Chapter 1.

Introduction: Explaining the rising tide of gender equality

During the late twentieth century the issue of gender equality once again became a major issue on the global agenda. The UN Decade for Women, which ended in 1985, initiated the integration of women into development, triggering the formation of thousands of women’s organization and networking them across the world. The trend accelerated during the next decade. In 1993, the Vienna World Conference proclaimed that women’s rights were human rights. And the 1994 Cairo International Conference on Population and Development placed women’s empowerment and health at the center of sustainable development programs. Two years later, the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women adopted a platform seeking to promote and protect the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all women. Although there has been substantial progress towards gender equality in much of the world, great disparities persist, as systematic indicators demonstrate.

In many places, most women’s lives remain wretched. Afghanistan was among the most oppressive regimes, with women and girls living under an extreme version of Islamic law introduced by the Taliban. They were denied education, barred from the workplace, unable to venture out in public without a male companion and the full head-to-toe covering of the burqa. They suffered from limited access to health care including laws forbidding treatment of women by male doctors, and pervasive threats of domestic and state-legitimated violence. Few regimes are so draconian, but women in many societies face endemic and substantial gender gaps in the division of household responsibilities, in access to educational opportunities and economic resources, as well as in legal and political barriers to positions of political power. Indicators of well being ranging from literacy and longevity, to labor force participation and poverty rates, and child mortality and schooling all reveal persistent disparities between women and men. Some societies experienced a mixture of progress and regression, as new entrepreneurial opportunities arose for women, following market liberalization in post-Communist Europe—along with weakened social safety nets for poorer families. In contrast, other countries have achieved major gains in legal, economic and political gender equality that are probably irreversible. Sweden exemplifies a society where women experience the highest level of parliamentary representation of any nation in the world, along with gender parity in secondary schooling and paid employment, and extensive parental rights and childcare facilities. Although such contrasts in women’s lives around the globe are well established; the reasons are not. What explains the disparities between the leaders and laggards in gender equality?

Economic Growth and Human Development

One approach common in the 1960s and early 1970s emphasized economic growth as the most effective strategy for achieving human development and improvements in the living conditions and status of women. After World War II, optimism abounded that the world could be rebuilt to end poverty, injustice and ignorance, improving women’s lives as an inevitable part of development. Walt Rostow’s influential 1960 book, *The Stages of Economic Growth*, suggested that human progress was driven by a dialectic that could be accelerated. The end of colonial rule in many parts of Africa, Asia and the Caribbean was seen as a major opportunity to transform prosperity and democracy in these societies. Greater affluence was expected to facilitate freedom from want and fear due to an expansion in health care and nutrition, schools and housing, jobs and basic social protection, increasing the urban middle classes and laying the social foundations for the consolidation of democratic institutions and civic society. Growth was seen as the panacea that would lift all boats, and it was often implicitly assumed that this included endemic problems of women’s literacy and education, their poverty, low pay, and occupational segregation in the workforce, their care-giving responsibilities in the home and family, and their participation and representation in the political system. The hope that economic development will automatically
benefit women in poorer societies continues to be heard. At its most simple, this proposition is often taken for granted as self-evident. After all, in the examples we have cited, Sweden is one of the richest societies in the world, with a per capita income of $26,000 per year while the figure for Afghanistan is around $800. Do these countries’ striking differences in gender equality simply reflect their differing degrees of development?

But by the end of the twentieth century, the limitations of growth alone were clear. Numerous anomalies are obvious even to the casual observer; Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Quatar, for instance, are about as rich as Sweden in per capita GDP, but women in these societies cannot stand for office or even vote, and they have narrowly restricted rights and opportunities outside the home: it is illegal for women to drive in Saudi Arabia, and the Middle East and North Africa have the lowest rates of female labor force participation in the world. Conditions for women are more favorable in some poorer nations. In India, for example, although women’s rights are also limited in many important ways, about 800,000 women serve in local government, with one-third of all local council seats reserved for them. Broader experience confirms that gender equality in elected office continues to lag behind in the transitional ‘Asian tigers’ as well as in many high growth states in Latin America. Even in the most affluent societies around the world, such as the United States, France and Japan, where women have made substantial gains in access to universities, company boardrooms, and the professions, there has been minimal progress for women in government—while in contrast in South Africa women comprise almost one third of all parliamentarians, ranking this nation as 11th worldwide in the proportion of women the lower house. It has become apparent that problems of gender equality are more complex, and intractable than the early developmental theorists assumed. Growing affluence does tend to generate the expansion of literacy and schooling, the establishment of the social protection safety net, and the rise of white-collar jobs in the service sector, but this process is neither inevitable nor does it necessarily automatically benefit women’s lives.

The Role of the State: Human Rights, Legal Reforms, and Political Institutions

Recognizing the limitations of economic strategies alone, during the 1980s and 1990s attention among the international women’s movement and in official bodies like the United Nations and European Union turned increasingly towards the role of the state in reinforcing or alleviating institutional barriers to women’s progress, and the need to establish political, social and economic rights to secure gender equality through legal reform and the courts. There was also a shift in the literature around this period from focusing upon the problems facing women’s well-being towards emphasizing the active role of women’s agency and voice in helping women to attain equal rights, such as to earn an independent income, to find employment outside the home, to have ownership rights, to become literate, and to participate in community decision-making. The independence and empowerment of women became understood as an integral part of the development process, so that women could articulate their own wants and needs.

In many countries legal rights for women remain limited; a comprehensive review of legislation in over 100 countries by Humana found that in the early 1990s women still lacked many basic rights, such as to own land, manage property, conduct business, and even travel without spousal consent. In much of sub-Saharan Africa, women have land rights through their husband as long as marriage endures, but lose this property when divorced or widowed. In Turkey, until a recent reform of the civil code, a wife needed her husband’s consent to work outside the home, women were not entitled to sue for divorce, to claim alimony, or to retain their maiden name. In Egypt and Jordan, women need their husband’s permission to travel. In Ireland it remains illegal to have an abortion except in extremely limited circumstances (where the mother’s life is in danger). In established democracies women have had the legal franchise for many decades -- since the 1920s in most Protestant countries and since the 1950s in most Catholic ones. But in newer democracies, such as Namibia and South Africa, most women have only recently acquired voting rights. And laws restricting women’s rights to vote and to run for
office persist in a handful of Middle Eastern countries, including Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

The United Nations has encouraged states to recognize women’s rights, most importantly through the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 and subsequently signed by 165 nation-states. This Convention emphasizes the importance of equal participation of women with men in public life. The women’s movement in many nations emphasized the need for equal opportunity and affirmative action strategies through reforming institutional barriers, removing structural biases, and altering the rules of the game to get women into positions of elected office. A particularly effective means to do so has been through the use of quotas in the selection of female parliamentary candidates, which has recently been adopted in many West European, Asian and Latin American countries, and the parity program adopted in France. Policies designed to prevent sex discrimination, to secure equal pay, maternity and reproductive rights, and to increase opportunities for women in the workforce and education, have been adopted in many countries, and the role of the state is now widely understood to be central in actively consolidating and reinforcing gender equality.

These strategies have secured concrete gains for women in many nations, particularly when government agencies or the courts have effectively implemented legal reforms and policy initiatives. Changing the ‘rules of the game’ can have a dramatic impact on women’s lives, accelerating progress and opening new opportunities. Yet at the same time there can be a substantial gap between the recognition of de jure formal rights and actual practice. Many governments have signed international conventions pledging themselves to equal opportunities in political representation, and political leaders, official bodies, and administrative agencies have often declared themselves in favor of this principle, along with groups in civic society like trade unions and parties, yet in the world as a whole, women remain far from parity at the apex of power, as heads of state at Prime Ministerial and Presidential levels, in the executive branch as ministers and as senior public officials, and in national parliaments. In the same way, CEDAW recognizes the importance of equality in the paid labor force. Yet although many governments have signed up to this principle, in practice women are disproportionately likely to have low-wage jobs, because of persistent occupational segregation and wage discrimination by sex, as well as lack of child care for working mothers, and in most countries women in management and corporate boardrooms continue to encounter a glass ceiling. Even in liberal countries like Sweden and Norway, segregation in the typical jobs held by women and men remains common. Statutory reform and formal recognition of women’s rights in international bodies are symbolic gains, which is an important advance in itself, but they are seldom sufficient to effect substantial social change if the capacity or the political will to implement these reforms remains weak.

Cultural Barriers

Economic growth and legal-institutional reforms are both important in any long-term comprehensive strategy to promote gender equality. But, as this book will demonstrate, in addition, culture matters, and indeed it matters a lot. Perceptions of the appropriate division of roles in the home and family, paid employment, and the political sphere are shaped by the predominant culture – the social norms, beliefs and values existing in any society – that in turn rest on levels of societal modernization and religious traditions. ‘Gender’ refers to socially constructed roles and learned behavior of women and men associated with the biological characteristics of females and males. In many societies, rigid gender roles determine the rights, resources and powers of women and men, notably the division of labor in the home and workplace. In others, men and women’s roles are more interchangeable, and innate biological differences lead to fewer social expectations. Where a culture of gender equality predominates, it provides a climate where de jure legal rights are more likely to be translated into de facto rights in practice; where institutional reforms are implemented in the workplace and public sphere, where
women embrace expanded opportunities in literacy, education and employment, and where the traditional roles of women and men are transformed within the household and family. Moreover the critical importance of culture is that women as well as men share the predominant attitudes, values and beliefs about the appropriate division of sex roles within any society. Where traditional values prevail, women are not just limited by society in terms of the opportunities they seek, but they also choose to limit themselves. Cultural change is not sufficient by itself for gender equality, - a limitation not always sufficiently recognized by the consciousness-raising individualistic focus of the women’s movement in the 1960s. But we argue that cultural change is a necessary condition for gender equality: women first need to change themselves before they can hope to change society. In turn, cultural change lays the basis for the mass mobilization of women’s movements and support for public policies that reinforce, consolidate and accelerate the process of gender equality.

At one level, there is nothing particularly new or startling about this claim. A mainstream tradition in sociology, anthropology, history and social psychology has long theorized that cross-cultural differences in beliefs about gender roles differ greatly in societies around the globe, even among societies at similar levels of socioeconomic development such as Sweden, Britain and the United States, on one hand; or India, the Philippines, and Indonesia, on the other. Feminist movements in many countries have also long emphasized cultural differences in family and sex roles, and the critical importance of changing traditional patriarchal norms for transforming relationships between the sexes. Most support for this thesis has come from qualitative evidence, often based on personal interviews, participant observation, and case studies. Comparative analysis of aggregate indicators has also revealed the substantial contrasts in the lives and roles of women and men worldwide. Nevertheless systematic survey evidence monitoring cultural attitudes towards gender equality across many societies remains scattered and inconclusive, with most studies limited to a handful of affluent postindustrial societies and established democracies in Western Europe and North America. While it is widely assumed that culture matters, it remains unclear how much it matters in comparison with levels of societal development and legal-institutional structures; and we know even less about how these factors interact in the long-term process of value change. This book demonstrates that cultural traditions are remarkably enduring in shaping men and women's worldviews; nevertheless glacial shifts are taking place that move systematically away from traditional values, towards more egalitarian sex roles. This shift is intimately related to the processes of societal modernization and to generational replacement. Moreover we also demonstrate that culture matters: where there are more egalitarian attitudes these are systematically related to the actual condition of women and men's lives. We acknowledge that this is not a simple one-way direction of causality, rather this is an interactive process, because changes in our lives affect our underlying attitudes and values. But we also demonstrate that cultural change is not an ad hoc and erratic process, rather patterns of human development and societal modernization underpin attitudinal shifts. The broad direction of value change is predictable although the pace is conditioned by the cultural legacy and institutional structure in any given society, exemplified by the role of an Islamic heritage in the Middle East, the legacy of Communism in Central Europe, and the egalitarian traditions in Scandinavia.

To develop these arguments, this book examines evidence of a rising tide of support for gender equality in over seventy societies around the world and then explores the causes of this cultural shift and its consequences for women's political power, including their civic engagement, support for the women's movement, and political representation. This introduction first develops the core theoretical argument and then outlines the research design, providing details about (1) the four waves of the World Values survey carried out from 1981 to 2001, (2) the comparative framework and societal classification used here, and (3) the time period used for trend analysis. The final section outlines the book and summarizes the contents of subsequent chapters.
Societal Modernization and Cultural Change

The revised version of modernization theory developed in this book hypothesizes that human development brings changed cultural attitudes towards gender equality in virtually any society that experiences the various forms of modernization linked with economic development. Modernization brings systematic, predictable changes in gender roles. The impact of modernization operates in two key phases:

i. Industrialization brings women into the paid work force and dramatically reduces fertility rates. Women attain literacy and greater educational opportunities. Women are enfranchised and begin to participate in representative government, but still have far less power than men.

ii. The postindustrial phase brings a shift toward greater gender equality as women rise in management and the professions, and gain political influence within elected and appointed bodies. Over half of the world has not yet entered this phase; only the more advanced industrial societies are currently moving on this trajectory.

These two phases correspond to two major dimensions of cross-cultural variation that will be described in more detail in the final chapter: (i) A transition from Traditional to Secular-rational values; and (ii) A transition from Survival to Self-expression values. The decline of the traditional family is linked with the first dimension. The rise of gender equality is linked with the second. Cultural shifts in modern societies are not sufficient by themselves to guarantee women equality across all major dimensions of life; nevertheless through underpinning structural reforms and women’s rights they greatly facilitate this process.

Modernization theories suggest that economic, cultural and political changes go together in coherent ways, so that industrialization brings broadly similar trajectories, even if situation-specific factors make it impossible to predict exactly what will happen in a given society: certain changes become increasingly likely to occur, but the changes are probabilistic, not deterministic. Modernization theories originated in the work of Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim. These ideas were revived and popularized in the late 1950s and early 1960s by Seymour Martin Lipset, Daniel Lerner, Walt Rostow, and Karl Deutsch. These writers argued that the shift from agrarian agriculture towards industrial production leads towards growing prosperity, higher levels of education, and urbanization, which in turn lay the social foundations for democratic participation in the political system. Traditional societies are characterized by subsistence livelihoods largely based on farming, fishing, extraction and unskilled work, with low levels of literacy and education, predominately agrarian populations, minimum standards of living, and restricted social and geographic mobility. Citizens in agrarian societies are strongly rooted to local communities through ties of ‘blood and belonging’, including those of kinship, family, ethnicity and religion, as well as long-standing cultural bonds. The shift from traditional agrarian society towards industrialized society concerns the move from agricultural production to manufacturing, from farms to factories, from peasants to workers. Social trends accompanying these developments, as illustrated in Figure 1.1, include migration to metropolitan conurbations, the rise of the working class and urban bourgeoisie, rising living standards, the separation of church and state, increasing penetration of the mass media, the growth of Weberian bureaucratization and rational-legal authority in the state, the foundations of the early welfare state and the spread of primary schooling. This phase occurred in the Industrial Revolution in Britain during the mid-to-late 18th Century and spread throughout the Western world during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The early developmental theorists emphasized a range of social trends that commonly accompanied the process of industrialization, including changes in traditional sex roles, the family and marriage.

[Figure 1.1 about here]
In the early 1970s, Daniel Bell popularized the view that after a certain period of industrialization a further distinct stage of development could be distinguished, as a non-linear process, in the rise of postindustrial societies. For Bell the critical tipping point was reached when the majority of the work force moved from manufacturing into the service sector, working as lawyers, bankers, financial analysts, technologists, scientists, and professionals employed in the knowledge industries. The now-familiar social and economic shifts characterizing post-industrial societies are listed in Figure 1. They include the rise of a highly educated, skilled and specialized workforce, the population shifts from urban to suburban neighborhoods and greater geographic mobility including immigration across national borders, rising living standards and growing leisure time, rapid scientific and technological innovation, the expansion and fragmentation of mass media channels, technologies and markets, the growth of multilayered governance with power shifting away from the nation state towards global and local levels, market liberalization and the expansion of non-profit social protection schemes, the erosion of the traditional nuclear family, and growing equality of sex roles within the home, family and workforce.

There is a broad consensus that certain socioeconomic developments have been sweeping across many societies, although alternative interpretations dispute the exact nature, periodization, and the appropriate weight given to different components. There remains considerable controversy, however, concerning the consequences of these changes, in particular the probable impact of the modernization process on gender equality. Why would we expect these changes in socioeconomic conditions to go hand-in-hand with cultural shifts? In a series of works, Inglehart has demonstrated how the evolution from agrarian to industrial to postindustrial societies brings about two coherent, predictable, and interrelated dimensions of change: (i) socioeconomic changes in the process of production, as Bell claimed, and also (ii) a transformation in societal cultures, including rising emphasis in postindustrial societies on the pursuit of quality of life values rather than material concerns. We see economic, political and cultural changes as evolving together in coherent trajectories, without claiming, as Marx did, that the changes in the processes of economic production drive the superstructure of value change, or that, conversely, cultural processes like the rise of Protestantism cause the socioeconomic developments, as Weber argued. We view these causal processes as reciprocal.

People living near the subsistence level tend to be primarily concerned with the basic struggle for survival when facing the unpredictable risks of disease, literacy and malnutrition, infant mortality, ethnic conflict and civil war, unsafe drinking water, and the spread of AIDS/HIV. Women and children are among the most vulnerable populations in these societies, not only because they are a high-risk population, but also because they are usually dependent on a male breadwinner. Of the world’s 6 billion people, the World Bank estimates that 1.2 billion live on less than $1 a day. Global poverty fell substantially during the 1990s, mainly driven by high economic growth in some larger nations like China and India, but extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa worsened. Levels of infant mortality have reduced around the globe, but the problem remains substantial; in 1998 there were 105 deaths per 1000 live births in societies with low human development. Basic problems of survival are starkly illustrated by average life expectancy; in agrarian societies on average people can expect to live for 59 years, twenty years less than in postindustrial societies. Opportunities for social and geographic mobility are limited by minimal literacy and schooling, especially common for girls and women.

In this context, Inglehart argues, poorer people in low-income societies tend to give top priority to meeting subsistence and survival needs. In richer countries, public policies provide subsistence-level incomes, adequate housing, and effective health care. In pre-industrial societies, without state services to cushion unpredictable blows, most people’s lives are highly vulnerable to risks of unemployment, ill health, poor crops, and violent crime, as well as disasters like floods, earthquakes, and famine. Societies whose people live with high levels of insecurity tend to develop cultures mistrustful of rapid change, emphasizing the values of traditional authority and strong leadership, inherited social status, and communal ties and obligations,
backed up by social sanctions and norms derived from religious authorities. In these societies, the traditional two-parent family with its division of sex-roles between male breadwinner and female caregivers, is crucial for the survival of children, and therefore society. Social norms buttress traditional family values and patriarchal norms of male dominance, strongly discouraging divorce, abortion, and homosexuality, and instilling negative attitudes towards an independent economic role for women outside of the household. The legal structure, involving property, marital, and citizenship rights for women, reflects these traditional norms. Pre-industrial societies emphasize childbearing and childrearing as the central goals of any woman, her most important function in life, and her greatest source of satisfaction and status. Given their very high rates of infant and child mortality, high rates of reproduction are emphasized in preindustrial societies, and large extended families provide a source of subsistence and protection for the parents in old age, as well as for the transmission of land and property. In peasant societies, women usually work within the home, primarily in the production and preparation of food, and in childcare. Even in these societies, there may be conflict between the social norms shaping the appropriate division of sex roles and the actual life-experiences of women and men, particularly if the male loses the capacity to act as the major breadwinner of the household, or if the woman heads a single parent family.

The rise of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution brought challenges to traditional values, and a worldview that encouraged achieved not ascribed status, individualism rather than community, innovation instead of continuity with tradition, and increasingly secular rather than religious social beliefs. The traditional roles of women taking prime responsibility for care of children and the elderly continued, but during the 19th and early 20th centuries more and more women in industrial societies entered the paid labor force, mainly in factories and white-collar clerical and retail jobs, and attained greater legal rights to own property, to divorce, and to vote. Fertility rates and the size of the average family fell, reflecting the availability of safe contraception, and improvements in health care reduced the risks of infant mortality, and because large extended families were no longer so crucial for protection in old age. People’s lives became less vulnerable to sudden disaster, as savings and insurance schemes developed to hedge against economic risks. The rise of local cooperatives, unions, building societies and savings and loan schemes, and the development of social protection by philanthropic voluntary organizations and the state, helped cover the worst problems of sickness, ill-health, unemployment, and old age.

In the period after World War II, post-industrial societies developed unprecedented levels of prosperity and economic security, with rising standards of living fuelled by steady economic growth, despite occasional cyclical downturns. Governments in these societies expanded the role of the welfare state to provide greater social protection for the worst-off citizens; more recently, health care, pensions, and care of the elderly have been contracted out to the non-profit and private sectors, under state regulation. In conditions of greater existential security, Inglehart theorizes, public concern about the material issues of unemployment, healthcare, and housing no longer takes top priority. Instead in advanced industrial societies the public has given increasingly high priority to quality of life issues, individual autonomy and self-expression, the need for environmental protection, and direct participation in political decision-making through petitions, protests and demonstrations. Cultural shifts have transformed not only political life, but also personal life, and nowhere more so than in the erosion of the traditional two-parent nuclear family, liberalizing patterns of sexual behavior, marriage and divorce, and bringing wider acceptance among both women and men of greater gender equality in the home, workforce and public sphere. Women are less restricted to attaining status and fulfillment through the traditional route of family, marriage, and children, as alternative opportunities for self-expression and financial autonomy have become available. These changing norms have given rise to political demands, fuelling support for the second wave feminist movement, and legal reforms associated with securing equal opportunities and women’s rights. In short, the rising tide of support for
gender equality in postindustrial societies is part of a broader and coherent culture shift that is transforming economically developed societies. Although the broad outlines of this shift are predictable, not every society responds to these developments in exactly the same ways: as we will demonstrate, society’s traditional cultural heritage helps shape contemporary social change. Each society’s values and religious beliefs, its institutions and leaders, and the structure of the state, all help shape this process in ways that differ from one society to another. Moreover even in rich societies, some groups fall through the social safety net, producing disparities between rich and poor.

If this theory is correct, and cultural shifts are coherent and predictable, then five specific propositions follow—each of which can (and will) be tested in this study.

(i) **Cross-national comparisons:**
First, if coherent cultural patterns tend to be associated with specific levels of socioeconomic development, then postmodern values of gender equality will be most widespread in the most affluent and secure societies; conversely, the publics of poorer preindustrial societies will systematically be most likely to emphasize traditional gender roles. The fact that we have data from more than 70 countries, covering the full range of variance from low-income societies to affluent postindustrial societies, will make it possible to test this hypothesis in a more conclusive fashion than has ever before been possible.

(ii) **Sectoral comparisons:**
Within any given society, postmodern values of gender equality will be most evident among the most secure, that is, the wealthier, better educated sectors of the public. The less secure strata will prove most traditional in their attitudes towards women.

(iii) **Gender comparisons:**
Women and men are expected to differ in their values and attitudes towards gender equality, with women proving more supportive of gender equality, especially in postindustrial societies. In traditional societies, both men and women often accept substantial gender inequalities. But societal modernization has transforming everyone’s life experience, especially that of women’s, reducing their vulnerability, generating greater financial autonomy, expanding literacy and educational opportunities, and strengthening the social safety net, especially for maternal and child care, reproductive control, and provision for the elderly.

(iv) **Generational comparisons:**
In societies that have experienced sustained periods of rising economic growth and physical security (such as Germany, the United States and Japan), or very rapid economic growth (such as South Korea and Taiwan), we expect to find substantial differences in the values held by older and younger generations. The young should be most egalitarian in their attitudes towards sex roles while the older cohorts will believe in more traditional roles for women and men, and the generation gap should be particularly large for women. We predict that the younger generation of women will hold the most egalitarian gender values within given societies, while the older generation of women will prove the most traditional. But societal values do not change overnight; instead there is a substantial time lag because adults tend to retain the norms, values and beliefs that were instilled during their pre-adult years. Since, according to our hypotheses, these generational differences are linked with economic growth, we do not expect to find equally large generational differences in
societies that have not experienced major increases in real GNP per capita over the last several decades (for example, Nigeria or Zimbabwe).

(v) Religious legacies

Finally, we anticipate that religious legacies will leave a strong imprint on contemporary values. In particular, controlling for a society's level of GNP/capita and structure of the workforce, we expect that the publics of Islamic societies will be less supportive of gender equality than the publics of other societies.

In considering patterns of trends over time in changing values towards gender equality, the ‘convergence model’ suggests that the changes in men and women’s lives in the home, workforce and political sphere occurred first in postindustrial societies, driven by structural shifts in the workforce and educational opportunities, generating the women’s movement in the 1960s and 1970s, but that in the long-term laggard societies will gradually catch up as the culture shift ripples around the globe. The process of globalization has accelerated the recognition of women’s rights, as well as the process of democratization. In the short-term, however, value change has widened the cultural differences between postindustrial and agrarian societies, including between women living in these types of societies.

The Comparative Framework

To examine the evidence for these predictions, this study follows Prezeworski and Teune’s ‘most different systems’ research design, seeking to maximize contrasts among a wide range of societies to distinguish systematic clusters of characteristics associated with different dimensions of gender equality. Some important trade-offs are involved in this approach, notably the loss of contextual depth that can come from focusing on one nation, or study of a few similar countries. But the strategy of carrying out broad comparisons has major advantages. Most importantly, it allows us to examine whether, as theories of societal modernization claim, basic values seem to shift along with the shift from traditional agrarian societies, with largely illiterate and poor populations, through industrial economies based on manufacturing base, with a growing urban working class, to post-industrial economies based on a large service sector middle class. And since it allows us to compare societies with sharply differing religious legacies, political systems, and democratic traditions, it enables us to analyze the role of these other, conceivably very important, factors.

Human development is also a complicated, multifaceted process of social transformation, including changes in the economy with the shift from agricultural production and extraction to industrial production and the rise of the service sector; in society with the growth of education, affluence and leisure, life expectancy and health, urbanization and suburbanization, the spread of the mass media, and changes in family structures and community social networks; and in politics with the process of democratization. Not all these developments necessarily go hand-in-hand in advancing the position of women in every society. The early stages of industrialization, for example, may expand literacy and educational opportunities for women, and yet may simultaneously weaken the informal extended family support networks available in agrarian communities. Structural adjustments in developing countries may produce efficiency gains in the longer-term, but may also disproportionately hurt women’s interests. The democratic transition in the post-Communist world opened up new opportunities for political rights and civic liberties, but the abandonment of gender quotas in elected office simultaneously sharply reduced the number of women in parliament. In affluent nations like the United States, Japan and France, women have advanced in management and the professions further and faster than in legislatures and cabinet. One difficulty is that the abstract concept of ‘societal modernization’ encompasses many complex dimensions of social change, including cross-cutting developments, some of which, like the growth of white-collar occupations and education, expand opportunities for
women, while others create new inequalities, like privatization and the contraction of social protection.

**Type of Societies**

Before moving on to consider the evidence we need to clarify the core typologies used to classify types of societies and states. Overall for the global comparison 191 nation-states were classified according to levels of societal modernization. The Human Development Index produced annually by the UNDP provides the standard 100-point scale of societal modernization, combining levels of knowledge (adult literacy and education), health (life expectancy at birth), and standard of living (real per capita GDP). This measure is widely used in the development literature and it has the advantage of providing a broader and more reliable indicator of societal well-being than monetary estimates based on levels of affluence or financial wealth. Using the 1998 Human Development Index, ‘postindustrial societies’ were defined as the twenty most affluent states around the world, ranking with a HDI score over .900 and mean per capita GDP of $29,585. ‘Industrial societies’ are classified as the 58 nations with a moderate HDI (ranging from .740 to .899) and a moderate per capita GDP of $6,314. Lastly, ‘agrarian societies’ are the 97 nations with lower levels of development (HDI of 739 or below) and mean per capita GDP of $1,098.

To see how far this classification predicts broader patterns of development, Table 1.1 illustrates some of the contrasts in the most common indicators of social well-being. The classic definition of post-industrial societies emphasizes the shift in production from fields and factories towards the service sector. Almost two-thirds of GNP in the societies classified as post-industrial derives from the service sector, but this figure falls to only 45% in agrarian societies. Table 1.1 shows how levels of urbanization, literacy, education and life expectancy systematically vary across the classification of different types of society. Perhaps the clearest contrast is in life expectancy: a person living in the average postindustrial society can expect to live to 78 years, as compared with only 59 years in agrarian societies. Table 1.2 summarizes two basic indicators of change in levels of societal development from 1980 to 1998. The Human Development Index shows that there have been some gains in all societies during the last twenty years. Nevertheless the disparities in levels of human development have scarcely closed at all between societies currently classified as postindustrial and agrarian. The per capita GDP in postindustrial societies has grown far faster than in industrial societies, and agrarian nations have made no gains. In the next chapter, this initial classification is discussed further, and comparisons are drawn between this measure of societal modernization and the UNDP Gender-related Development Index (GDI) that takes into account the overall level of societal modernization and the disparities that can exist between women and men even in affluent societies, as well as the Dikkstra and Hanmer Relative Status of Women (RSW) index, which measures gender equality within countries.

[Tables 1.1 and 1.2 about here]

**Type of States**

Over the years numerous attempts have been made to develop effective measures of a society’s level of democracy. It should be noted that alternative measures emphasize different components, and all the alternative indices suffer from certain conceptual or methodological flaws. Nevertheless one recent review concluded that, despite these differences, in practice there was considerable similarity in the rank order correlations of nations across different indices. The Gastil index, a 7-point scale used by Freedom House, has become widely accepted as a standard measure providing a basic classification of political rights and civil liberties. We adopt this measure because it has the advantage of comprehensive coverage, including all nation-states and independent territories around the globe, as well as the ability to use it for time-series
analysis, since the Index has been published every year since the early 1970s. We have reversed the Gastil scale in the analysis for ease of interpretation, so that a higher score represents higher levels of democracy. We are also interested in how long democracy has endured in given societies. To obtain a measure of length of democratic stability, we use the annual Freedom House ratings produced from 1972-2000. We define as older democracies the 39 states around the world with at least twenty years continuous experience of democracy from 1980-2000 and a Freedom House rating of 5.5 to 7.0 in the most recent estimate. We classify as newer democracies the 43 states with less than twenty years experience with democracy and a current Freedom House rating of 5.5 to 7.0. Another 47 states were classified as semi-democracies (Freedom House describes them as ‘partly-free;’ others use the terms, ‘transitional’ or ‘consolidating’ democracies); these states have been democratic for less than twenty years and have current Freedom House ratings of 3.5 to 5.5. Non-democracies are the remaining 62 states, with a Freedom House score in 1999-2000 from 1.0 to 3.0; they include military-backed dictatorships, authoritarian states, elitist oligarchies, and absolute monarchies. Appendix A lists the classifications of nations used throughout the book, based on these measures. Clearly there is considerable overlap between human and democratic development at the top of the scale; many older democracies are also affluent postindustrial societies. But the pattern of states among industrial and agrarian societies shows a far more complex pattern, with newer democracies, semi-democracies and non-democracies at different levels of socioeconomic development.

The World Values Survey

The analysis of cultural attitudes is based upon the World Values Surveys (WVS), a global investigation of socio-cultural and political change. The study has carried out representative national surveys of the basic values and beliefs of publics in more than 70 nation states on all six inhabited continents (see Figure 1.2), containing in total 4.7 billion people or over 80% of the world’s population. It builds on the European Values Surveys, first carried out in 22 countries in 1981. A second wave of surveys, in 41 nations, was completed in 1990-1991, a third wave was carried out in 55 nations in 1995-1996, and a fourth wave with 53 nations took place in 1999-2001 (see Table A2). The pooled survey used in this book includes almost one quarter million respondents, facilitating sub-group analysis even for minority groups. The survey includes some of the most affluent market economies in the world such as the U.S., Japan and Switzerland, with per capita annual incomes as high as $40,000 or more; together with middle-level industrializing countries such as Taiwan, Brazil, and Turkey, as well as poorer agrarian societies, such as Uganda, Nigeria, and Viet Nam, with per capita annual incomes of $300 or less. Some smaller nations have populations below one million, such as Malta, Luxembourg and Iceland, while at the other extreme almost one billion people live in India, and there are over one billion in China. The pooled survey with all waves contains older democracies such as Australia, India and the Netherlands, newer democracies including El Salvador, Estonia and Taiwan, semi-democracies such as Russia, Brazil, and Turkey, as well as 11 non-democracies exemplified by Zimbabwe, Pakistan and Egypt. The transition process also varies markedly: some nations have experienced a rapid consolidation of democracy during the 1990s; today the Czech Republic, Latvia and Argentina currently rank as high in political rights and civil liberties as nations such as Belgium, the United States, and the Netherlands with a long tradition of democracy. The survey includes some of the first systematic data on public opinion in many Islamic states, including Jordan, Iran, Egypt, and Morocco. The most comprehensive coverage is available in Western Europe, North America and Scandinavia, where public opinion surveys have the longest tradition, but countries are included from all world regions, including five Sub Saharan African nations and five Middle Eastern states. The four waves of this survey took place from 1981 to 2001, although the same countries were not always included in each wave, so comparisons over the full period can be carried out in twenty societies. Data drawn from the Eurobarometer surveys, conducted bi-annually since 1970, and from the Political Action Study in the mid-1970s, facilitates longer-term comparisons.
The Plan of the Book

Based on these considerations, Chapter 2 goes on to analyze indirect attitudinal evidence of support for gender equality, including comparison among different types of societies. With remarkable consistency, we find that the publics of richer, post-industrial societies are much more likely to support gender equality than the publics of agrarian or industrial countries. Intergenerational differences, which are largest in postindustrial societies and relatively minor in agrarian societies, suggest that the former are undergoing intergenerational changes. Women in postindustrial societies, in particular, are deeply divided by generation in their support for gender equality. Lastly, support for gender equality in the political sphere, in the workplace, and in the home is also explained by many of the standard factors commonly associated with cultural shifts, including education, religiosity, marital status, and post-materialism.

Chapter 3 considers the role of religion in more depth. In particular, the process of societal modernization is path-specific, and is conditioned by the cultural heritage and structural context of a given society. This chapter demonstrates that the cross-sectional differences in support for gender equality vary even among societies at similar levels of human development, being shaped by factors such as the strength of religiosity and the type of religious values. Multivariate analysis probes into these factors in more depth and the chapter considers whether an Islamic religious heritage is the most powerful barrier to change.

Part II of the book examines the political consequences of the rising tide of gender equality. Chapter 4 examines evidence of the shift from the traditional to the modern gender gap in voting behavior. The chapter compares cross-national support for parties across the left-right spectrum among women and men and considers how far these differences reflect the same modernization and cultural factors that shape attitudes towards traditional gender roles. The study also examines generational patterns in the size of the gender gap.

One of the most intractable problems of gender equality concerns continuing male predominance in traditional political elites, such as in parties and parliaments. Chapter 5 goes on to compare gender differences in three dimensions of political participation: in traditional activism via election and parties; in civic activism through voluntary organizations, new social movements and community associations; and in protest activity such as signing petitions, taking part in boycotts, and demonstrations. The study shows how the major forces of modernization and cultural heritage affect these differences.

Chapter 6. Do similar factors lead to the familiar gender gap in political leadership, in terms of women as heads of state, cabinet ministers, and parliamentary representatives? This chapter compares women and men in national parliaments around the world. The analysis considers the reasons for the persistence of gender differences and the roles of societal modernization and of cultural legacies in explaining levels of female representation.

Chapter 7. The conclusion examines how far attitudes towards gender equality form part of a larger cultural shift towards self-expression values. The conclusion draws together the major findings from each of the chapters, and considers their implications for the transformation of women and men’s lives and for cultural change worldwide.
### Figure 1.1: Typology of Stages of Societal Modernization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>From Agrarian to Industrial Societies</th>
<th>From Industrial to Postindustrial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
<td>The population shift from agrarian villages to metropolitan conurbations.</td>
<td>The diffusion from urban areas to suburban neighborhoods. Greater social and geographic mobility, including immigration across national borders, generating the rise of more multicultural societies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human capital</strong></td>
<td>Growing levels of education, literacy and numeracy with the spread of basic schooling.</td>
<td>Rising levels of education, especially at secondary and university level, generating increased levels of human capital and cognitive skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workforce</strong></td>
<td>The shift from extraction and agriculture towards manufacturing and processing.</td>
<td>The rise of the professional and managerial occupations in the private and public sectors, and greater occupational specialization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Status</strong></td>
<td>The rise of the working class and the urban bourgeoisie, and the decline of peasant society and traditional landed interests.</td>
<td>The move from ascribed occupational and social roles given at birth towards achieved status derived from formal educational qualifications and careers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Living Conditions</strong></td>
<td>Growing standards of living, rising longevity, and expanding leisure time.</td>
<td>Economic growth fuelling an expanded middle class, rising living standards, improved longevity and health, and growing leisure time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Science and religion</strong></td>
<td>The industrial revolution in manufacturing production. Growing division of church and state. The diversification of religious sects and denominations.</td>
<td>Rapid technological and scientific innovations. The process of secularization weakening religious authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mass Media</strong></td>
<td>The wider availability of mass-circulation newspapers and periodicals, and, during the twentieth century, access to electronic mass media.</td>
<td>The shift in the mass media from mass broadcasting towards more specialized narrowcasting with the fragmentation of media outlets across markets and technologies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government</strong></td>
<td>The expansion of the franchise, the growth of Weberian bureaucratization and reliance on legal-rational authority in government.</td>
<td>The growth of multilayered governance, at the global and local levels, as well as the expansion in the non-profit sector.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Protection</strong></td>
<td>The development of the early foundations of the welfare state and the elements of social protection for sickness, unemployment and old age.</td>
<td>Market liberalization and the contraction of the state, displacing social protection increasingly to the non-profit and private sectors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family structures</strong></td>
<td>The shrinkage from extended to nuclear families, the gradual reduction in the fertility rate.</td>
<td>The erosion of the nuclear family, the growth of non-traditional households, and changing patterns of marriage and divorce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex roles</strong></td>
<td>The entry of more women into the paid workforce.</td>
<td>Growing equality of sex roles in the division of labor within the home, family and workplace, and the rise of women (especially married women) in the paid labor force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural values</strong></td>
<td>Material security, traditional authority, and communal obligations.</td>
<td>Quality of life issues, self-expression, individualism and post-materialism.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1.2: The societies contained in the pooled World Values Surveys, 1981-2001.
Table 1.1: Indicators of Societal Modernization, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Society</th>
<th>% GNP from services</th>
<th>% Urban Pop.</th>
<th>Life expectancy (years)</th>
<th>% Adult literacy</th>
<th>% Gross educational enrollment ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postindustrial</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>93.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>67.2</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>75.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agrarian</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>54.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Mean social indicators in 172 nations. See Technical Appendix A for the classification of nations and Appendix B for concepts and measures.
Table 1.2: Trends in societal modernization, 1980-1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Society</th>
<th>Human Development Index</th>
<th>Per Capita GDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postindustrial</td>
<td>.860</td>
<td>.918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>.742</td>
<td>.802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agrarian</td>
<td>.486</td>
<td>.564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>.625</td>
<td>.681</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Society</th>
<th>Older democracy</th>
<th>Newer democracy</th>
<th>Semi-democracy</th>
<th>Non-democratic</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postindustrial</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agrarian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>74</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The number of nations in each category. For details about the classifications see Appendix A.


32 Ibid. p.6.

contemporary societies: a cross-national comparison of the transition from male breadwinner to


35 C. Buchmann. 1996. ‘The debt crisis, structural adjustment and women's education -
Implications for status and social development.’ International Journal Of Comparative Sociology
37 (1-2): 5-30.

NY: M.E.Sharpe.

37 For discussion of the theoretical and policy relevance of the Human Development index, its
validity and the reliability of the data used in constructing the index, see The UNDP. UNDP
Human Development Report 1995. NY: Oxford University Press/UNDP; Mark McGillivray and
Howard White. 1993. ‘Measuring development? The UNDP's Human Development Index.’

38 See the Technical Appendix A at the end of the book for the detailed classification of all
nations. Note that this classification differs from that used by the UNDP, which uses a different
 distinction between medium and low level of human development.

39 A. Geske Dijkstra and Lucia C. Hanmer. 2000. ‘Measuring Socio-Economic Gender Inequality:
Toward An Alternative to the UNDP Gender-Related Development Index.’ Feminist Economics 6
(2): 41-75.

40 See Adam Przeworski et al. 2000. Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-
and J. Verkuilen. 2002. ‘Conceptualizing and measuring democracy - Evaluating alternative
indices.’ Comparative Political Studies 35 (1): 5-34.

41 Societies are defined based on the annual ratings provided by Freedom House since 1972.
The level of freedom is classified according to the combined mean score for political rights and
www.freedomhouse.org

42 Full methodological details about the World Values Surveys, including the questionnaires,
sampling procedures, fieldwork procedures, principle investigators, and organization can be
found at: http://wvs.isr.umich.edu/wvs-samp.html.

43 These countries are ranked as equally ‘free’ according to the 2000-2001 Freedom House
assessments of political rights and civil liberties Freedom House. 2000. Freedom in the World