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## The WomanStats Project

### The Project

The WomanStats Project began in 2001 with the aim of investigating the link between the security and behavior of states and the situation and security of the women within them. Since that time, it has grown to include five principal investigators at three universities, representing four fields of study: international relations, geography, psychology, and political psychology. The Project has also been a source of mentoring to over thirty students, many of whom have gone on to post-graduate work.

The principal investigators are:

- Valerie M. Hudson, Brigham Young University (international relations)
- Mary Caprioli, University of Minnesota-Duluth (international relations)
- Chad Emmett, Brigham Young University (geography)
- Rose McDermott, University of California-Santa Barbara (political psychology)
- Bonnie Ballif-Spanvill, Brigham Young University (psychology)

### Goals of the Project

The Project has several interrelated goals:

- to develop the most comprehensive database on the situation and status of women in the world
- to develop innovative indices and measures to describe the situation and status of women, which will allow for empirical analysis, assessment, monitoring, and evaluation activities
- to perform empirical and spatial analysis of the relationship between the situation and status of women in the world with the behavior and security of states

### The Database

The WomanStats Project is constructing what is already the most comprehensive database on the status of women cross-nationally. Already almost 65% complete, when finished it will cover over 240 variables for 172 nations with populations greater than 200,000 persons. Variables include those relating to nine aspects of women's situation and security:

1. Women's Physical Security
2. Women's Economic Security
3. Women's Legal Security
4. Women's Security in the Community
5. Women's Security in the Family
6. Security for Maternity
7. Women's Security Through Voice
8. Security Through Societal Investment in Women
9. Women's Security in the State

To demonstrate the difference WomanStats data make, suppose one were interested in assessing women's security through examining complex issues such as rape.

Existing cross-national data sources would provide an indication of the prevalence of rape according to official sources, where available and reliable.

But WomanStats would give you much more. Uploaded onto a publicly available internet site, one would find the following variables concerning rape for any chosen country: official and unofficial estimates of the incidence of rape, laws concerning rape, laws concerning who can testify in a rape case, estimates of the level of enforcement of rape laws within the society and across various subnational regions, customary practice after rape (ostracism, honor killings, effect on marriageability or on divorce), laws concerning abortion in the case of rape, laws on marital rape, customary practices regarding marital rape, presence of resources for women who have been raped (such as women's shelters), legal punishments concerning rape, estimates of HIV/AIDS transmission due to rape, and even first-hand accounts by rape victims (collected by NGOs) of their treatment within the society. Clearly, the constellation of information provided in the WomanStats database paints a far more accurate and detailed picture of how rape affects the lives of women in various nations than what is currently available. Policymakers could implement more effective and achievable initiatives based on this stronger empirical foundation and track the success of those initiatives using a chosen set of focused indicators of change. Furthermore, through our web-based interface credentialed experts may directly enter data online. And all of this data would be available with an internet connection and the click of a mouse!

### **The Research**

As the database has progressed, we have undertaken development of seven indices of women's situation and security, including indices ranking nations concerning level of violence against women in society, equity in family law for women, degree of son preference, toleration of trafficking in women, extent to which women are involved in societal decisionmaking, access to appropriate health care for women, and societal investment in advancing women's opportunities. At the time of this writing, we have completed the rankings of our set of 172 states on level of violence against women in society and toleration of trafficking in women. (It should be noted that each one of the seven scales draws upon more variables than GEM and GDI combined.)

With these rankings, we are now able to explore how the situation of women is related to the behavior and the security of states. A first step will be to express the geography of gender status beliefs through GIS and other tools available to geographers. Second, we hope to analyze relationships among the independent variables concerning the status of women. We will explore issues such as the degree to which law and practice and attitudes concerning aspects of women's experience correlate and the possible existence of "syndromes" of treatment of women, with particular codings on one variable correlating with particular codings on other, seemingly unrelated variables. Third, the ultimate objective of the project will be to analyze the relationships to be found between the independent variables measuring the status of women in society and the dependent variables assessing aspects of internal, national, regional, and international security, including variables such as first use of force and adherence to international law.

Because the fate of nations is integrally tied to the status of women in society, this research project has the potential to profoundly affect every society's understanding of

itself and the most important determinants of national and international security and their current and future transformation.

### **Contact Information**

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