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# An Experimental Examination of the Efficacy of Human Rights Campaigns: Gender Differences and Stereotypes (abstract)

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## **The Social Practice of Human Rights: Charting the Frontiers of Research and Advocacy**

2015 Conference of the University of Dayton Human Rights Center

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For the archive of the conference, see [http://ecommons.udayton.edu/human\\_rights/2015/](http://ecommons.udayton.edu/human_rights/2015/)

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### **Research Panel:** Framing Human Rights

**Presenters:** Michele Leiby, Angie Bos, and Matthew Krain

**Title:** An Experimental Examination of the Efficacy of Human Rights Campaigns: Gender Differences and Stereotypes

**Abstract:** International Human Rights Organizations [IHROs] attempt to shape individuals' values and mobilize them to act. Based on previous research, we know that IHROs may strategically manipulate gender images and stereotypes in order to increase consensus and action on human rights issues. The discourse of "women and children" as protected categories rests on the assumption that women do not participate in the public sphere, and as a result are apolitical and innocent, whereas men, especially draft-age men, are seen as political agents and potential combatants, and therefore automatically do not qualify for protection as civilians. While many scholars have rightly criticized this discourse as essentialist and empirically false, we ask the question – does it work? Are human rights campaigns, which rely on gendered imagery more effective at shaping individuals' attitudes on a particular human rights abuse, and prompting them to take action on the issue? We test the efficacy of gendered human rights campaigns using an experimental research design. In our experiment, participants are randomly assigned to the control group (shown no campaign materials) or one of the treatment groups, which are shown a campaign against various human rights abuses featuring a personal frame (see McEntire, Leiby and Krain 2015) where the gendered imagery is minimal (a baseline), or one in which this imagery is amplified. We survey participants regarding their attitudes on the human rights issues, their likelihood to get involved in a human rights campaign, and their perceptions of men and women's roles in times of war.

**Keywords:** Human Rights Organizations, Framing, Gender Stereotypes, Experimental Design

### **Biographies:**

**Michele Leiby**, Assistant Professor of Political Science, College of Wooster, conducts research on wartime sexual violence in Latin America, and how Human Rights Organizations frame their appeals to mobilize support. Her work has been published in English and Spanish, appearing in *American Political Science Review*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *Politics and Society*, *Revista Memoria* as well as in edited volumes on international sex crimes.

**Angela Bos**, Associate Professor of Political Science, College of Wooster, conducts research on political parties, campaigns and elections, media and politics, gender and racial stereotypes of candidates, political psychology, civic education, political participation, and effective pedagogy in political science.

**Matthew Krain**, Professor of Political Science, College of Wooster, examines the causes and consequences of regime social control policies and large-scale human rights violations, and the role of the state and other actors in the international community in causing, preventing or mitigating the severity of conflict and violence, including genocide and other human rights violations.