Foreword

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Scholarship about feminism and federalism is alive and well, and this is a very good thing. This *Handbook on Gender, Diversity and Federalism* provides evidence that smart scholars are asking and answering interesting questions about feminism and federalism. But much more remains to be done.

The 23 chapters in this book address a third generation of feminism and federalism studies. Unlike earlier generations that dealt with traditional federations, asking questions such as why some countries adopt women's policies such as quotas and prevention of sexual abuse, work in this third-generation compilation is more ambitious in terms of definitions of federalism, countries studied, intersectionality and how gender effects change in inter-governmental relations. The importance here is that it is not just traditional federations and not just traditional questions.

This work expands the boundaries of federalism and its impact on women. I very much like the expansion. Although long-time federalists (like me) have been content with the diversity of recognized federations (and their institutions), it is hard to deny the vibrancy of recognizing quasi-federations which may be partial or even unstable federations, moving back and forth from democratic to authoritarian governance forms. Decentralization – a research mainstay for traditional federalism scholars – takes on a new feel in this volume in the examination of how decentralization affects aspects of gender regimes such as marriage, adultery and divorce.

Also welcome is the idea of not just asking how a federation compares to a matched non-federation in adopting women's issues such as quotas but with seeking more broadly to develop new approaches and drawing from other disciplines for alternative terminology. For example, Vickers uses the term 'federalization' which she defines as a way to recognize countries that aren't formal federations but use some federal arrangements to accommodate diversity and manage conflict.

Most federalism literature doesn't deal with decolonization and democratization or its opposite military or authoritarian governance. This is important over time as sometimes federations in the global south experience both democratization and authoritarianism at different times. This recognition of the dynamic nature of federalism rather than the more usual static approach is refreshing. Democratization relates to gender in ways I had not thought about – including declining fertility rates and women's economic circumstances and political empowerment.

I have long advocated expanding the scope of federalism research from the focus on institutions to a more diverse research focus on actor-centered and mixed behavioral approaches. I can also add intersectionality to that list. Several of the chapters in this book deal with how gender intersects with race, class and even religious minority identities in important and meaningful ways.

But of course, institutions remain important to political scientists and happily are well covered in this book. While federalism scholars are beginning to embrace the multilevel governance (MLG) notion, authors in this book highlight why recognition of MLG is important, especially in non-traditional federations or quasi-federations. Informal institutions are recognized in chapters in this book in ways that continue to expand our thinking about institutions. Also of interest are chapters about how gender and federalism affect policy issues such as

health and social policy, protection from violence, Indigenous reconciliation and LGBTQ rights.

As expected in any such path-breaking treatment, there remain issues that need to be resolved, questions that need to be answered. The fourth-wave research agenda proposed here includes a better understanding of MLG and disadvantaged/marginalized groups in society, feminist interests that don't align, and campaign narratives and how they play out in feminist and other identities. A closer look at gender, diversity and federalism in the Global South is clearly an important research agenda, and one that, along with this work, will help us better understand federalism and feminism now and in the future.

NOTE

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