Gender issues in fundraising

Changing the narrative: How to help men in fundraising become better allies in dismantling patriarchal structures

◔ The fundraising profession

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Introduction: how we communicate props up the patriarchy

Why are we still having to persuade people – in particular, men – that gender equality is a good thing? Why is it so difficult to persuade them to take the necessary action towards an egalitarian society? And why is the fundraising sector – which largely exists to tackle injustice – struggling to live by the values it expects others to hold? Do the answers lie in the way we communicate?

Female/women leaders are creating huge social change in every direction. Our sector is full of successful women – from Hilary McGrady, director general of the National Trust, who has steered her team through the pandemic and a period of intense media scrutiny to raise record-breaking amounts of income (Whitehead 2022), to philanthropists Melinda Gates and MacKenzie Scott who are recognized as two of the world's most powerful individuals (Forbes 2021), to Laurie Bolt and her fundraising team at Age UK, winners of Fundraising Team of the Year at the Third Sector 2021 awards for the way they delivered the charity's best ever year of fundraising during the pandemic.[1]

None of this is surprising given the vast amount of evidence that shows the brilliance of female leaders. Across sectors, research shows women improve performance metrics, reduce the likelihood of lawsuits, reputational scandals and corporate crime, improve sustainability measures, and invest more in innovation. (Chamorro-Premuzic 2022).

Yet, women are still coming up against considerable barriers in the workplace. There has been much coverage of the challenges women in fundraising face over the years – for more than a decade, the sector trade press has highlighted the lack of female representation in the top fundraising jobs. More recently, scandals such as the Presidents Club fundraising dinner (MacQuillin 2018; Marriage 2018), Oxfam's safeguarding failures[2] and the Chartered Institute of Fundraising's less-than-adequate handling of allegations of sexual misconduct (Cooney 2022), have highlighted the level of sexually inappropriate behaviour female fundraisers are subject to. And there are many, many stories of mansplaining, being overlooked for promotion, poor maternity pay – the list goes on.

This paper takes a look at how the way in which we talk about the challenges faced by women fundraisers can help or hinder the quest to tackle sexism. In particular, it focuses on how we might change the narrative we use about gender equality with the aim of convincing more men in fundraising to proactively engage with the movement. It challenges some of the commonly used frames and suggests alternatives that may be more effective in persuading men to adopt new attitudes and behaviours – which in turn should contribute to a more level playing field for women.

It is important to note that in no way does this paper intend to argue that men should be given priority in the gender equality movement nor that they can be absolved of any responsibility for their actions. Men must be held accountable for their choices and actions. Nor is this paper in anyway arguing for women to do more of the emotional labour involved with persuading others that gender equality is necessary and important.

What I hope is that by exploring the psychology of behaviour change and by applying the framing theory to our communications, we can find a way to bring more men into the fold in a way that is useful and practical, and which uses effective communications to reduce the amount of time and energy it takes to achieve gender equality goals.

It is split into three parts:
Part 1:   The importance of framing.
Part 2:   The role of men in gender equality initiatives.
Part 3:   How to bring more men in fundraising with us on our journey towards equality.

A shorter version of this paper can be read in *Gender issue in fundraising: Phase 2 – A blueprint for dismantling patriarchal structures in the fundraising profession* (Hill, et al 2023), published by Rogare. ⊙

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1
The importance of framing

1.1   What is framing?

Text, visuals, stereotypes, metaphors and messengers all help us make sense of the world. How this information is presented – the framing of an issue – influences the way in which our brain interprets and highlights the information it is given, which in turn impacts on what we think and how we feel about it (Entman 1993).

As the Frameworks Institute (2020) says: "Framing is about the choices we make in what we say, how we say it, what we emphasize, and what we leave unsaid, and how these choices shape how people think, feel, and act… We're all already framing our issue, whether we realize it or not. Every website blurb, press release, email announcement, or social media post advances a story about what our issue is about, who it affects, and what society should do about it. There's no such thing as an unframed communication."

Clusters of these feelings and ideas are called schemata. The most effective frames are those that tap into existing schemata. As the political scientist, Robert Entman wrote in his book *Projections of Power*, frames help people understand complex issues by matching new information to the schemata someone already holds and can tell people what to think, how to feel and what action to take (Entman 2004).

'It is not just women that can be harmed by these gender stereotypes, they can also be damaging for men, placing undue pressure on them financially and professionally, limiting their ability to participate fully in family life and making it harder for them to make choices that are best suited for their lives.'

For example, a schema for climate change might involve tropical storms, flooding, a dirty exhaust pipe on a car, Greta Thunberg and polar bears standing on small islands of ice. Each element may have its own individual emotional association attached to it, such as positive feelings towards the polar bear and negative feelings towards the exhaust pipe.

Once the schema is stored in the long-term memory, new information about any one of these elements may bring it to mind. For instance, someone telling their friend about a problem with their car exhaust can activate negative feelings about climate change. Climate change campaigners can use these associations to their advantage in their communications activities: using cute pictures of polar bears on materials where they want people to feel positive and pictures of car exhausts where they want audiences to feel negative emotions, for example.

Thinking about women's health, a schema for the menopause might involve women experiencing hot flushes, brain fog, erratic emotional responses, HRT, medical support, and mature women enjoying adventure and new experiences. The latter elements are likely to be less familiar for most people yet convey more positive messages about women and the menopause.

The former elements listed are probably those that people are most familiar with and have the strongest negative connotations for women. An example of how this schema may impact on women is as follows: The media covers a story where a woman experiencing the menopause is framed as being emotionally unstable. This reinforces people's perceptions that women of a certain age are unreliable, which translates into a reluctance for firms to hire mature women.

The most effective frames tap into 'schemata' – clusters of feelings and ideas already held by people, which inform them what to think, how to feel and what action to take. For example, a schema for climate change might include polar bears on small ice floes – and an image often used by charities.

1.2   Creating culturally congruent frames

The frames that have the most potential for influence are those which are 'culturally congruent'. They use words and images that people know and understand. The more salient the frame, the more likely it is to evoke similar and recognisable thoughts and feelings and therefore has a higher probability of being accepted and remembered (Entman 2004).

Furthermore, repeated use of these frames can leave people with unhelpful perceptions about individuals and groups, which are carried with them into both their personal and professional lives.

There are several linguistic tools that communicators use to create culturally congruent frames. One is the metaphor – a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action that is not literal, but which is regarded as representative – the aim being to encourage audiences to take meaning in the direction the messenger wants them to. For example, political metaphors often focus on war, using language such as 'fight' and 'battle'.

"Each metaphor intensifies selected perceptions and ignores others, thereby helping one to concentrate upon desired consequences of favoured public policies and helping one to ignore their unwanted, unthinkable or irrelevant premises and aftermaths," wrote Murray Edelman (1971) in *Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence*.

Stereotypes are another framing tool. People tend to be "cognitive misers" who are motivated to minimise the use of their cognitive resources (Nisbet 2010). Thus, when provided with "expectancy-consistent information" – information that aligns with what we already believe – this is more easily processed and understood than information that conflicts with our expectations (Allen et al 2008).

Stereotypes imply that the image of someone or something being presented is typical of an entire category, thus allowing people to make snap judgements and reducing the amount of mental reasoning they need to make. The more someone recognises a stereotype – in that it fits with the frames they hold in their head (i.e. it is culturally congruent) – the more attention they will pay to it. In addition, emotion can play an important role in increasing the salience of stereotypes. For example, stereotypes have more influence when the recipient is angry than when they are calm or happy (Erisen 2020).

Our understanding of reality is also filtered through conscious and unconscious prejudices, formed throughout our lives, which become our 'conditions for understanding'. These prejudices or socio-cultural biases can shift our attention towards certain aspects of social reality and make us neglect others (Verloo and Lomdardo 2007).

Gender and racial schema are recognised as being

particularly engaging for people. Messages that draw on both gender and race at the same time – such as the 'Angry Black Woman' stereotype (Motro et al 2022) – have potential to be particularly impactful.

The reason for this is because both gender and race are frequently used within Western society to convey messages about an individual's character and behaviour and our relationship to them. "Both play important roles in structuring society, culture, and politics both today and throughout American (and human) history," says Nicholas Winter (2008) in his book, *Dangerous Frames: How Ideas About Race and Gender Shape Public Opinion*.

Centuries of prejudice have defined schemas that communicators can use to influence opinion. "Our schemas for both race and gender contain a rich array of knowledge, emotional reactions, and evaluations knit together into a structured whole," says Winter (ibid).

When a message is presented in a way that matches the structure of a gender and/or racial schema held by the recipient, they will then apply their thoughts and feelings about gender and race to that message. "The right issue frames should mobilize people's ideas about these things and apply them to seemingly unrelated issues," says Winter (ibid).

In addition, when people have their gender and racial schemas deliberately primed or cognitively activated by communicators, they can be influenced to judge people in a particular way, be that favourably or not.

For example, women are frequently portrayed in advertising, films and other cultural media as caregivers rather than leaders. As we will explore further later in this paper (s2.1), these stereotypes perpetuate the idea that women do not have the right characteristics for high-status roles in the workplace, therefore contributing to women being overlooked for leadership roles.

Framing, therefore, can be a powerful tool when looking to create communications that will change attitudes and behaviours. As such, when considering how to break down the structural barriers that hinder female fundraisers in the workplace, the way in which messages about gender equality are framed should be taken into consideration.

## 1.3 How gender inequality in the workplace is framed

There are many ways in which gender inequality in the workplace is framed. For the purposes of this paper, attention will be given to two, which are commonly known as 'Lean In' and 'Lean Out'.

As Ruby Bayley (2022) covers in her Rogare paper, 'Gender issues in fundraising – lean in or lean out?', Lean In is a school of thought that was officially formulated by Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg in 2013 with the publication of her book *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*. "Its central tenet is that women, socialised by gender stereotypes, unconsciously hold themselves back from professional advancement due to misplaced insecurity, passivity, and a lack of ambition," Bayley writes, explaining how Lean In posits that gender equality can be achieved if only women were more confident and created a seat at the table for themselves and that to take individual responsibility in this way will not only result in more power for the woman in question but this power will also trickle down to women below them.

However, Lean In critics say that it "downplays other structural issues and inequalities that are embedded in work-life, such as a lack of family-friendly policies, the myriad ways women are impacted by unconscious bias, the impact of austerity, sexual harassment in the workplace and barriers to reporting it, unpaid care work, and the effects of emotional labour," (ibid).

It also assumes that all women will receive the same benefits if they follow Lean In advice with no recognition of how classism, racism, homophobia and transphobia impact on their ability to thrive. In addition, a study by Duke University found that Lean In messaging results in people being more likely to blame women for not fixing gender imbalances and less likely to believe that structural changes would make a difference (Kay and Fitzsimons 2018).

An alternative to Lean In is Lean Out. This removes the onus from individual women and instead reframes the debate to one that involves everyone. It states that to overcome gender inequality widespread systemic change is required, with a role for everyone to play, from governments, institutions, companies, to society as a whole. Failure to work together to address the many barriers that women have to overcome will result in little long-term and sustainable progress, it claims.
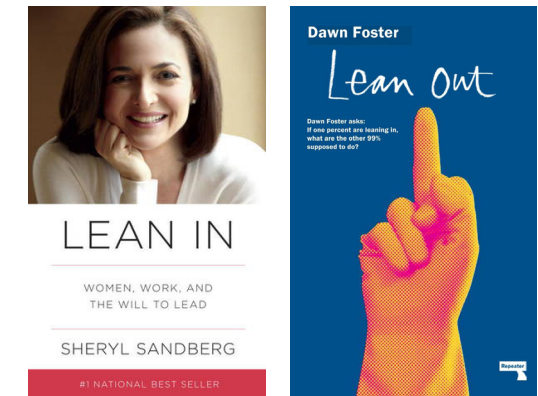
Ruby Bayley (left) described the two opposition schools of Lean In and Lean Out feminism in her paper for the first phase of Rogare's Gender Issues of Fundraising project. You can access that here – https://www.rogare.net/gender-issues.

1.4 'Smash the patriarchy'

At the centre of both the Lean In and Lean Out frames is the patriarchy: a social system in which power is distributed unequally between men and women, to the detriment of women. In another piece for Rogare looking at the patriarchy, Ruby Bayley (2022) writes:

"It is widely accepted not to be about individual men oppressing individual women through specific acts but instead an interconnected, multi-layered structure of power relations in which men dominate our legal, political, social, and cultural spaces resulting in the subordination, discrimination and oppression of women."

Not only is this inequality embedded in the state and its laws, it is also supported by tradition, education and religion, and is upheld by powerful cultural and social norms, including stereotypes.

Stereotypes linked to the patriarchy will be familiar to all. In public discourse and media, men are typically portrayed as being more agentic than women – i.e. having more control, being in charge, and able to display strong emotions, such as anger, in an authoritative manner.

Conversely, women are portrayed as being more 'communal' than men: they are promoted as nurturing and emotionally sensitive, including, to their detriment, irrational and hysterical. Strong agentic characteristics are often associated with leadership, while nurturing qualities are associated with care giving. In turn, this contributes to perceptions that men should be the ones pursuing careers, while women should be the ones looking after children and elderly parents.

It is not just women that can be harmed by these gender stereotypes. As I explore further below, they can also be damaging for men, placing undue pressure on them financially and professionally, limiting their ability to participate fully in family life and making it harder for them to make choices that are best suited for their lives.

In addition, as Emily Esplen highlights in *Engaging Men in Gender Equality: Positive Strategies and Approaches*, men as well as women must be supported to challenge strict gender divisions, be those at home, at work or in the community. She says that if real progress towards gender equality is ever to be achieved, men need to be "liberated from the constraints of gender roles and expectations", such as not showing emotions or wanting to spend time with children (Esplen 2006). ◐

> ❛ *Failure to work together to address the many barriers that women have to overcome will result in little long-term and sustainable progress, say adherents of Lean Out Feminism.'*

2
The role of men in gender equality initiatives

2.1 Why we need to talk about men

Having a public conversation about the role of men in gender equality initiatives can be difficult. To have these conversations can, and does, result in backlash from those who are fearful – genuinely and rightly – that it will dilute the conversation, divert resources away from women towards men, and ultimately refocus attention back on men who, some feminists argue, have received enough attention thus far.

To rely on male representations of female voices and interests can, over the long-term, work against challenging and transforming gender norms if that means more space is taken up by a man than a woman says Caroline Sweetman (2013) in her paper on working with men on gender equality. Some may also feel that to require the help of men means women are incapable of fighting their own battles.

While these fears are understandable and should not be disregarded, we must also acknowledge that most power is held by men. They have an undeniable and unavoidable role to play if women are to have an equal share of that power. It is in the interest of the gender equality movement to find a way for men to participate in the most positive and productive way possible.

The types of power held by men will vary depending on the individual and the circumstance, but they include financial, political, emotional and professional power. As Sweetman highlights and as this paper will demonstrate shortly, that does not mean that all men hold power, nor that the amount of power they hold does not and cannot change over time.

What it does mean is that if we want change to happen, we need those with power to make those changes; we need men to use their power for the benefit of women. Without more men as allies, women will not and cannot achieve their goal of gender equality.

As I wrote for Civil Society Media on International Women's Day 2021 (Slack 2021), many of the major changes for women's rights have occurred because of enlightened and supportive men:

"We have more women in board rooms because men hired them. We have maternity and paternity rights, equal pay, sexual harassment laws because men have understood why they are important and so voted for them."

Indeed, as Emily Esplen (2006) points out, not engaging with men and boys may limit the effectiveness of interventions and could intensify gender inequalities. She writes: "Development interventions which aim to improve women's employment and income generating opportunities, for example, are likely to compound women's heavy work burdens unless efforts are made to encourage men to take greater responsibility for childcare and domestic chores.

"Projects that focus solely on women may also reinforce existing gender stereotypes (women as carers, men as breadwinners, and so on). Involving men, by contrast, can generate a broader consensus on issues which have previously been marginalised as being of interest to women only – sexual and reproductive health, for example."

Despite this, most gender equality initiatives remain aimed at women. International Women's Day events are predominantly attended and talked about by women. Women in leadership events are mainly attended and talked about by women. Events focused on violence against women are attended and talked about by women. If significant and sustainable progress is to be made towards gender equality, this needs to change. More men need to be brought into the movement and encouraged to take active roles.

'We have more women in board rooms because men hired them. We have maternity and paternity rights, equal pay, sexual harassment laws because men have understood why they are important and so voted for them.'

This is not a new idea. Since 2007, the UN has been calling for more men to participate in public debates around gender issues in order to bring to light men's responsibilities in gender equality work and to serve as role models for men as partners in these efforts.

It was also the focus of Sweetman's 2013 paper on working with men on gender equality:

"From a pragmatic perspective, men's participation adds to the range of strategies available to feminist movements. This can be seen as 'using the master's tools', which for some is very positive and a pragmatic way of advancing a cause.

"For example, men command attention in male-dominated institutions, in ways women do not. If a male gender advisor from an NGO can command the attention of senior male government officials in a way that could not occur with a woman, due to prejudice, then the work of changing short-term agendas and getting things done will go ahead more quickly."

I have previously called for feminism to be more inclusive of male allies. This is my article from Civil Society on International Women's Day in 2021.

2.2 What does it mean to be a man in a patriarchal society?

Previous Rogare papers have set out all the reasons how the patriarchy harms women and hinders their ability to progress in fundraising (Appleby 2022). Given that this project is about gender equality, it would be remiss not to explore the ways in which the patriarchy harms men and consider how this hinders their willingness and ability to create the conditions required for egalitarian workplaces.

Social norms under the patriarchy stress that for men to be successful, they need to be strong, leaders in their field, the breadwinner, the person who protects and provides for women and children. The social researcher R.W. Connell (1987) refers to the concept of "hegemonic masculinity" when describing the role of the 'ideal man'. This man is wealthy, professionally successful, muscular, well-dressed, charismatic and someone for other men to look up to. "A select group of elite men lead and dominate society economically, socially and politically, and it is their way of being 'male' that defines the ideal of masculinity in a particular context. Hegemonic masculinity is about performance and status. It is partly attained by a show of superior strength and intelligence at the expense of women," Sweetman (2013) writes of Connell's work. Anything other than this and they will not meet societal expectations.

Achieving this version of masculinity is not easy. "For some men - particularly those who are young, poor, or belong to under-represented LGBTQ+, ethnic or religious groups – it can be particularly challenging. Few men achieve the ideal. No man can live up to it throughout their entire lifetime. The amount of power they wield may vary depending on the environment. They may hold power within their family or friendship

group but be powerless at work or in wider society. As anthropologist Andrea Cornwall (2000) says: "While it is unquestionably the case that many men do occupy positions of power, it is one thing to name those subject positions and another to go on to presume that all men have access to these positions or indeed want to take them up".

The impact of a lack or loss of power is perceived by many men to be detrimental to them, which in turn influences their willingness and ability to support gender equality initiatives and hold feminist views. For example, if they are unable to become the successful breadwinners, family heads and leaders which stereotypes of masculine power and success demand of them, they come under stress and fear being excluded from their social groups (Esplen 2006). So, when they are told they now have to compete against women as well as other men, it can create a problem, leaving some of them feeling threatened. In addition, research has shown that men worry about losing their place in society if they publicly identify as feminist, due to, for example, friends, family and colleagues viewing them differently (Holmgren and Hearn 2009). In response, they stay silent on these issues or in some cases will actively work to sabotage them.

These experiences can leave men feeling fearful of the social isolation that could come from expressing feminist ideology which can result in them being more likely to not challenge harmful gender and racial stereotypes and reluctant to demonstrate support for gender initiatives (ibid). At the same time, men who have never had power or feel they have lost or are losing power, are likely to be the ones most resistant to even considering gender equality initiatives in the first place.

This does not mean that bad behaviour on the part of men should be excused or accepted. Far from it. But it is important to understand the factors driving this behaviour if we are to develop strategies to address it.

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2.3 Male positions on gender equality

Drawing on the studies mentioned in this paper, men often take one of four positions when it comes to gender equality.

Hostile: They are actively hostile to gender equality and other feminist issues.
Silent aggressors: They are passively hostile to feminism and associated issues, but ignore them in the hope they will go away.
Passive supporters: They are in favour in principle but do nothing and remain silent.
Active supporters: They favour gender equality and are active participants in conversations and initiatives that aim to achieve egalitarian workplaces, social lives and other environments.

Which of the four positions they take depends on a number of factors, including where they are in life and how much power they hold. This is because individuals find themselves in different social contexts as they experience new life events and move through life stages (e.g., education, employment, marriage, parenthood), which in turn creates new status and new roles that can either reinforce attitudes or change them. For example, heterosexual men can be highly influenced by their female partners' employment status as they can benefit (or not) from their wages and career (Bornatici, Gauthier and Goff 2020).

It is also important to acknowledge other myths and untruths that are believed to influence male support for gender equality. For example, millennials are often labelled the woke generation, which has led to perceptions that they are, by default, supportive of egalitarian workplaces. In fact, many millennials have a tendency to hold more traditional or sexist attitudes than their predecessors.

American author and lawyer Anita Hill (2021) writes that "not all millennials are on board with the #metoo agenda of prioritizing anti-harassment efforts. According to a Gallup poll, only 55% of men aged 18-49 currently consider sexual harassment a major problem – a 16 point drop since 2017."

Research by polling companies such as the Meredith Poll in the US (McLennan and Manzo 2022) and Ipsos (2022) in the UK have each found multiple examples of conservative attitudes towards women and other

under-represented groups among Generation Z and Millennials. And more recently we have seen the way in which social media influencer Andrew Tait has very successfully tapped into the fears and insecurities of young men and indoctrinated large numbers of them with misogynistic views (Rich and Bujalka 2023).

Understanding the appeal of Andrew Tate involves exploring the raft of issues facing young men, which range from educational attainment through to mental health – issues that require and deserve more attention than the scope of this paper allows for.

However, when it comes to attitudes in the workplace, a Swiss study into changing attitudes towards gender quality may offer some explanation as to why younger employees hold more conservative attitudes (Bornatici, Gauthier and Goff 2020). It found that younger individuals are less supportive of measures to promote women and believe that women are decreasingly

penalized. The researchers involved in this study believed these attitudes can be explained by the fact that the visible social improvements towards gender equality tend to hide the enduring process of gender differentiation and hierarchisation.

Millennials might therefore object to old-fashioned sexism, such as cat calling and groping, which is more visible and socially less desirable, but remain somewhat blind to new forms of sexism, such as the quiet sabotaging of gender equality initiatives by male employees (as discussed in more detail in ss2.2/2.4).

Baby-boomers, on the other hand, who were socialised during the peak of the second wave feminist movement, are the cohort most likely to think that women are still discriminated against and to favour measures promoting women. This suggests that we cannot simply rely on sexist behaviours 'dying out', nor on younger people to be the torch-bearers for change.

2.4 Perceptions of power

There is a firmly held belief by some that the pendulum has swung too far in women's favour and that men are now victims of feminism. Those involved in men's rights or father's rights groups argue that they have had their power removed by women, that their lives are suffering, they are unable to find or maintain the careers they once enjoyed (and associated status those careers afforded them) due to women taking all the top jobs, and that they are financially precarious as a result and thus unable to provide for their families.

The rise of the 'Angry White Man' in Trump's America epitomizes this perfectly, says author Michael Kimmel (2017): "All that he needs is that shared sense of aggrieved entitlement—that sense that 'we', 'the rightful heirs' of America's bounty, have had what is 'rightfully ours' taken away from us by 'them', faceless, feckless government bureaucrats, and given to 'them', undeserving minorities, immigrants, women, gays, and their ilk. If your despair can be massaged into this Manichaean struggle between Us and Them, you, too, can be mobilized into the army of Angry White Men".

Indeed, research suggests that men who feel they are being over-looked at work as a consequence of gender equality initiatives will actively, albeit quietly and often unconsciously, sabotage the initiatives. One study into increasing the number of senior

female STEM academics found that men were less supportive of equality initiatives they perceived to be using 'positive discrimination' to place more women in top jobs, and more supportive of those initiatives they perceived to be fairer (i.e. those they felt were beneficial for both men and women) (Farell et al 2021).

This finding was also reflected in a 2017 UK Equality Challenge Unit survey, which found that some respondents – mainly men although some women too – perceive gender equality initiatives as "lip service without real impact" or as a "box ticking exercise". These respondents feared that men's performance and achievement would be downplayed whereas women's work will be overplayed. For women this translated into worries that their promotion would be perceived as perfunctory rather than a genuine reflection of their ability. For men, the gender equality initiatives risked creating resentment, particularly within those who do not acknowledge or understand the additional barriers that women may face in STEM careers which negatively affect women's career progression.

This research helps make the case for male perspectives of gender equality initiatives to be considered during promotional activities, and for narratives regarding gender equality initiatives to be framed accordingly. ❻

3

How to bring more men with us on our journey towards equality

American author Anita Hill (l) observes that many men believe claims of sexual harassment are "exaggerated by paranoid women and sensational journalists". This could be an example of 'cognitive dissonance' – the phenomenon described by Leon Festinger (r).

Part 1 of this paper considered the role of framing and schema in reinforcing attitudes and behaviours. Part 2 attempted to set out possible frames and schema that men may hold in relation to gender equality initiatives. Part 3 will make an effort to bring the two together and consider how we use framing to bring more men who work within fundraising and the larger charity sector on the journey towards gender equality.

Challenging and changing beliefs and behaviours is not easy. As social psychologist George Lakoff (2014) says:

"Concepts are not things that can be changed just by someone telling us a fact. We may be presented with facts, but for us to make sense of them, they have to fit what is already in the synapses of the brain. Otherwise, facts go in and then they go right back out. They are not heard, or they are not accepted as facts, or they mystify us".

Studies by social scientist Leon Festinger offer some clues as to why this is the case. He proposed that inconsistencies between our beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, and/or behaviour can create discomfort in our minds – something he called cognitive dissonance (Gawronski and Brannon 2019). Because we dislike feeling uncomfortable, we attempt to reduce this tension by rejecting an idea or piece of information, by explaining it away or finding justification for it, or by seeking support from those who agree with one's belief.

Festinger described the desire for cognitive consistency as a psychological need that is as basic as hunger and thirst. Moreover, the greater the size of the dissonance, the greater the pressure to reduce it (ibid). The examples provided by Festinger included members of a cult who would not admit that their faith was based on lies even though there was overwhelming evidence to prove it as such, and

smokers finding excuses as to why they haven't quit smoking despite knowing the health risks.

Studies into race and gender have used cognitive dissonance to help explain why people struggle to accept that racism and sexism still exist today.

For example, in a study looking into the attitudes of white American women who grew up in the racially segregated Deep South between 1920 and 1970 and lived in households with Black servants, cognitive dissonance was cited as a driver for the way in which these white women attempted to reconcile past behaviour with the cultural values of today. They tried to reduce the dissonance experienced in a variety of ways ranging from outright denial of any racial prejudice, providing justification for Black servitude, to blaming others (van Wormer and Falkner 2022).

Social researcher Reggie Jackson made the same argument in an article about why so many white people refuse to believe that racism persists in America today. He says that white people want to believe that America is not a racist nation and when they are faced with the reality that it is, dissonance is created, which they try to reduce by denying there is a problem: "Instead of admitting the wrongs, it is so much more comfortable to look the other way" (Jackson 2017).

A similar application of cognitive dissonance could be applied to the trends identified by Anita Hill in her book – *Believing: Our Thirty-Year Journey to End Gender Violence* (2021). In it she refers to how "many claims of gender-based violence, whether sexual assault, workplace harassment, or intimate partner abuse, are closed without a meaningful search for the truth. Often, when we do investigate, we ignore facts that are inconvenient, dismissing them as insignificant."

Hill gives examples of male leaders who believe that sexual harassment was a subject that was being "exaggerated by paranoid women and sensational journalists". Other men felt that the #metoo campaign is "a perfect example of a minor special interest group's ability to blow up any issue to a level of importance which in no way relates to the reality of the world in which we live and work".

Hill believes that this "denial is more than an oversight. It is a strategy that employers, politicians and judges employ to escape assigning accountability for addressing the problem."

While in some cases Hill is likely correct, I posit that the denial could also be cognitive dissonance playing out in front of us.

If cognitive dissonance does explain individual and organisational reluctance to address sexism in the workplace, how do we overcome it to enable more men to accept the challenges that women face?

A university in America has used cognitive dissonance training to help it successfully deliver diversity workshops to its predominantly white cohort of students (McFalls and Cobb 2021). It recognised that students' prior life experiences can afford them a different understanding of gender and race to that which is expected of them, which may result in them rejecting or resisting new information, thus rendering the diversity workshop ineffective.

The university believed that by teaching the students about cognitive dissonance prior to them taking the workshop, it would make them more amenable to changing their attitudes.

The university's assumption was correct. "When students were introduced to the theory and established an understanding of meta dissonance

before discussing diversity issues, fewer responses were labelled as denial, compared with the responses of students who were not exposed to the theory".

This and other studies, such as those by William J McGuire (1960) and George Lakoff (2016), have shown that it is not possible to change someone's beliefs or behaviours simply by presenting them with new information or telling them they are wrong. Instead, changing someone's opinion requires an open discussion of the topic.

For example, social psychologist William J McGuire looked at the role of dissonance in persuasion techniques. He understood there are various factors which will influence someone's willingness to accept new information. Subject to the amount of dissonance created, they may interpret a fact or reality according to what they want it to mean.

However, by inviting them to logically think it through by connecting different pieces of information, they can reduce dissonance and change their mind at the same time. He wrote: "Specifically, this technique would involve asking the person his opinions on logically related issues, thus sensitizing him to any inconsistencies that exist among his stands on these issues and producing a change towards greater mutual consistency" (McGuire 1960).

Based on McGuire's research, to challenge a negative belief or stereotype about women in the workplace, we must acknowledge the frames people already hold and take them on a cognitive journey that invites the message recipient – in our case, men leaders with power and influence over fundraisers – to come to their own new conclusion by tapping into the schemata they already hold in their mind. Changing attitudes, such as those towards gender stereotypes, requires a strategic and respectful conversation.

3.1 It's not just what you say, it's who says it

If we need a strategic conversation to achieve gender equality, we also need to think carefully about who participates in it. The sad truth is that we don't always value people (or other sources of information) based on the content or accuracy of what is being said. Rather, we listen to those perceived to possess particular traits or attributes that signal that their messages are worth listening to (Hockley 2019).

Does this person appear to know what they are talking about? Do they have relevant expertise or experience? Do they seem genuine, or are they trying to scam me? Are they tough enough to get the job done? Might they have an ulterior motive? Are they trustworthy? It's peoples' judgments of these traits that determine how likely people are to accept the message. Therefore, it's the messenger who gets the audience to open up, believe in what's being communicated and spread the idea. The messenger, therefore, is just as important as the message.
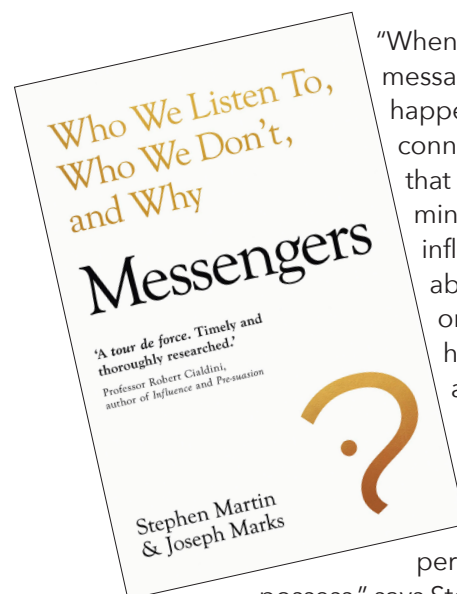
"When a messenger delivers a message something intriguing happens. They become connected to the content of that message in an audience's mind. Importantly their influence doesn't come about because of the merits or facts of their case – as we have frequently become accustomed to of late. Instead, the messenger's influence comes about as a result of a trait or feature that an audience perceives the messenger to possess," says Steve Martin, researcher and co-author of *Messengers: Who We Listen To, Who We Don't, and Why*. In this book, Martin, and his co-author Joseph Marks (2019) identified two forms of messengers:

Hard Messengers – who achieve acceptance of their message because audiences perceive them to possess superior status.

Soft Messengers – who gain message acceptance because they are perceived to possess a connectedness with their audience.

Messengers with high status – be that in society (such as politicians and celebrities), the workplace (such as bosses), family and friendship networks or elsewhere – are influential in groups and societies because they are believed to possess power and other useful qualities that would make them a good ally or a fierce foe.

They are seen as higher up the pecking order than the person or people with whom they are interacting and are therefore awarded respect, admiration, and deference. In this instance, status is achieved by those who possess one or ideally more of the following traits: high socio-economic status, competence, dominance and physical attractiveness.

Conversely, soft messengers achieve influence by getting along with others. Humans are social animals and have a strong desire to connect, bond, and cooperate with others. This is why softer characteristics can also help people to carry sway.

People don't always look to those with status for information. Sometimes they prefer to hear from their friends, those they trust, and people who are 'like them'. In this instance, the traits that are required include warmth, vulnerability, trustworthiness and charisma.

As such, for men to trust and buy-in to a messenger, they need to feel the source is credible and has the relevant knowledge, skill or expertise. Given the stereotypes detailed previously (s2.1), this can mean that men, including male leaders, are often more likely to trust other men and male leaders than their female counterparts. However, this doesn't mean only men can and should talk to men. Using high-status women alongside male messengers can be useful as work by Oxfam has found (Lang 2002).

Similarly, identifying other individuals and role models who have an influence on men (e.g. peers, mothers, fathers, grandparents, community members and celebrities) can also be helpful.

"Group sessions with women and men are opportunities to model [gender equality] behaviours and having men and women as facilitators with equal voice and levels of participation sends an important message" writes James Lang in the Oxfam paper (ibid).

3.2 How do we persuade male fundraisers to be part of the change?

Given centuries of social conditioning, inground cognitive functions and fears over losing power (be those fears justified or not), it would be foolhardy to assume that men – even those who work in fundraising and may be naturally more inclined to fight social injustices – will automatically support gender equality initiatives.

Nor can we assume that they will stand aside or silence their voices to make way for women, simply because they've been asked to do so. I have in mind one company's events team that tried (and failed) to insist on having all-female panels much to the chagrin of the men who worked there. Or they are pitched in such a way that male colleagues feel they will be overlooked for career development opportunities because their employer has diversity boxes to tick.

In addition, many feminist campaigns and campaigners pitch men as the aggressor and the oppressor and are resistant to bringing them into the movement. When I've worked with women's groups and suggested we involve men in the conversation, I've been over-ruled on the basis that these are women's issues and women's issues alone. When discussing potential campaigns with other activists in Facebook groups, the aggression directed towards men has been concerning, and woe betide any man that attempts to add his voice to a feminist debate on Twitter.

As I wrote for Civil Society Media: "All too often, our language and our actions have been defensive, aggressive and polarising. Our anger is justified, but frequently we have used it in a way that has created more division. We only need to look at Twitter to see countless examples of this. Rather than being inclusive – the very outcome we are striving to achieve – we are being exclusive." (Slack 2021.)

Instead, I would argue that a different approach is required. One that involves a reframing of the narrative around gender inequality, meaningfully combined with a strategic conversation between women and men.

First, we need to review the framing of our communications to check for use of unhelpful stereotypes and other negative frames. Are female fundraisers being stigmatized due to the way they are represented on your website? Do recruitment ads use gender inclusive language and make realistic requests of candidates (for example, asking for 10 years continual service is unlikely to appeal to women who have taken time off to have children)? Do gender equality initiatives contribute to the perception of 'positive discrimination' and that men will get a raw deal as a consequence of said initiative?

For example, are they framed from the perspective of 'it's the right thing to do for women' or 'there are benefits for men too'? – these benefits being many and varied, ranging from professional advantages such as having access to innovative, successful staff, through to personal benefits, such as being able to spend more time with their families.

Second, if we are to invest men in this topic, we need to understand their perceptions of, and support for, gender equality initiatives – making it clear this is a safe space for them to honestly discuss their fears. While at the same time, we need to help them understand more clearly the difficulties female fundraisers encounter because of gender bias and the responsibilities men are afforded purely because of their gender – something known as 'the patriarchal dividend'.

Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell coined the phrase 'patriarchal dividend' to describe all the advantages society affords to men.

The phrase 'patriarchal dividend' was coined by the influential writer on men and masculinities R.W. Connell (1996) and "refers to the advantage that all men have in a society that, openly or otherwise, favours males, maleness, or masculinity. Individual men can either choose to press this advantage, or opt, whenever possible, not to. Women have no such advantage, which means a very different position in relation to feminist struggle" (Sweetman 2013).

This presents a challenge to the fundraising sector. Can our male colleagues recognise the patriarchal dividend and moments when they have taken advantage of it – consciously or not? And consider

'We should work to reframe the narratives we use in a way that challenges traditional categories of 'us' and 'them' or 'men versus women' – taking into account the complicated ways in which people invoke different aspects of their identities and experiences to advance their own interests and either disempower, or stand in solidarity with, others. We need to show men what's in it for them.'

how they might take steps to address this in the future? And can female colleagues offer men a genuinely safe space to discuss their worries about gender equality initiatives and the potential impact on their lives so that we can all learn from each other?

Third, if men feel threatened by gender equality, where is the incentive for them to work towards it? If we want those with power, typically men, to accept our proposals for egalitarian workplaces, we need to demonstrate the value gender equality will afford them and to do so in a way that will "free them up from limiting gender norms which create pain and conflict" (Sweetman 2013).

Therefore, we should work to reframe the narratives we use accordingly in a way that challenges traditional categories of 'us' and 'them' or 'men versus women' – taking into account the complicated ways in which people invoke different aspects of their identities and experiences to advance their own interests and either disempower, or stand in solidarity with, others. We need to show them what's in it for them.

Fourth, as part of the strategic conversation with men, we need to find narratives that give them the confidence to stand up for women's rights without risk of losing status among their peers and show them easy and practical ways in which they can move from being passive supporters to active supporters.

Examples range from the easy, such as not taking credit for a female colleague's idea, through to the more challenging, such as giving up public speaking

or leadership roles to make way for women, calling out misogynistic behaviour by other men, and refusing to accept donations (even the large ones) from donors that have sexually harassed female colleagues.

Fifth, we must remember that the messenger is just as important as the message. Let's start by finding messengers who are knowledgeable, trustworthy and have the credibility required to inspire trust and confidence in those who we want to change their behaviour and attitudes – men in power. This will likely mean high-profile men who are masculine without the toxicity, are considered professionally successful, and are also active and vocal feminists and gender equality advocates, who can show men that they won't lose their masculinity and status as a consequence of actively supporting women's rights. Perhaps we can find a way for them to use this power alongside or in partnership with female colleagues and peers, thus elevating the status of women as they go.

Finally, this paper only scratches the surface of how we can more effectively use communications tools and techniques to address structural sexism in charity fundraising. The ideas presented would benefit hugely from being tested and analysed by the sector, with narratives, messaging and initiatives being revised accordingly – and importantly, shared with others. This is not something that can be achieved by women alone or by one or two individual organisations. We all – men and women, the entire fundraising and charity sector – need to work together. ❻

'This is not something that can be achieved by women alone or by one or two individual organisations. We all — men and women, the entire fundraising and charity sector — need to work together.'

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FOOTNOTES

1   https://www.thirdsectorawards.com/finalists/age-uk-fundraising-team

2   https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/oxfam-safeguarding-allegations-our-key-coverage.html

Rogare's Gender Issues in Fundraising project

This paper by Becky Slack is part of the second phase of Rogare's project to examine gender issues in the fundraising profession. We began this project towards the end of 2017, inspired by Beth Upton's 2017 *UK Fundraising* blog on her experiences of being a woman in the charity sector. Gender in fundraising is an issue that had been simmering for many years before the MeToo movement and the scandals of the Presidents Club fundraising dinner and Oxfam's safeguarding failures caused it to boil over. Now there is evidence from the USA that something like 25 per cent of female fundraisers have been subjected to sexually inappropriate behaviour.

Naturally there are calls for the both the fundraising profession and the charity sector more widely to tackle this issue, and diversity initiatives have been set up in the USA and UK.

Rogare is contributing to these challenges with the aim to ensure any solutions are grounded in the relevant theory and evidence that already exist. Our work has consists of three phases:

Rogare is contributing to these challenges with the aim to ensure any solutions are grounded in the relevant theory and evidence that already exist. Our work consists of three phases:

Phase 2 – building on the issues identified and ideas collated under Phase 1, construct a Blueprint – based on Lean Out Feminism – to dismantle patriarchal structures in the fundraising profession.

The paper outlining the Blueprint – its 45 recommendations – also contains the following sections:
- Types of gender oppression and why structural change is needed to combat them – by Ashley Belanger
- Improving workplace and leadership equity – by Heather Hill and Elizabeth Dale
- Donor-perpetrated sexual harassment – by Jessica Rose
- How to engage and enlist more men in being part of the change – by Becky Slack (a shorter version of this paper).

Phase 3 – starting in 2023, this phase will look at how to implement and/or adapt the Blueprint, and explore any other challenges and issues that arise as we take this forward.

About the author of this paper: Becky Slack – co-director of Agenda

Becky Slack is co-director of Agenda (formerly known as Slack Communications). She has a 28-year career spanning journalism, communications and fundraising. Becky was a founder member of the Women's Equality Party, helped create its first policy document and co-organised its first party conference. She is the former editor of LEAD: Leadership for Equality and Diversity, and holds a master's degree in political strategy and communications from the Brussels School of International Studies (part of the University of Kent), where she explored racial and gender prejudice in American politics, among other topics.

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Heather Hill	Chapel & York/Rogare (phase 1 & phase 2 project leader)	**Ruth Smyth**	BoldLight/Rogare (phase 1).

Get in touch

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