplomacy was not equal to men's.[28] The next year,

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[18] Deborah Cass and Kim Rubenstein, "Representation/s of Women in the Australian Constitutional System," *Adelaide Law Review*, Vol. 17, 1 (1995), p. 6.

[19] Melissa Conley Tyler, "Diversity and Diplomacy," *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 70, 6 (2016), pp. 695–709.

[20] Robert Callum, "The Case for Cultural Diversity in the Intelligence Community," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter Intelligence*, Vol. 14, 1 (2001), pp. 25–48.

[21] Nancy Adler, "Global Leadership: Women Leaders," *Management International Review*, Vol. 37 (1997), p. 176.

[22] Ann Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*.

[23] Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*.

[24] Tickner, *Gender in International Relations*, p. 2.

[25] Helen McCarthy, *Women of the World: The Rise of the Female Diplomat* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

[26] Aggestam and Towns, "The Gender Turn in Diplomacy," p. 14.

[27] Tyler, "Diversity and Diplomacy."

[28] Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. 2017. "Women in Leadership Strategy: Promoting Equality and Dismantling Barriers." *http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/women-in-leadership-strategy.pdf*

Australia's first female Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, launched Australia's first *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy*, one of an emerging few foreign ministries in the world to institute gender policy more broadly across foreign affairs, economic diplomacy, and development programmes. Around the same time, other agencies within the Australian federal government's international affairs apparatus were experiencing their own landmark events relating to gender. The Australian Human Rights Commission had handed down multiple damning reviews on gender harassment and discrimination within Defence.[29] The AFP created its first International Deployment Group's *Gender Strategy*, now in its second iteration. Plus, the Australian Border Force (ABF), which has since become an integral portfolio in the Department of Home Affairs, was reported to be established with a gender-equal senior leadership team, making it one of the first such portfolios (if not the first) to be established within government.[30]

Shortly after these moves across different portfolios in international affairs, the 2017 *Foreign Policy White Paper* was handed down to an audience that spoke volumes in the history of Australian foreign policy. It included Australia's first female Defence Minister since federation, Marise Payne, Australia's first gay female *and* first Asian-born federal minister, Shadow Foreign Minister Penny Wong, and Australia's first female Secretary of DFAT, Frances Adamson.[31] While the 2017 *White Paper* was far from a feminist manifesto, the connection between women's empowerment, gender equality, and global governance was significant.[32] Most agencies have embraced gender equality strategies, inclusive of targets and/or quotas that have begun to change the face of government. The combined effect of these changes suggests a more women- and feminist-informed era of Australian IR — what Lee-Koo sees as the emergence of pro-gender norms in Australian foreign policy "by stealth".[33,34]

From being chronically and severely under-represented, with gender diversity in Australian international affairs agencies lagging significantly behind wider public service, the corporate sector, and other countries internationally,[35] institutions in the

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[29] Australian Human Rights Commission, "Review into the Treatment of Women in the Australian Defence Force: Audit Report," 2014, *https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/adf-audit-2014.pdf*; Elizabeth Broderick and Co, "Cultural Change: Gender Diversity and Inclusion in the Australian Federal Police," 2016, *https://www.afp.gov.au/sites/default/files/PDF/Reports/Cultural-Change-Report-2016.pdf*

[30] Strategic Research and Communications Division unpublished raw data, "Women in Leadership in Department of Home Affairs," 31 December 2018; "Department of Immigration and Border Protection A-Based Positions," 12 December 2017.

[31] Stephenson, "As Julie Bishop Exits."

[32] The 2017 *White Paper* was in many ways in stark opposition to earlier foreign policies, such as the 2003 Howard government-era foreign policy white paper, which contained no references to women or women's rights. In contrast, the *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper* states:

> Gender inequality undermines global prosperity, stability and security. It contributes to and often exacerbates a range of challenges, including poverty, weak governance and conflict and violent extremism. Australia's foreign policy pursues the empowerment of women as a top priority. (Commonwealth of Australia 2017, p. 93) *https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/2017-foreign-policy-white-paper.pdf*

[33] Lee-Koo notes that "there is a genuine embrace of pro-gender norms, but the masculinist cultures of Australia's politics limit the capacity for it to be publicly debated and celebrated," p. 236.

[34] Katrina Lee-Koo, "Pro-Gender Foreign Policy by Stealth: Navigating Global and Domestic Politics in Australian Foreign Policy Making," *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 16 (2020), p. 236-249.

[35] Danielle Cave, et al., "Foreign Territory: Women in International Relations," 2019, *https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/gender-australia-ir-sector*

field are in the midst of rapid and seemingly dramatic gendered change. Yet, critically, women remain chronically under-represented in the field and experience persistently gendered challenges.

A Feminist Institutional Framework for Gender and International Affairs

Much feminist political science has centred on seeking out "real world puzzles", which have often been linked to institutional change and development.[36] The study of institutions is premised in the belief that institutions — rules — matter.[37] In defining institutions, Leach and Lowndes remind us that "actors do not always follow rules, but they do know when they have broken them".[38] Institutions operate to constrain or enable certain actions, following a "logic of appropriateness" that not only guides behaviour, but also whose behaviour is deemed appropriate.[39] There is an obvious association of rules with the formal — such as policies prescribing behaviour or laws with enforceable sanctions when breached. Yet rules are also associated with the informal — beliefs, norms, and practices, which may not be found in a rulebook or policy paper, but are still enforceable, and still have a marked effect on behaviour.[40] While informal or hidden rules (often causing covert forms of discrimination and bias) have regularly been overlooked in the measurement and attainment of gender equality, they do nonetheless have a considerable impact on women's under-representation.[41]

To understand how gendered institutions influence women's representation in international affairs, I propose the following framework in Figure 1. This framework derives from a combination of theory, which highlighted salient gendered institutional contexts, and insights gained during pilot background interviews, which highlighted gaps in existing theoretical models, where they existed.

I identity four core sites as influencing gendered institutions and challenges: the field of diplomacy; the individuals' context; the agency context; and the domestic and host country contexts. This covers all three aspects that McGlen and Sarkees[42] argue research on women in foreign policy should assess — societal, organisational, and individual. Yet, the framework has further broken down factors and extended analysis to capture important differences. For instance, if one studies the impact of "society", which society do they study? For international affairs' leaders, home society and host society are specific environments that deserve complete analysis. The field of diplomacy is neither a society nor an organisation, but as gendered norms are significant and consistent across diplomacy globally, it is still a relevant unit of

[36] Georgina Waylen, "What Can Historical Institutionalism Offer Feminist Institutionalists?" *Politics & Gender*, Vol. 5, 2 (2009), pp. 245–53; Jennifer Thomson, "Resisting Gendered Change: Feminist Institutionalism and Critical Actors," *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 39, 2 (2018), pp. 178–91.

[37] James March and Johan Olsen, "The New Institutionalism: Organisational Factors in Political Life," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 78, 3 (1984), pp. 734–49.

[38] Steve Leach and Vivien Lowndes, "Of Roles and Rules: Analysing the Changing Relationship Between Political Leaders and Chief Executives in Local Government," *Public Policy and Administration*, Vol. 22, 2 (2007), p. 185.

[39] Louise Chappell and Fiona Mackay, "What's in a Name? Mapping the Terrain of Informal Institutions and Gender Politics," in *Gender and Informal Institutions*, ed. Georgina Waylen (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017), pp. 23-44.

[40] Waylen, *Gender and Informal Institutions*.

[41] Stephenson, "Domestic Challenges to International Leadership."

[42] Nancy McGlen and Meredith Sarkees, *Women in Foreign Policy: The Insiders* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

Figure 1 Gendered Institutions in International Affairs
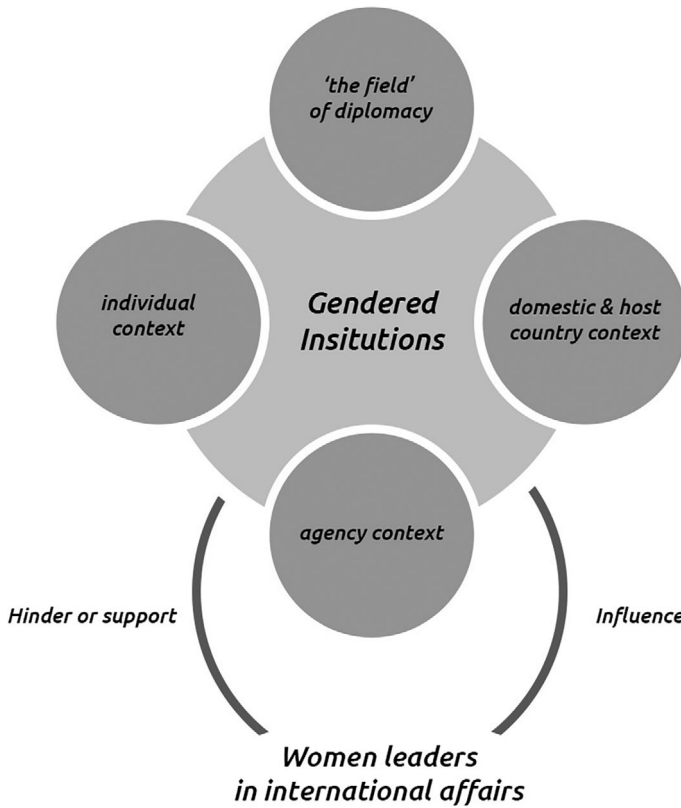
analysis, and should be differentiated from other contexts. The individual is also analysed in this research, including analysis of family contexts — because whether and how women deployed internationally was always dependent on their family circumstances, and what other social supports they had.

While not exhaustive, each of these sites presents critical insights into norms, behaviours, and practices that either hinder or support women in international affairs.[43] This framework is posited to provide an effective rubric for measuring gendered institutions across international affairs agencies globally, allowing analysis of multiple core sites of institutional change and resistance that will be revisited in the discussion.

Methodology

Although an exploration of intersectionality is not the focus of this article, an intersectional feminist approach guided this comparative case study, which sought to gather data on diverse women's leadership in Australian international affairs by capturing gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and other salient demographic data points. The research data include fifty-seven in-depth qualitative interviews, ranging from one to two hours with women leaders in EL (pipeline leadership) and SES level leadership

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[43] The framework also acknowledges the co-constitutive relationship between institutions and actors. Not only do institutions work to support or hinder women leaders, women leaders also exert influence over institutions, changing them both formally and informally through their presence and the enactment of new rules and norms.

(or equivalent) within the case agencies, plus a further twenty-seven associated informal and backgrounding interviews with politicians, managers, and associated advisors. Both university and Defence ethical approval was sought and gained. All interviews have been de-identified.[44] Interviews were semi-structured in order to draw out data and narratives on women's under-representation. This approach was chosen because of its capacity to provide insights into how the research participants viewed the world and their experiences.[45] Interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically.

Participant criteria included individuals who:

- Identify as a woman.[46]
- Are employed by one of the four case agencies.
- Are currently or have been internationally deployed (within the last ten years) within their agency.
- Are currently or have been in an EL or SES level position, or equivalent.

Furthermore, raw unpublished data were sought and gained from the case agencies. The primary quantitative sources analysed include:

(1) Australian Public Service Employee Database (APSED) Yearbook Statistics, accessed under a Request For Information (RFI 763), which compiled data from 1984 to 2018.[47]
(2) Agency annual reports from each agency studied.[48]
(3) Agency websites.[49]
(4) Data requests made directly to the agencies.[50]

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[44] Except for those with former Prime Minister Julia Gillard and former Foreign Minister Julie Bishop in the wider research, who represent the first women to be at the highest levels of Australian international affairs leadership to date.

[45] Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[46] Research was open to both cis-gendered and trans-gendered women.

[47] These data mainly cover DFAT, Home Affairs, and the DoD (civilian Defence).

[48] Including data from 2000 to 2018 for DFAT, Home Affairs, and Defence, and from 1984 to 2018 in the AFP, due to its exclusion from the APSED data set. DFAT annual reports for 2011–12 were missing, and AFP annual reports from 1990 to 2003 were missing and unable to be sought by the AFP Freedom of Information team, as they had not yet been fully digitised. Not all agency annual reports recorded data on gender, with the ADF only recording these data since 2012.

[49] Particularly for DFAT and the AFP. DFAT's Australian ambassadors and other representatives page was analysed and gender data collected at multiple points throughout the research: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Australian Ambassadors and Other Representatives" *http://dfat.gov.au/ about-us/ourpeople/homs/Pages/australian-ambassadors-and-other-representatives.aspx* The AFP publishes data on international representation on their website, updated yearly; however, these data were pure percentage data, with no numerical data accessible. It broke international representation down by gender, but not by rank or role.

Australian Federal Police, "Statistics of AFP Staff in Overseas Posts" *https://www.afp.gov.au/news- media/facts-and-stats/afp-staff-statistics*

[50] Data on Defence Attaches was requested from Defence's International Policy Division in 2017, and access was granted to previously unpublished raw data dated in 2017 (International Policy Division, "Defence Attaché Staff," 2017). Data on Home Affairs A-based employees were requested twice, once in 2017 prior to the merger from Department of Immigration and Border Protection into Home Affairs, and again in 2019 under the new Home Affairs structure (Strategic Research and Communications Division). Both data sets were previously unpublished raw data. Data on EL, SES, and HOM/HOP leadership were requested from DFAT in 2019 (Women in Leadership Secretariat, "Gender Breakdown in DFAT," 2019). This data was previously internally published, but not previously publicly accessible. DFAT is Australia's core diplomatic and foreign policy agency,

Figure 2 Militaristic-Bureaucratic Continuum
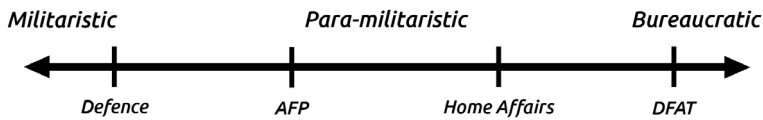
Case agencies are at a federal level of government and represent the core agencies responsible for their respective international portfolios. Agencies were selected based on: size, as the largest international-facing federal government agencies; whether international engagement and deployment was part of their core activities and whether senior leaders were part of international representation and/or deployment. While the roles and portfolios women were engaged in differed, their "distinctive way of life" characterised the women as part of organised, enduring groups charged with representing Australia's security and diplomatic interests overseas.[51] To draw out useful comparative points, agencies are characterised on a continuum from 'harder' militaristic agencies (Defence), to para-militaristic agencies (AFP and Home Affairs), to "softer" more bureaucratic agencies (DFAT) (see Figure 2).

The agencies have been characterised according to this continuum in order to enhance comparability and in order to explain key differences in agency structure and hierarchy. Agency structuring has specific implications for women leaders, given that the degree of hierarchy and structure often contributes to the prevalence of sexism and discrimination due to power differentials between individuals.[52] More militaristic and para-militaristic agencies have historically been deeply steeped in gendered norms and practices around male physicality and enforcement. Leadership within these agencies is characterised by strength, action, authority, and male agentic attributes.[53] In the case of both Defence and the AFP, recent reviews have highlighted considerable gender discrimination and sexism that marks these agencies as specifically and overtly gendered.[54] More bureaucratic agencies, on the other hand, are associated with flatter organisational structures and less overt distinctions between hierarchy and rank, as witnessed for instance by uniform and rank military and enforcement agencies.

The bureaucratic-militaristic characterisation is determined largely by the agency's contemporary structure and staffing composition. Bureaucratic agencies remain dominated by professional public servants (civilians), and in the context of international affairs, result in decision-making and negotiation by bureaucratic means

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guiding much of the policy landscape and priorities adopted across the other agencies in international affairs. Broadly regarded as one organisation known as "Defence," the ADF (the military body with Army, Navy, and Air Force service lines) and the DoD (civilian, public sector department) are a diarchy representing Australian national security and state sovereignty in international and domestic contexts. The Home Affairs has a number of portfolio agencies under its departmental structure, most of which are new as of 2017/2018, and remain focused on national security, border protection, intelligence, immigration, and customs. The AFP is Australia's core federal policing agency, involved in community policing and international cooperation on crime.
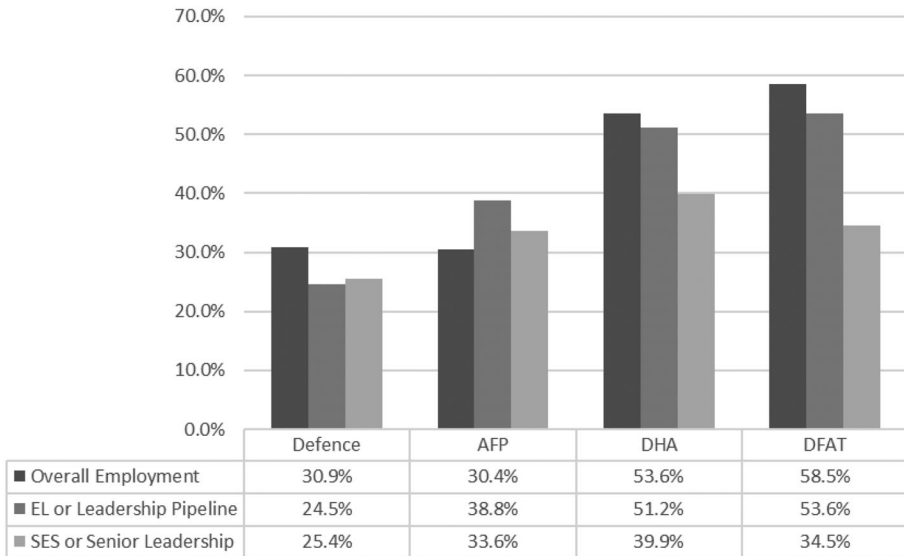
[51] Michael Angrosino, *Doing Ethnographic and Observational Research* (London: SAGE Publications, Ltd, 2007).

[52] McGlen and Sarkees, *Women in Foreign Policy*; Stephenson, "Domestic Challenges to International Leadership."

[53] Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*; Tickner, *Gender in International Relations*.

[54] Stephenson, "Domestic Challenges to International Leadership."

Figure 3 Representation of Women in the Agencies, 2018

	Defence	AFP	DHA	DFAT
■ Overall Employment	30.9%	30.4%	53.6%	58.5%
■ EL or Leadership Pipeline	24.5%	38.8%	51.2%	53.6%
■ SES or Senior Leadership	25.4%	33.6%	39.9%	34.5%

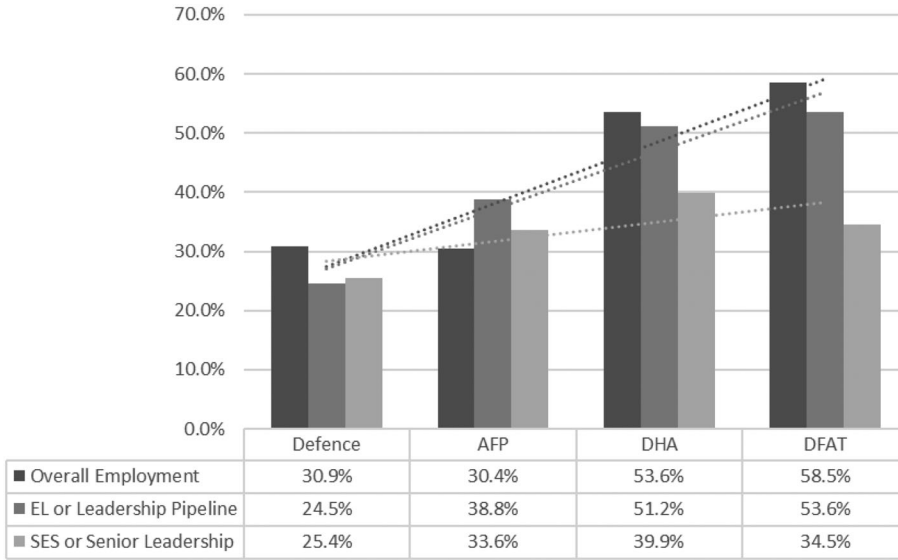*Source:* Agency Annual Reports and APSED RFI 763 data.

(limited by the APS Act 1999). Para-militaristic agencies are characterised by their staffing populations of both professional public servants ("unsworn") and "sworn" officers, with certain special powers, for instance under the AFP Act (1979) and ABF Act (2015), including the ability to be armed. Para-militaristic agencies are further defined by their ability to use military equipment and tactics, in addition to negotiation and operations by other means. Militaristic agencies are defined by their staffing populations of both professional public servants (civilians) and of military personnel, with certain special powers under the Australian Constitution. In the context of international affairs, militaristic and para-militaristic agencies have a wider scope of actions available, including the ability to use or threaten force (subject to certain conditions).

Statistics on Women's Representation in International Affairs

This section seeks to establish the extent to which women remain under-represented in Australian international affairs. It quantifies women's under-representation, particularly given the rapid changes that have occurred in the past five years that have seen women's participation in formal leadership grow. Overall, women remain under-represented, and more militaristic agencies and intelligence agencies are generally considered the worst performing in terms of gender representation — with militarism noted as oppositional to feminism.[55] Yet, breaking down these data on gender by rank and comparing it with opportunities for leadership and international representation over time reveals novel findings on women's representation in Australian international affairs.

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[55] Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*; Claire Duncanson and Rachel Woodward, "Regendering the Military: Theorising Women's Military Participation," *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 47, 1 (2016), pp. 3–21.

Figure 4 Representation of Women in the Agencies (with Trend Lines), 2018 (the Most Recently Available Data at the Time of Submission)

	Defence	AFP	DHA	DFAT
■ Overall Employment	30.9%	30.4%	53.6%	58.5%
■ EL or Leadership Pipeline	24.5%	38.8%	51.2%	53.6%
■ SES or Senior Leadership	25.4%	33.6%	39.9%	34.5%

Source: Agency Annual Reports and APSED RFI 763 data.

Figure 3 details the percentage of women (1) employed overall in the agencies, (2) employed in EL or equivalent roles, and (3) employed in SES or equivalent roles.

Overall, Figure 3 demonstrates that women remain chronically under-represented at the highest levels of international affairs leadership, which is consistent with global studies on women's representation in diplomacy and national security (see for instance: Ann Towns and Birgitta Niklasson's work[56]). In 2018, women were least represented overall in the AFP (at 30.4 per cent), followed by Defence (30.9 per cent). However, women formed the majority of overall staff in Home Affairs (53.6 per cent) and DFAT (58.5 per cent). They also formed the majority of EL leaders in Home Affairs (51.2 per cent) and DFAT (53.6 per cent). Within Home Affairs and DFAT, women were least represented at the SES level, representing only 39.9 per cent of SES roles in Home Affairs and 34.5 per cent of SES roles in DFAT. Out of all the agencies, women were least represented in SES leadership in Defence (representing 25.4 per cent of SES roles and 24.5 per cent of EL roles), followed by the AFP (representing 33.6 per cent of SES roles and 38.8 per cent of EL roles).

When we interpret Figure 3 along the militaristic-bureaucratic characterisation established in Figure 1, novel trends regarding the representation of women emerge.

A linear regression has been applied to Figure 4 to determine if there is a relationship between overall employment (Trend line 1) and EL or equivalent (Trend line 2) and SES or equivalent (Trend line 3). Figure 4 demonstrates that the more militaristic and para-militaristic agencies (Defence and AFP in particular) evidence both lower levels of women overall (Trend line 1) and in leadership (trend lines 2 and 3) as compared with more bureaucratic agencies (Home Affairs and DFAT). However, a novel insight emerges when we observe the difference between Trend line 1 (overall

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[56] Towns and Niklasson, "Gender, International Status."

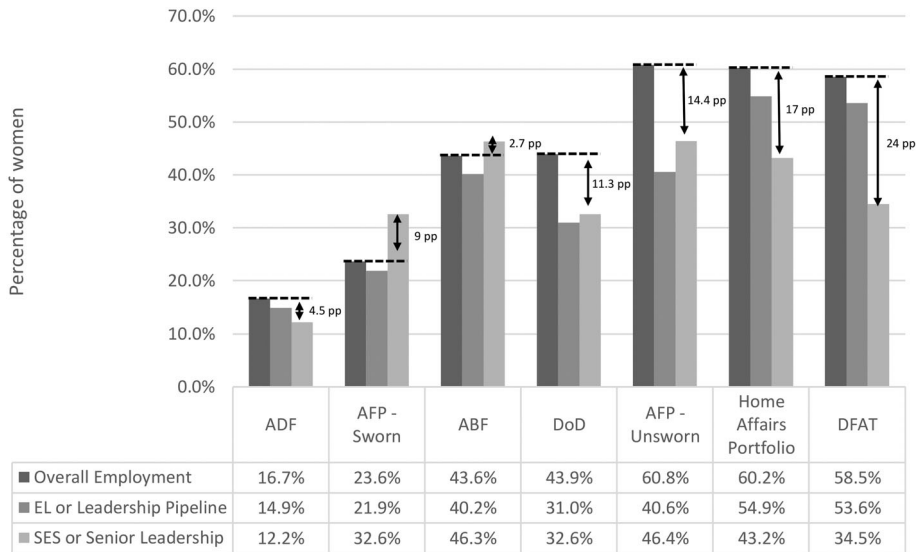**Figure 5** Militaristic-Bureaucratic Continuum (Agencies Disaggregated)
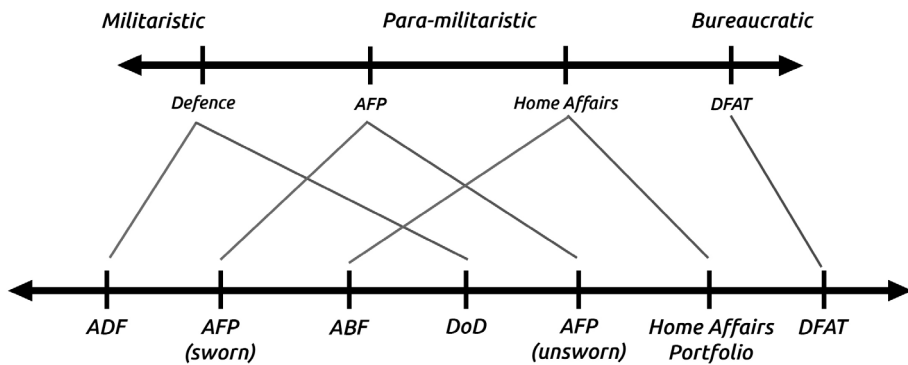
employment of women) and Trend line 3 (women in SES or equivalent position) across the agencies. The gap between overall employment of women and women in the highest echelons of leadership (SES or equivalent) widens, the more bureaucratic the agency is. Although the literature and data indicate that women are least represented in militaristic and para-militaristic agencies, women are *most proportionally represented* in these agencies ("hard" agencies known for their deep vertical and horizontal segregation). Inversely, while women represent a majority of more bureaucratic agencies ("softer" agencies, known for their better opportunities for women's representation), women are *least proportionally represented* in these agencies. This trend holds when the overall employment of women (Trend line 1) is compared with women in EL or equivalent positions (Trend line 2). This is a significant novel finding, counter-intuitive to the established literature.

Given that considerable differences exist *within* agencies regarding their military or sworn populations versus their civilian or unsworn professional populations, these above findings should be reinforced when the agencies are further disaggregated along a militaristic-bureaucratic continuum (see Figure 2). Disaggregation reveals findings that aggregated data would obscure, improving the accuracy and rigour of the statistical analysis.

Figure 5 breaks Defence into the ADF (military) and the DoD (civilian), the AFP into sworn and unsworn populations, Home Affairs into the ABF (predominantly sworn) and the Home Affairs Portfolio (predominantly professional, immigration and customs), and DFAT remains undivided. These characterisations reflect how each portfolio is divided within their own agency annual reports. Furthermore, disaggregating the agencies for this section reveals major differences in military and sworn populations versus civilian or unsworn populations. All professional, civilian, or unsworn divisions are characterised as more 'bureaucratic' than their relevant military or sworn divisions. The ADF is characterised as most militaristic, followed by the AFP (sworn), the ABF, the DoD, the AFP (unsworn), the Home Affairs Portfolio, and lastly, DFAT. Figure 6 details the percentage of women (1) employed overall in the agencies, (2) employed in EL or equivalent roles, and (3) employed in SES or equivalent roles along this disaggregated continuum, to test whether these findings remain.

Figure 6 shows that in 2017, 2018, women remained the least represented in overall employment in ADF at 16.7 per cent, followed by AFP (sworn) at 23.6 per cent. Women's representation in the ABF is at 43.6 per cent and 43.9 per cent in the DoD, both within the acceptable range of gender parity. Women form the majority of overall

Figure 6 Representation of Women in the Agencies (Disaggregated), 2017, 2018 (the Most Recently Available Data at the Time of Submission)

	ADF	AFP - Sworn	ABF	DoD	AFP - Unsworn	Home Affairs Portfolio	DFAT
■ Overall Employment	16.7%	23.6%	43.6%	43.9%	60.8%	60.2%	58.5%
■ EL or Leadership Pipeline	14.9%	21.9%	40.2%	31.0%	40.6%	54.9%	53.6%
■ SES or Senior Leadership	12.2%	32.6%	46.3%	32.6%	46.4%	43.2%	34.5%

Source: Agency Annual Reports and APSED RFI 736 data.

employment within the AFP (unsworn) at 60.8 per cent, Home Affairs Portfolio at 60.2 per cent, and DFAT at 58.5 per cent. When we look at SES leadership, women in the ADF represent 12.2 per cent of senior leadership, which is 4.5 percentage points lower than their overall representation, and demonstrates that women are least represented in ADF SES equivalent roles out of all of the agencies studied. Yet when we analyse women's representation in AFP-sworn and ABF roles, women are more *highly* represented in SES roles than their overall employment, with women representing 32.6 per cent of SES roles in the AFP (an increase of 9 percentage points) and women representing 46.3 per cent of SES roles in the ABF (an increase of 2.7 percentage points). From the DoD onwards, the gap between women's representation overall and in the SES widens. Women in the DoD represent 43.9 per cent overall, and 32.6 per cent of the SES, indicating that women have a decreased chance of reaching SES leadership by 11.3 percentage points. While women represent a majority of overall employment in the AFP unsworn (60.8 per cent), the Home Affairs Portfolio (60.2 per cent), and DFAT (58.5 per cent), these agencies evidence the biggest gaps in SES ranks. The more bureaucratic an agency is, the more it evidences a "glass ceiling" form of gender imbalance, whereby "discrimination actually *increases at the top* of the hierarchy" — in SES roles in particular (emphasis in original).[57] These data are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 demonstrates that *in only three occurrences* do women have a higher chance (proportional to women's overall representation) than men (proportional to men's overall representation) of reaching leadership or overseas deployment. In the first occurrence, AFP (sworn) women have a 9 per cent increased chance, proportional to their overall representation, of reaching SES leadership. In the second occurrence, ABF women have a 2.7 per cent increased chance, proportional to their overall

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[57] *Ibid.*, p. 527.

Table 1. Representation of women proportional to overall representation, 2017 and 2018

Agency	Overall per cent of women	Per cent of women in EL or leadership pipeline	Per cent of women in SES or senior leadership	Per cent of women international representatives
ADF	**16.7**	14.9	12.2	14.6
AFP (sworn)	**23.6**	21.9	32.6	20.1
ABF	**43.6**	40.2	46.3	30.0
DoD	**43.9**	31.0	32.6	62.5
AFP (unsworn)	**60.8**	40.6	46.4	60.4
Home Affairs Portfolio	**60.2**	54.9	43.2	47.2
DFAT	**58.5**	53.6	34.5	41.4

Note: Bold makes it easier to compare women's overall representation proportional to their representation in EL, SES and international posts.
Source: Agency Annual Reports and APSED RFI 763 data.

representation, of reaching SES leadership. This is a significant finding, highlighting women's increased chances for achieving SES ranks of leadership in the AFP (sworn) and ABF.

The third occurrence is in the DoD, where women have both a higher chance than men of deploying internationally (representing 62.5 per cent of deployments) *and* a higher chance of deploying internationally compared with their overall representation (an increased 18.6 per cent chance from their overall proportion of 43.9 per cent). This indicates very good chances for civilian women to be deployed internationally, compared with men *and* compared with their overall gender ratio in the Department. However, there were only *eight* international posting opportunities available for Defence Attaché civilian staff in total for that year. Civilian staff continue to have the least prestige, authority, and power compared with military staff when posted overseas. Therefore, the area in which women have had the highest initial chance, compared with men, remains largely unfulfilled because of the lack of opportunity and the limitations of civilian status.

There are three further core findings that Table 1 illustrates. Firstly, women in DFAT — as Australia's primary international affairs agency — might be expected to have an easier pathway to international deployment, due to the nature of the work. In fact, women form a majority of EL positions (53.6 per cent) in DFAT. However, a stark gap remains between women's overall representation (58.5 per cent) and their deployment internationally (41.4 per cent), with women having a 17.1 percentage point decreased chance of international deployment compared with their overall representation.

In fact, women in DFAT experience the *lowest* chances of gaining international deployment (proportional to overall representation) out of all the agencies studied. An even bigger gap remains for women who seek SES leadership (representing a decreased chance by 24 percentage points). This means that women in DFAT have both the lowest chance of gaining international leadership and the lowest chance of gaining SES representation (proportional to women's overall representation) out of any of the agencies studied. Worryingly, the gap between employment and opportunity for SES and international deployment has remained consistent for almost two decades in DFAT, even despite women's increasing leadership.

While DFAT has made rapid progress particularly since the introduction of the *Women in Leadership Strategy*, since 2000, the gap between women's overall employment in the Department and their representation in the SES has only decreased

by 0.6 of a percentage point. Proportionally, women in 2018 only had a 0.6 per cent increased chance of getting an SES position than they had in 2000. Although there are more women in SES and Head of Mission (HOM) and Head of Post (HOP) positions than ever before, their representation is not keeping pace with women's overall representation.

Secondly, while agencies that are more bureaucratic may be more female-dominated in terms of pure numbers, this evidently does not prescribe nor proscribe leadership and/or international opportunity. In fact, women's representation in SES roles across the agencies from 1984 to 2018 demonstrates that women's representation in leadership is generally increasing (with the exception of Home Affairs in recent years). Yet, the data explored above demonstrate that while women in the Home Affairs Portfolio and DFAT in particular are not the minority (at 60.2 and 58.4 per cent, respectively), they form part of a consistently marginalised majority. Women's representation lags considerably behind in SES and international roles in particular.

Thirdly, Table 1 reinforces findings made earlier in Figures 3 and 4 that the most militaristic and para-militaristic agencies exhibit the highest chances of gaining SES leadership. The results are particularly stark for women in the AFP (sworn) and the ABF, where despite having the best chances for reaching the most senior echelons of leadership, women in these agencies were among the lowest represented overall. This trend broadly holds over the entire 1984–2018 period for which data are available, highlighting that these findings are not simply one-off findings, but appear more indicative of a longer-standing trend.

Two themes emerged from the research that explains women's higher chances of reaching leadership and international representation in more militaristic and para-militaristic agencies. The first is structure, with Defence and AFP providing structured opportunities for women in terms of career progress from one rank to the next. Furthermore, being part of a smaller pool of applicants may give women an opportunity to "stand out" and be given more opportunities for advancement than they might have had in a larger cohort of women. This was particularly apt in the case of the AFP, where a female-only recruitment round was launched in 2017.

The second theme that explains these results is the overtness of gendered rules in more militaristic agencies, which provided a kind of visibility or transparency of gendered institutions — a factor that I argue had a significant effect on women. For some women, the overtness of gendered challenges acted as a disincentive for pursuing more militaristic agencies as career choices, evidenced by the low levels of women overall. For others, the overtness and visibility of these gendered rules appear to have enabled women to navigate the agencies more successfully. In fact, participants in this study commented that they knew what to expect in terms of gendered challenges, and therefore how to work around it, unlike some of their colleagues in more bureaucratic agencies for whom the challenges, and career paths, were more obscured. Thus, both structure and visibility of gendered challenges contributed to women's most proportional representation in more militaristic agencies, and least proportional representation in more bureaucratic agencies.

Explaining Women's Continued and Chronic Under-Representation

After identifying the nature and extent of women's under-representation in the prior section, this section briefly explores the three core factors that contribute to women's continued under-representation in Australian international affairs. The first is the legacy of history, which continues to shape contemporary agency identity and norms in subtle

and often undefinable ways that are gendered. The second factor is the "layering"[58] and duplication of gendered rules across multiple institutional fields, not only within the agency context, but also the diplomatic field, home and host society context, and individual (often familial) context. The third factor is the way that this complexity and "layering" of rules *multiply* to effect women at different stages of their life, their international posting, and their career on the path to leadership. Despite progress, gendered institutions endure through fluidly adapting to new social and operational realities, with gendered challenges changing in shape but not necessarily nature.

The Historical Legacy of Gendered Institutions

Recent gendered changes across the agencies, including the introduction of women's leadership strategies and gender equality policies, have begun to change participant experiences, with most participants expressing how much better represented women now were in their agencies, and that they thought that general experiences were improving. These perspectives reflect the more robust domestic and international debate around women's inclusion, and mark many of the wider social progressions witnessed over the past few decades. However, they also do not account for the whole picture. In all agencies, gendered institutional challenges remain, or have been reinstated across the agencies, often covertly or without planned intent, arising by accident.[59] Women were frequently silenced in their work, undervalued for their contributions, and either too visible or not visible enough on the international stage. While multilateral settings provided women with the most opportunities to be heard, participant experiences highlighted how women's voices continued to be lost or disregarded as unauthoritative, particularly in agency and bilateral settings. Women reported being systemically undervalued, often perceived as "less than" that of their male counterparts. In addition, the ability to be visible (or not) had a severe limiting effect on women's range of action on the international stage. Women were often only seen in times of heavy scrutiny, and completely marginalised when it mattered to their career progression or claiming accomplishments.

Persistent inequalities occurred even though all agencies were actively working to dismantle any formal gendered institutions that limited women's leadership and representation. This highlights the primacy of informal institutions to maintain gendered divisions across international affairs. Informal institutions reflect a historical status quo, often seen as "natural" and "immutable", reinforcing historical legacies that continue to shape women's contemporary experiences in leadership, despite their growing numbers and improving experiences.[60] As Chappell and Waylen note: "With the weight of history on their side, defenders of the gender status quo — those advantaged by existing power arrangements — have often defeated attempts to subvert the existing regime.[61]"

In DFAT, formal institutions, such as the *Women in Leadership Strategy* (2015), were successful at reaching initial change targets for women's representation in EL and

[58] Georgina Waylen, "Informal Institutions, Institutional Change, and Gender Equality," *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 67, 1 (2014), pp. 212–23.

[59] Fiona Mackay, Meryl Kenny, and Louise Chappell, "New Institutionalism Through a Gender Lens: Towards a Feminist Institutionalism?" *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 31, 5 (2010), pp. 573–88.

[60] Louise Chappell and Georgina Waylen, "Gender and the Hidden Life of Institutions," *Public Administration*, Vol. 91, 3 (2013), p. 600.

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 603.

SES roles — including 40 per cent by the end of 2018 for SES band 1. The Women in Leadership Secretariat also had enough power as part of the executive to enforce these formal policies, which has resulted in a positive change with women now verging on parity in international representation for the first time in history.[62] This can be seen as a formal institutional success, reliant on DFAT's will to enforce new gendered institutions, and their power to enforce new gendered institutions.

However, the enduring gap between overall representation and SES ranks in particular, as well as women's reported experiences, does suggest "nested" change — institutional change that is "nested" within old institutional structures and norms.[63] Participant 1 noted that "there will be some people you can never change", with gendered challenges "increasingly pushed underground and subdued" (Participant 1, DFAT, 1 February 2019). Given that women do form the majority of the agency now, it is particularly interesting that many of the expectations around unpaid spousal labour remain to dominate agency behaviour internationally, with women remaining to experience considerable challenges balancing diplomatic representation and the expectations of unpaid diplomatic labour in the household. Participant 2 noted:

> my children were one and three when we went to [our posting], and my husband wasn't there. He was commuting between Canberra and [us] and I had the children with me […] there were all sorts of challenges […] traditionally it's been more likely or common for the female spouse to follow the male rather than the other way around. One thing I noticed when I was filling my two head of mission postings, was […] most of the male heads of mission had spouses with them […] whereas none of the female or very few of the female heads [did]. (Participant 2, DFAT, 18 June 2018)

Many heterosexual participants in particular reflected that their male spouses did not tend to do the unpaid domestic hosting duties that were expected of "trailing spouses", resulting in the women taking on this diplomatic double burden. Among other things, this continued reliance on women's unpaid labour internationally highlights the fact that much of the paid work of the wider economy relies on the unpaid work of predominantly women — it is simply too big of a reality to change these norms through one agency.[64] Internalising these "externalised costs" would seem prohibitive. Nevertheless, it means that gendered institutional change within DFAT has been only partially successful over time.

In Defence, the low number of women overall and in leadership initially indicates that gendered change is slow and that the agency remains particularly resistant to change. Between 1995 and 2013, there were a total of thirteen inquiries into military culture and discrimination prompted by scandals, with substantial recommendations issued.[65] Despite commitments to change, action has not necessarily followed formal policy intent, with reviews and recommendations often superseded prior to action taken. In fact, the deeply historical and "live" nature of past gendered norms and identities has resulted in an agency with perhaps the most engrained masculinist norms. The agency remains deeply gendered, a "man's world" that still relies on tropes about men's strength and physicality as being central to the ability to do the job and

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[62] Stephenson, "Domestic Challenges to International Leadership."

[63] Meryl Kenny, *Gender and Political Recruitment: Theorising Institutional Change* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

[64] Elise Stephenson, "Invisible while Visible: An Australian Perspective on Queer Women Leaders in International Affairs," *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, Vol. 3, 3 (2020), pp. 427–43.

[65] Benjamin Wadham and James Connor, "The Dark Side of Defence: Organisational Deviance and the Australian Defence Force," in *Challenging Identities, Institutions and Communities* (Proceedings of the Australian Sociological Conference, Adelaide, South Australia 2014).

"advance". These notions were particularly salient in informal conversations with senior leaders, who continually reinforced the *operational needs* of Defence above improving gender relations.

Within this context, the more proportional representation of women across the agency challenges the simplicity of arguments put forth by McGlen and Sarkee's[66] and others, which suggest that military institutions remain the most masculine and male-dominated spheres of the state. By analysing women's proportional representation and pathways to leadership, Defence offers more equal opportunities for leadership and international representation than almost every other agency studied. The structure of Defence had an effect here — the ability to "pull rank" in a heavily hierarchical system, plus partake in the highly developed paths to leadership, ensured that Defence did offer women considerable opportunities for progression, and the rank, and therefore credibility, to wield power. In fact, while the 2019 Women in the ADF Report notes that women officers do spend more time at rank than men, this is marginal — six years at rank for women, compared with five and a half years at rank for men.[67] Structured career paths and entire tomes written on progression points have enabled women's more proportional representation.

The visibility of gendered challenges is also significant — and is one of Defence's main historical legacies. Defence has always been gendered. It has maintained gender-segregated units more consistently and publicly than any other agency of government — up until 1984 for the Women's Royal Australian Navy Service and Women's Royal Australian Army Corps, when they were disbanded and personnel mainstreamed into the standard service lines. Defence has demonstrated the powerful and complete ways in which women remain marginalised throughout the agency. It has been public and exposed in the face of allegations of sexual and gender harassment, discrimination, and mistreatment. However, as a result, the agency and those in it *know that it is gendered* in a way in which many of the other agencies insist they are not. The visibility of these challenges appeared to equip participants with the insight and strength to therefore navigate and negotiate the challenges — they know their opponent.[68]

In Home Affairs, women have historically predominated the agency, resulting in a very different institutional context over the past few decades. Yet, despite representing over two-thirds of the agency in 1996 (representing 68.4 per cent of the department), women have been declining in their representation, overall and in leadership, ever since. The comparative lack of formal institutions and policies in Home Affairs (until recently, and compared with the other agencies) can easily be seen as a positive — the fact that they were not there to institute positive gendered change is because they were not needed. Yet, the reality was that without formal institutional support, gender equality was not instituted at the highest levels. Women may not have been a minority in the agency, but the culture of the agency still reflected "a blokey law enforcement environment" that in many cases has intensified, not improved in recent decades (Participant 3, Home Affairs, 2 May 2018). Over recent decades, the agency has become increasingly para-militaristic and enforcement-oriented, and more male-dominated.

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[66] McGlen and Sarkees, *Women in Foreign Policy.*

[67] Department of Defence, "Women in the ADF Report 2018–2019," 2019, *https://www.defence.gov. au/annualreports/18-19/downloads/WomenintheADFreport2018-19.pdf*

[68] The obvious point is that women can only get so far: no woman has occupied position of Chief of the Defence Force — or in the AFP the Commissioner — which suggests that absolute limits to women's progression endure.

Finally, in the AFP, formal institutional change has made progress at transforming historical enforcement cultures — traditionally "blokey", bullying, and bolshie male-dominated environments. The fact that women are most represented in the SES in AFP-sworn roles (proportional to opportunity) is significant — in no other agency has this been so starkly achieved. After the AFP conducted the *Cultural Change* review in 2015, the agency sought to reform a number of its old formal institutions, including introducing processes such as blind hiring and promotions. Yet, in the agency's eagerness to trial different solutions for entrenched gender inequalities, new policies and practices were tried and repealed in short succession. Participants noted that there was an instability in these policies, which would change from one year to the next. On viewing these, Participant 4 noted:

> it's not that we need to scrap these initiatives, it's just we need to revisit how they're being delivered. But, like anything, people have knee-jerk reactions like, "well, that didn't work". I think there's such a push for change that when the result isn't immediate people are quick to criticise initiatives that, [and change that] […] [but,] I think, [it] needs more bedding down (Participant 4, AFP, 31 January 2019).

The result was an institutional context that was unstable, fostering an environment that has reverted to, and become more reliant on, informal rules. This is evident in the stagnation of women's overall representation, and in EL and international posts in the past ten years, as well as in women's experiences, which highlighted enduring discrimination and harassment. Again, institutional change across the AFP appeared to be "nested" within "old" institutional structures and norms.[69]

Change is afoot in all of the agencies studied. Women continue to make the most impressive gains in DFAT, AFP-sworn SES roles, and Defence, which evidence consistent growth in women in leadership. Yet, representation is falling in Home Affairs, and stagnating more generally in the AFP. Gaps between overall representation and leadership are particularly stubborn in DFAT, and the progress made in Defence seems inadequate given the amount of formal institutional interest the agency has developed. Historical legacies of male-domination and women's subordination across the field continue to influence the agencies, highlighting how gendered institutions in Australian international affairs endure through fluidity — changing from time to time in shape, but not overall nature, ensuring that gender inequalities remain.

Layering and Duplication of Gendered Institutions

The second main factor contributing to women's continued under-representation is the layering and duplication of gendered challenges. There are few fields that are so amorphous in shape, rapidly changing, and deeply contextual as the field of international affairs. Furthermore, there are few fields that are so specifically and inherently "international" by nature. The field is changing, yet it still evidences specific gendered scripts that operate across many different institutional contexts, and are reinforced on so many levels it is difficult to combat them in just one institutional context, without addressing the rest. It is clear that even with very progressive and gender equitable formal policies and rules in agencies, gendered challenges across other spheres, like the diplomatic "work place" more generally ("the field"), home and host societal settings, and individual circumstances, still continue to enforce rules that restrict or go in direct opposition to progress. The theoretical framework established in the beginning highlights these different sites of institutional resistance.

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[69] Kenny, *Gender and Political Recruitment*.

The layering of new institutions on top of already existing rules,[70] as well as duplication at multiple levels domestically and internationally, has strengthened gender equality moves in some spheres.[71] Yet, layering and duplication also acted as a point of tension and inconsistency, enabling resistance to institutional change. For instance, at the individual level, gendered social norms, as well as family and spousal considerations, remained a major challenge to women's representation and experiences. Gendered norms continued to affect women in both home and host society contexts, and were further complicated by institutionalised or legalised homophobia and racism, as well as specific cultural and religious norms that affected how women were perceived, valued, and treated. At the diplomatic field level, the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961) remains the guiding international standard for diplomacy and international representation. Yet, throughout the Convention, only male pronouns are used to describe the roles and responsibilities of a diplomat, with the word "his" used thirty-five times throughout the Convention, and "he" used twelve times. As the official, and overarching formal institution decrying "what" diplomacy constitutes and who can occupy such roles, the Convention is explicitly gendered.[72]

Duplication and layering of gendered challenges remain an issue for women in the field, highlighting that there was an absence of "complete" formal institutions to guarantee women's equality. "Complete" formal institutions would indicate rules and norms that were consistent across all four core sites of participants' experiences. In lieu of formal institutions, informal institutions were more likely to arise, akin to Waylen's findings.[73] These often provided the most significant barriers to women: "old" specifically gendered rules and norms that worked to disadvantage women, marginalise and silence their contributions, and affect their experiences in the field.

Compounding and Duplicative Effect of Gendered Institutions

Finally, flexibility and mobility underpin international affairs, and are a core reason why gendered institutions have a compounding effect on women at different stages of their career. While the analysis of gendered institutions has often remained focused on one particular set of institutions or one institutional context, the reality for many women across international affairs is that the field is particularly complicated by

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[70] Waylen, "Informal Institutions, Institutional Change, and Gender Equality."

[71] Particularly where agency gender strategies are reinforced by equitable and supportive home environments and international law or guidelines like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Sustainable Development Goals or gender equal mandates in international fora.

[72] It is acknowledged that this reflects the treaty drafting conventions of the time when gender equal or neutral language was non-existent and all treaties (except when explicitly with women) would have used "he", "his", and "him". The way in which the Convention is interpreted by states and courts would likely reflect more contemporary values; however, the rigidity and explicit gendering remains part of the overarching context within which participants work. Despite agency-specific or APS-wide policies that now use gender-neutral language and act as the more immediate policies or formal rules-in-use for the selection of representatives, the overarching weight and prestige of the Vienna Convention still holds. At least contemporarily, this is problematic given the discursive role language has in shaping social reality, and given that androcentric language and androcentrism maintains a gender imbalance "by obscuring male advantage as simply a gender-neutral standard."

April Bailey, Marianne LaFrance and John F Dovidio, "Is Man the Measure of All Things? A Social Cognitive Account of Androcentrism," *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, Vol 23, 4 (2019), p. 308.

[73] Waylen, "Informal Institutions, Institutional Change"; Waylen, *Gender and Informal Institutions*.

gendered challenges that affect women at every turn, and have a compounding effect on women over a lifetime of posting and progression cycles.

Across the agencies, enormous flexibility was required of participants in order to deal with: different cultural norms; organisational norms; chains of command; political requirements; diplomatic protocol; emergency and rapidly changing protocol; gendered expectations of their colleagues; gendered expectations of their counterparts; gendered expectations of their family; education systems for children; workplaces for spouses; transport systems; safety requirements in countries with varying levels of social and political safety, particularly concerning for LGBTI+ women and women with children; and the externalised costs of the whole system that continued to depend on the unpaid labour of women and institutionalised forms of feminised sacrifice. Mobility was also a key part of women's experiences, determined by the logistical ability to deploy in the first place, as well as the need to travel in-country and across regions with little notice when emergencies break out. Mobility placed extraordinary demands on individuals and their support systems, particularly for women who tended to bear the responsibility for child-rearing, care for elderly or sick relatives, organisation of education and healthcare, and even domestic labour in the form of cooking dinners and preparing lunches.

These demands of flexibility and mobility are combined with the layering and duplication of rules and institutions across multiple contexts — individual, agency, field, home, and host contexts — which are combined *again* with individual timing. Gendered challenges were experienced differently for women on the pathway to posting, compared with being on posting, and returning from posting. Similarly, gendered institutions were experienced differently at each of the stages of women's careers — with women often at the mercy of gendered institutions *most* when their power was *least*. This compounding effect of gendered challenges was evidently too much for some women, at some points. Key periods when women left their agencies, or were considering leaving their agencies, were often after returning from posting (sometimes involving returning from post early to do so). This was both a good career move in terms of leaving after completing an international posting that added to their skills and experiences, and a pragmatic move indicative of women coming to the end of their ability to cope with the extraordinary demands that international representation placed on them.

Conclusion

This article has both characterised the extent of women's under-representation in Australian international affairs and sought to understand why women continue to be under-represented. Women may no longer be severely under-represented across some spheres of international affairs; however, it is clear that gendered norms continue to affect women's experiences and representation, sometimes with devastating consequences in terms of career and personal development. Feminist institutionalist theory demonstrates that there is a deep pervasiveness of gender across international affairs — a field teeming with complex and multifaceted rules that challenge women at every turn. Despite recent turns in Australian foreign policy and an overall rise in women's representation, gendered rules and norms continue to affect women. Historical legacies, layering and duplication of gendered challenges, and the compounding effect of these challenges at different points of women's lives and posting cycles are a leading reason why women remain under-represented and experience government differently. Gendered institutions endure through fluidity, adeptly adapting to changing social

norms and operational realities, resulting in gendered challenges that may have changed shape, but not necessarily nature.

Furthermore, analysing the agencies demonstrates that some agencies provide more optimal circumstances for women leaders than others. The militaristic-bureaucratic characterisation of Australian international affairs agencies helps us to understand the gender inequalities that remain, with findings conforming to the literature that posits that more militaristic agencies are some of the most male-dominated agencies of the state,[74] evidencing the lowest levels of women across the agencies studied. However, this article has also established that more militaristic agencies are also correlated with women's highest chances of actually reaching leadership and overseas deployment, proportional to their opportunity. This is a significant finding, particularly as women in Australia's premier agency for international affairs, DFAT, evidenced both the lowest chance of gaining international leadership and the lowest chance of gaining SES representation (proportional to opportunity) out of all the agencies studied.

It is important to note that more militaristic agencies are not "worse" for women, nor are more bureaucratic agencies "better" for women. All demonstrate pervasive forms of gender inequality that over time have changed by varying degrees in shape and form, but not necessarily nature. Progress is being made, in some cases to significant effect. It is, however, clear that Australian international affairs remains persistently and extensively gendered.

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[74] Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*; Tickner, *Gender and International Relations*; Australian Human Rights Commission, "Review into the Treatment of Women in the Australian Defence Force: Audit Report," 2014, *https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/adf-audit-2014.pdf*; Elizabeth Broderick and Co, "Cultural Change: Gender Diversity and Inclusion in the Australian Federal Police," 2016, *https://www.afp.gov.au/sites/default/files/PDF/Reports/Cultural-Change-Report-2016.pdf*