

Westminster Too: On Sexual Harassment in British Politics

MONA LENA KROOK

Abstract

At the end of 2017, millions of women used the #MeToo hashtag to draw attention to widespread sexual harassment and assault around the world. In British politics, female politicians, staff members, and journalists opened up about their own experiences, provoking the resignation and party suspension of a number of male Cabinet ministers and Members of Parliament. This article explores how this issue got on the political agenda, what features of politics might foster harassment and discourage reporting, and what solutions might be pursued to tackle this problem. It argues that sexual harassment should be understood as a systemic, cultural problem, rather than a question of problematic individuals. Ignoring the issue of sexual harassment in politics, the article concludes, has serious consequences for gender equality—as well as for democracy itself, reducing policy effectiveness, distorting the political pipeline, and diminishing political transparency and accountability.

Keywords: sexual harassment, women in politics, gender and politics, British politics, Westminster, Labour party

IN OCTOBER 2017, sexual harassment and assault allegations against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein inspired millions of women around the world to share similar experiences, many using the viral #MeToo hashtag. Women involved in various aspects of British politics—as politicians, staff, and journalists—joined these voices, disclosing a wide range of troubling behaviours encountered over the years. As a result, a number of male Cabinet ministers and Members of Parliament (MPs) have resigned or been suspended from their parties. Some offenders came to light via a list developed by parliamentary staff using a private WhatsApp messaging group. Others had been accused months earlier, but parties took no steps to reprimand or dismiss them—until the scandal brought these cases back to light. Still others remain anonymous for now. For some, like the women who set up the #LabourToo website to collect testimonies and develop a compendium of the types of abuse faced by women within the party, the aim is less to ‘out’ particular individuals than to demonstrate the extent of the problem.

This is not the first time that women have come forward about sexual harassment in British politics, however. In 2013, the Liberal Democrat chief executive, Chris Rennard, was accused of sexually harassing numerous female party colleagues going as far back as 2007. Although there was insufficient evidence for criminal charges, an internal party report found credible evidence for other claims and he was suspended from the party in 2014 for refusing to apologise. One year later, the suspension was lifted, and Lord Rennard was elected by peers to sit on the Liberal Democrats’ ruling body, although he eventually agreed to resign. In the wake of a sexual assault case against former Deputy Speaker, Nigel Evans, House of Commons Speaker, John Bercow, established a confidential hotline in 2014 for anyone working in Parliament to report incidents of harassment and bullying. And in 2016, female journalists published a series of articles on sexism and harassment they had confronted when working at Westminster, inspired by an incident in which Isabel Hardman at *The Spectator* reported to the Tory whip’s office a

sexist remark made about her by a male MP, later revealed to be Bob Stewart.

Distinct from previous occasions, however, both major party leaders responded to the October 2017 allegations. As the scandal first broke, Prime Minister Theresa May stated that 'unwanted sexual behaviour' is 'completely unacceptable'. Two days later, she wrote to Speaker Bercow, calling for the establishment of a new grievance procedure to deal with complaints of misconduct at Westminster. She noted that, while the Conservative party was determined to improve its own procedures, it was vital to work on the issue on a cross-party basis as well. Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn condemned the 'warped and degrading culture' that has permitted abuse of women to be 'accepted and normalised'. He stated emphatically that there would be 'no tolerance in the Labour Party for sexism, harassment, or abuse. Whatever it takes, we are absolutely committed to rooting it out.'¹

On 30 October, MPs weighed in on these matters as well, with Harriet Harman posing an Urgent Question to House of Commons Leader, Andrea Leadsom, asking for a statement about her plan to tackle sexual harassment in Parliament. During the debate, Liz Saville Roberts, a Plaid Cymru MP, shared that a staff member for another MP had come to her that day, frustrated that she had reported an incident no less than four times—but that the case had gone nowhere. Labour party MP, Kevin Barron, noted that the three major parties had blocked an effort in 2012 by the Parliamentary Committee on Standards to give the Standards Commissioner wider scope to deal with issues of sexual misconduct. When Leadsom was asked what she believed should happen to perpetrators, she responded that—while penalties were still to be discussed—staff members could potentially lose their jobs, MPs faced possible withdrawal of the whip, and cabinet ministers might be sacked. With respect to the types of acts defined as 'sexual harassment', she emphasised that she would set 'the bar significantly below criminal activity'.²

Despite these strong and supportive responses to the problem of sexual harassment in politics, not all reactions have been equally serious and sympathetic. During the Urgent Question, several MPs claimed that,

on their way to the debate, they heard colleagues in the corridors making jokes about being sexual harassers and complaining about a 'witch hunt'. Those accused of sexual misconduct have also sought to minimise the gravity of the charges against them. Former International Trade Minister, Mark Garnier, admitted openly that he had called his secretary a sexually disparaging name and had asked her to buy sex toys. He stated, however, that these behaviours did not amount to harassment, but were merely 'amusing conversation' and 'good humoured high jinks'.³ Similarly, journalist Julia Hartley-Brewer was astonished when Defence Secretary, Michael Fallon, resigned in November, allegedly for touching her knee on multiple occasions in 2002. She said she did not consider herself a 'victim' and it was 'the most insane, absurd, and ridiculous resignation of a cabinet minister ever'.⁴

The rapidly developing nature of this scandal raises a number of questions. First, how did this issue get on the political agenda? If such behaviours have long been normalised, or hidden from view, how did they suddenly become recognised as a 'problem' in politics? Second, is there something about the political sphere that facilitates sexual harassment—and/or that makes reporting it more difficult? Third, what can be done about it? Why are existing measures insufficient for tackling the problem? To answer these questions, I draw on a number of academic literatures, as well as developments in other countries, to inform and situate the British case. I argue in favour of understanding sexual harassment as a systemic, cultural problem that is not merely confined to the aberrant acts of particular individuals. Moreover, ignoring its manifestations in the political sphere does not only undermine gender equality. It also poses a number of serious threats to democracy, including reducing policy effectiveness, distorting the political pipeline, and diminishing political transparency and accountability.

Sexual harassment as a 'problem' in politics

Sexual harassment in the workplace has long existed, but until recently women have

tended to be blamed, as their presence in these spaces exposed them to 'natural' and 'uncontrollable' male lust. The problem was thus viewed as a question of morality on the part of women, rather than as one of force on the part of men. To be sexually harassed or assaulted, consequently, reflected negatively on a woman's character, deterring many from speaking out. These perceptions began to shift in the 1970s due to feminist mobilisation.⁵ Early definitions of this phenomenon focused on what is now labelled 'sexual coercion', whereby an individual in a position of power demands sexual favours as a condition of employment or promotion (a *quid pro quo* situation). In ensuing decades, however, two further dimensions have also been recognised. 'Unwanted sexual attention' involves unwelcome sexual or romantic gestures; examples include sexual touching, pressure for dates, or sexualised comments about the recipient's appearance. 'Gender harassment' does not seek sexual cooperation, but instead reflects hostile and misogynistic attitudes, like sexist jokes, comments, and insults. These forms of harassment create a hostile work environment. They do not only occur between bosses and subordinates: colleagues at similar or lower ranks may also engage in these behaviours.

Contrary to traditional understandings, current definitions thus emphasise that sexual harassment is not an expression of sexual desire. Rather, it is motivated by a craving for social status, or a feeling of power gained by pressuring, provoking, frightening, intimidating, or demeaning another person who has little recourse for self-defence or retaliation. Other forms of inequality—like age, race, and disability—can exacerbate these dynamics. Hostility to women, or negative attitudes toward gender equality, thus determine a person's likelihood to engage in—and/or tolerate—sexual harassment. For these reasons, some scholars advocate using the term 'sex-based harassment' in lieu of 'sexual harassment', arguing that at the core of this phenomenon is an effort to defend one's status in the existing system of gender hierarchy. Both men and women can therefore engage in sex-based harassment, although men are far more likely to do so.⁶ Those who believe that gender equality has already been achieved—and thus deny

ongoing discrimination—may also engage in victim blaming. By explaining the problem in individual and not structural, cultural terms, women who fall in this category can (falsely) reassure themselves against their own vulnerability to harassment.⁷

As a result of major transformations in gender roles, overt hostility to women has decreased in recent years, leading to expectations that sexual harassment might be on the decline. Yet, as research has shown, blatant sexism has largely been replaced by 'ambivalent sexism', whereby egalitarian values coexist with negative sentiments toward women. Sexist humour thrives in such an environment, because it provides an outlet for expressing antagonistic attitudes toward women under the guise of 'benign amusement'. Its prejudice-releasing function is evidenced by the fact that those who rank high on the enjoyment of sexist humour are more likely to harass sexually and/or sexually assault women. Framing sexist remarks and behaviours as a 'joke', in turn, avoids the social disapproval normally associated with discrimination. This dual function makes sexist conduct difficult to challenge: if women laugh, they are complicit in their own humiliation; if they refuse, they are accused of lacking a sense of humour. Sexist 'jokes' are thus far from 'harmless', but instead increase tolerance of sexism, reinforcing and normalising gender inequality.⁸

What has changed over the past few decades, however, is that many women—and their male supporters—now refuse to endorse the sexism and misogyny driving these various forms of behaviour. As a result, 'sexual harassment' is now widely accepted as a concept, even if it has not always led to more respectful treatment of women. Despite this context, sexual harassment *in politics* has only newly been recognised as a phenomenon. Over the last ten years, sexual harassment allegations have led a number of high-level political officials to lose their positions. These include Mbulelo Goniwe, chief whip for the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party in South Africa in 2006; Massimo Pacetti and Scott Andrews, Liberal MPs in Canada in 2014, followed by a third Liberal MP, Darshan Kang, in 2017; Silvan Shalom, interior minister of Israel in 2015; and Denis Baupin, vice

president of the French National Assembly in 2016. In the United States, the issue became salient in October 2017 when more than 140 women in California politics started the #WeSaidEnough campaign to denounce widespread sexual harassment against (and by) lawmakers, aides, and lobbyists. US Representative Jackie Speier launched #MeTooCongress, sharing her experiences and urging current and former staffers to come forward with their stories, and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand announced she would pursue legislation on this issue.

That sexual harassment occurs in politics, however, has long been known. In the wake of the Baupin scandal in France, a manifesto published in the French newspaper *Liberation* called for an end to the 'conspiracy of silence' around sexual violence and harassment in French politics. It criticised the silence of politicians, which has permitted impunity and prevented broad recognition that the issue exists, 'even if in hushed tones it is known by all'.⁹ A European Parliament (EP) staffer, who was raped by another staff member and who lodged a complaint with senior officials in 2016, similarly decried the 'culture of silence' around these issues—even though senior parliamentary staff and at least five EP members were aware of her case.¹⁰ And in an editorial, Michelle Rempel, a Conservative MP in Canada, denounced the fact that she often had to mentor young women on dealing with sexist behaviour in parliament, concluding: 'if it's truly 2016, sexism should be your problem to deal with, not simply ours'.¹¹

These debates have also emerged within a broader global context of growing attention to violence and harassment against women in politics.¹² In March 2016, the National Democratic Institute, an international non-governmental organisation based in Washington, DC, launched the #NotTheCost campaign to de-normalise violence as simply the 'cost of doing politics'. In October 2016, the Inter-Parliamentary Union published an issues brief on sexism, violence, and harassment against women parliamentarians, generating the first global statistics from interviews with female MPs from all regions of the world. The data indicate a strikingly high prevalence rate of these interrelated phenomena: more than 80 per cent had

experienced psychological violence, more than 25 per cent some form of physical violence, and more than 20 per cent some type of sexual violence in the course of their work as parliamentarians.¹³ Present debates expand these discussions to encompass not only women as voters, party members, activists, and politicians, but also as staff members and political journalists. Excusing violence and harassment as 'politics as usual' allows these behaviours to continue unabated—in turn, legitimating and strengthening the gender inequalities that have historically pervaded all parts of the political system.

Sexual harassment and the political sphere

Politics has long been viewed as a quintessentially masculine space. At a normative level, the traits often said to characterise good leaders—competitive, self-confident, and ambitious—are also those stereotypically attributed to men. At a practical level, parliamentary working arrangements—hours, debate styles, and even architecture—also tend to reflect the assumption that MPs will be male. As women enter politics, therefore, they often confront various forms of hostility, usually rooted in the perceived disjuncture between stereotypes of 'women' and of 'leaders'.¹⁴ Similar patterns have been observed in other male-dominated workplaces, where organisational cultures tend to reward those who demonstrate the most hyper-masculine characteristics. Not surprisingly, such dynamics create a context ripe for sex-based harassment, both within and across gender categories. Settings where such conduct is normalised—as in politics—are less likely to have robust policies against sexual harassment, if indeed they have any frameworks at all. As a result, targets of harassment are less apt to report incidents and have their allegations taken seriously, leading to few or no sanctions against perpetrators.

Several structural features of politics as a place of employment exacerbate these organisational cultural dynamics. In Britain, MPs are considered self-employed and hire their own staff. As the first point of contact with

citizens, staff of political officeholders are often targets of harassment by the general public.¹⁵ Less recognised, however, is that this particular employment set-up also makes staff vulnerable to harassment from MPs themselves. First, staffers can have their employment terminated at any time. Additionally, most are younger than the MPs they work for—meaning that they tend to have less experience and political connections, being at the start of their political careers. Combined, these factors make staff the perfect target for those who seek to exert their power over others, with few if any resources at their disposal to fight back. Second, given direct employment by the harassing MP, it is not clear to whom a complaint should be directed. Despite the existence of the Westminster hotline, no independent mechanism of accountability presently exists. All cases, if pursued, are referred to the respective political parties, who can actively discourage women from pursuing claims, fearing that any scandal might negatively affect the party's electoral prospects.

Beyond the employment relationship, other structural aspects of politics also prevent action from being taken to tackle sexual harassment. Similar to staff, political journalists rely heavily on MPs and other politicians to provide quotes and other information in order for them to be able to do their job reporting on recent events. *Daily Mail* associate editor, Isabel Oakeshott, keenly recognised this in 2016 when she argued that *Spectator* journalist, Isabel Hardman, should not have complained to the Tory whip about Bob Stewart's behaviour. In a classic victim blaming move, she suggested that Hardman 'should have been pleased at the attention. The sadness is that male MPs will be a little more guarded next time they talk to her and, no doubt, to the rest of us. That's the last thing we journalists need.'¹⁶ This dynamic is not restricted to Britain: in 2015, forty female political journalists in France published a manifesto decrying the sexism and unwanted sexual attention they had faced, all too often, from male politicians over the years. Tellingly, less than half of them openly put their names on the manifesto and all the incident snapshots were presented anonymously, in light of the potential risk to their careers.

Within Parliament, politicians are, furthermore, protected in several ways due to the nature of their job as representatives of the people. In Costa Rica in 2006, a female staffer discovered that elected officials were protected by immunity for any speech or actions taken in the course of their political work—which meant that sexual harassment legislation did not apply to them in their capacity as politicians. In Canada in 2014, two female MPs from the National Democratic party were harassed by two male MPs from the Liberal party. When seeking redress, the women learned that there were no formal or informal mechanisms in place inside Parliament to deal with complaints when they involved two colleagues. The fact that it occurred across party lines meant, further, that the issue could not be handled solely as an internal party matter—although Liberal party leader, Justin Trudeau, moved quickly to remove both MPs from their seats. Unless remedied, as they were in Canada, such legal and regulatory gaps protect officeholders from being held accountable. At the same time, victims lack the types of protections that they would have in any other workplace.

Interventions against sexual harassment in politics

Political dynamics thus exacerbate the tendencies associated with identifying and responding to sexual harassment. However, the representative nature of politics also makes it possible to argue that it—more than any other arena—should be the focus of intervention, and indeed leadership, on this issue. As noted by MP Liz Saville Roberts during the Urgent Question debate: 'You would expect this place to be setting an example and not lagging behind what is normal workplace practice anywhere else in the country.'¹⁷ Recognising that MPs should be held to a high standard, in 1994 Prime Minister John Major established the Committee on Standards in Public Life, leading to the creation of a Code of Conduct, a Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, and a new Standards and Privileges Committee. With these reforms, Parliament moved from a system of informal, unwritten norms to a more

institutionalised system of standards, investigation, and sanction to police patterns of misconduct by MPs. Most forms of misconduct are financial in some way and/or relate to abusing the power of the office for personal gain. Such behaviours are recognised as a serious problem for democracy, with regulations in place not only to prevent improper influences on policy, but also to ensure 'honourable' conduct on the part of MPs.¹⁸

The democratic implications of sexual harassment—like other forms of misconduct on the part of MPs—call for Parliament to play a leading role in tackling this problem. Yet, for a variety of reasons, Parliament should not be the only actor. On the one hand, many organisations have a mixed record in terms of addressing sexual harassment, often privileging and protecting perpetrators. Relying only on one institution, therefore, may not suffice to ensure justice for victims, especially when there is lack of transparency with regard to how decisions are taken. Further, with more reporting options, individuals may be more willing to come forward. On the other hand, sexual harassment does not only take place in Parliament, but also in local councils, inside parties, and online. Challenging these cases of harassment requires mechanisms outside of Parliament, developed and executed by actors in local government, political parties, and civil society. A multifaceted response, in other words, offers the best prospects for raising awareness of this problem and ensuring that perpetrators are held to account.

At the parliamentary level, one message emerging clearly from the Urgent Question debate was the need for an independent body to receive and adjudicate claims—an idea endorsed multiple times by Leadsom and mentioned as well by May in her letter to the Speaker. The existing parliamentary hotline offers quite a minimal infrastructure: it provides counselling to complainants and then refers the matter on to the political parties. An independent body, several MPs proposed, might include offering impartial legal advice before deciding whether—and in which way—to proceed. To ensure that all procedures are victim-sensitive, some female MPs tweeted, parliamentary authorities should consult with external organisations

with expertise on handling cases of sexual harassment and assault. Focusing on such details is crucial, even as Leadsom stressed the need to move quickly, because an opportunity to restore confidence may be lost if the new system is not created in an open and informed way. The California Senate, for example, responded in a matter of days to the #WeSaidEnough campaign, announcing that they had appointed two law firms to investigate sexual harassment claims. Campaigners, however, immediately raised concerns about lack of transparency—not only wondering about legal expertise, but also questioning who had decided to hire these particular firms.

A second suggestion, put forward by numerous MPs in the Urgent Question debate, involved provision of training for (1) MPs on how to treat their staff, which might be expanded to cover not only sexual harassment but other forms of bullying and inappropriate behaviours; and (2) interns and those on work placement, with instruction on the various procedures in place. More generally, MPs agreed that more work needed to be done so that everyone working at Parliament was more aware of the resources available to respond to sexual harassment. These policy and training suggestions very much go hand-in-hand. Indeed, in Canada the new sexual harassment policy introduced in 2014 also requires sexual harassment training for all MPs and staff. Similarly, alongside her efforts to improve the onerous sexual harassment complaint process in the US Congress, Jackie Speier has lobbied since 2014 to make sexual harassment training mandatory for every congressional office. The need is clear: in a CQ Roll Call survey in July 2016, six in ten female congressional staffers reported being sexually harassed.¹⁹

Outside Parliament, political parties have an important role to play in the fight against sexual harassment. Prior to October 2017, the Labour party had already instituted a Code of Conduct for MPs and party members. Grievances related to violations of this Code are referred to the party's head of complaints. However, at the end of October, Bex Bailey, a Labour activist and former member of the National Executive Committee (NEC), revealed that after she was raped at a party event in 2011, she was warned that the

incident could 'damage' her—and she was given no advice on what to do next. Indeed, it appeared to her that there was no procedure in place to report the incident at all.

Amidst these discussions, on 1 November the party's General Secretary, Iain McNichol, sent an email to all of the members of the parliamentary Labour party and their staff sharing the party's 'new' sexual harassment procedures. Although the NEC elected a specialist panel of NEC members to review complaints and decide whether disciplinary action is necessary, procedurally the process was identical to the previous policy, where sexual harassment complaints were largely handled by one person only, the head of complaints. According to critical discussion by party members on Twitter, this approach fell short in two ways: first, Labour party officials lack the necessary training to handle cases of sexual harassment and assault; and, second, when the process is governed by party insiders, the anonymity of victims is severely compromised—while also potentially involving the colleagues and friends of the accused. A possible alternative model might be the 'integrity commission' set up by the ANC in South Africa to review sexual harassment allegations. In July 2016, this commission ruled in favour of the twenty-one year old complainant against one of its powerful provincial chairmen.

At the civil society level, finally, various networks have mobilised to raise awareness and give voice to those who have been sexually harassed. Most directly, women have taken power into their own hands by setting up anonymous reporting mechanisms for elected women, female party members, and parliamentary staff. Together with an opinion piece in the *Los Angeles Times*, the #WeSaidEnough campaign in California launched a website to collect testimonies later posted anonymously on their Twitter feed. In Britain, women in the Labour party set up the #LabourToo website around this same time, with the aim of gathering stories to share with party leaders to lobby them 'to take these issues more seriously and create a consensus to change policy and cultural norms within our organisation'.²⁰ When the Baupin scandal erupted in France in 2016, most discussions focused on the sexual harassment of female officeholders and party members. A few

months later, however, female staff in the National Assembly set up a website, with linked Facebook and Twitter accounts, to post their testimonies anonymously. They called themselves *Chair collaboratrice*: literally, 'flesh of a female staffer,' but sounding like *chère collaboratrice*, or 'dear (or beloved) staffer'. These initiatives have served a vital purpose in exposing sexual harassment inside democratic institutions—as well as in seeking to de-normalise its occurrence.

Toward greater gender equality in political life

Sexual harassment, in politics as in other domains, has long been viewed as the cost of women's incursion into the public sphere. While the remnants of such attitudes still exist, decades of lobbying by women's rights activists have succeeded in reframing the problem as a systemic, cultural issue rather than one reducible to the problematic behaviours of particular individuals. What recent debates add to these broader understandings is that violence and harassment against women in politics is not simply a question of equality. It also poses serious threats to democracy.

Sexual harassment can, for example, render female politicians and staffers less effective in their jobs, taking time and emotional energy away from substantive policy work. Sexual harassment can be one of the most damaging barriers to career success for women: it is associated with decreased job satisfaction, lower organisational commitment, and greater likelihood of withdrawing from work. When colleagues are harassed, moreover, 'ambient sexual harassment' can lead to higher levels of conflict and lower team cohesion and performance overall, because its existence signals injustice, unfairness, and disrespect within the organisation.

These negative dynamics, in turn, can affect the political pipeline, as many staffers later run for political office themselves. Attrition of women at this stage can therefore have important long-term implications for women's political representation and engagement. Finally, sexual harassment can reduce political transparency and accountability to the extent that female journalists are prevented from reporting on important stories,

either because they must avoid certain politicians or are refused information for failing to play along. Treating sexual harassment as ‘inevitable’ or simply ‘politics as usual’ thus has serious, and deleterious, consequences: it reinforces gender inequality, fosters a hostile work environment, and degrades democratic institutions.

Notes

- 1 Theresa May “very concerned” by sexual harassment allegations made against MPs by their staff; <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/10/27/theresa-may-concerned-sexual-harassment-allegations-made-against/> (accessed 28 October 2017); Jeremy Corbyn: sexually abusive MPs must be held to account; <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/oct/28/jeremy-corbyn-says-abusive-mps-must-be-held-to-account> (accessed 28 October 2017); ‘Sex scandal escalates as Labour activist Bex Bailey says she was raped at party event—but told not to report it’; <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/10/31/labour-activist-says-raped-senior-figure-party-event-told/> (accessed 1 November 2017).
- 2 ‘Urgent Question on sexual harassment in parliament’; <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-10-30/debates/832D011D-F22E-47EB-A7B2-E5062E84AF91/SexualHarassmentInParliament> (accessed 4 November 2017).
- 3 ‘Tory minister Mark Garnier “asked secretary to buy sex toys”, reports claim’; http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/tory-minister-mark-garnier_uk_59f58d58e4b03cd20b820533 (accessed 30 October 2017).
- 4 ‘Journalist touched on knee by Sir Michael Fallon describes resignation as “absurd”’; <https://news.sky.com/story/journalist-touched-on-knee-by-sir-michael-fallon-describes-resignation-as-absurd-11108984> (accessed 2 November 2017).
- 5 C. N. Baker, *The Women’s Movement against Sexual Harassment*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- 6 J. L. Berdahl, ‘Harassment based on sex: protecting social status in the context of gender hierarchy’, *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2007, pp. 641–58.; B. L. Russell and K. Y. Trigg, ‘Tolerance of sexual harassment: an examination of gender differences, ambivalent sexism, social dominance, and gender roles’, *Sex Roles*, vol. 50, no. 7, 2004, pp. 565–73.
- 7 T. Ståhl, D. Eek and A. Kazemi, ‘Rape victim blaming as system justification: the role of gender and activation of complementary stereotypes’, *Social Justice Research*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2010, pp. 239–58.
- 8 M. L. Bemiller and R. Z. Schneider, ‘It’s not just a joke’, *Sociological Spectrum*, vol. 30, no. 4, 2010, pp. 459–79; T. E. Ford, ‘Effects of sexist humor on tolerance of sexist events’, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, vol. 26, no. 9, 2000, pp. 1094–107.
- 9 ‘Harcèlement et politique: “Pour que l’impunité cesse”’; http://www.liberation.fr/france/2016/05/09/harcement-et-politique-pour-que-l-impunit-cesse_1451542 (accessed 10 May 2016).
- 10 ‘Brussels faces its own harassment demons’; <https://www.politico.eu/article/sexual-harassment-brussels-faces-its-own-demons/> (accessed 30 October 2017).
- 11 ‘Michelle Rempel: confront your sexism’; <http://nationalpost.com/opinion/michelle-rempel-confront-your-sexism> (accessed 20 April 2016).
- 12 M. L. Krook, ‘Violence against women in politics’, *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2017, pp. 74–88.
- 13 Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Sexism, Harassment, and Violence against Women Parliamentarians*, Geneva, 2016; <http://archive.ipu.org/pdf/publications/issuesbrief-e.pdf> (accessed 3 December 2017).
- 14 A. H. Eagly and S. J. Karau, ‘Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders’, *Psychological Review*, vol. 109, no. 3, 2002, pp. 573–98; N. Puwar, *Space Invaders: Race, Gender, and Bodies out of Place*, New York, Berg, 2004.
- 15 T. J. Lowry et al., ‘Harassment and other problematic behaviors experienced by the staff of public office holders’, *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2015, pp. 1–10.
- 16 ‘Strong women don’t need to whine about sexists calling us “totty”: as a female writer complains about MP’s jibe, a colleague says there are better ways to handle things’, *Daily Mail*, 13 April 2016; <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3538716/Strong-women-dont-need-whine-sexists-calling-totty-female-writer-complains-MP-s-jibe-colleague-says-better-ways-handle-things.html> (accessed 14 April 2016).
- 17 ‘Urgent Question on sexual harassment in parliament’, 30 October 2017; <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-10-30/debates/832D011D-F22E-47EB-A7B2-E5062E84AF91/SexualHarassmentInParliament> (accessed 4 November 2017).
- 18 N. Allen, ‘Dishonourable members? Exploring patterns of misconduct in the contemporary House of Commons’, *British Politics*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2011, pp. 210–40.
- 19 See <https://www.rollcall.com/news/predatory-behavior-capitol-hill-sexual-harassment> (accessed 3 December 2017).
- 20 See <http://www.labourtoo.org.uk> (accessed 5 November 2017).