

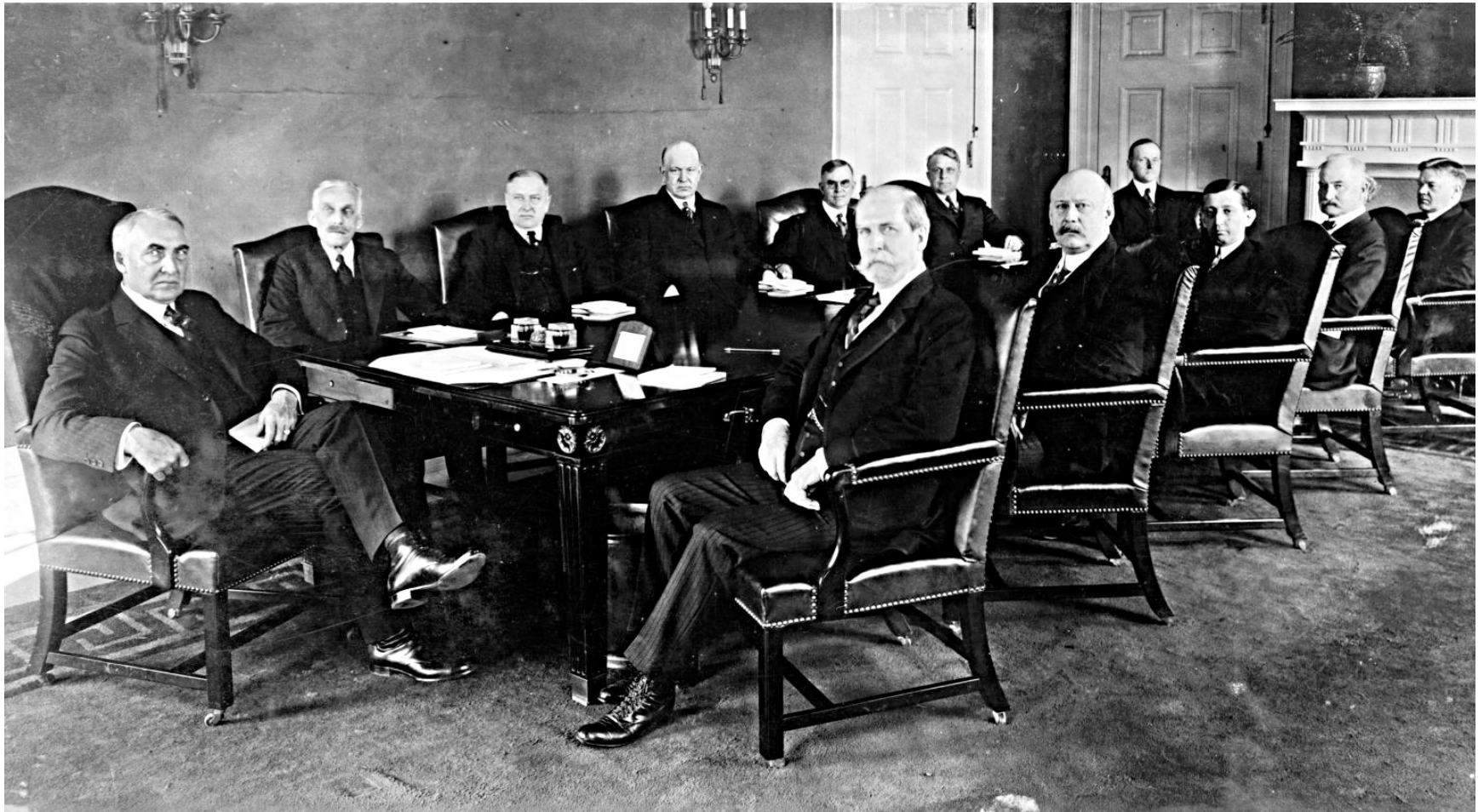
# The XX Factor

Alison Wolf

The world has been transformed

And the old world now looks very  
strange

# From the USA

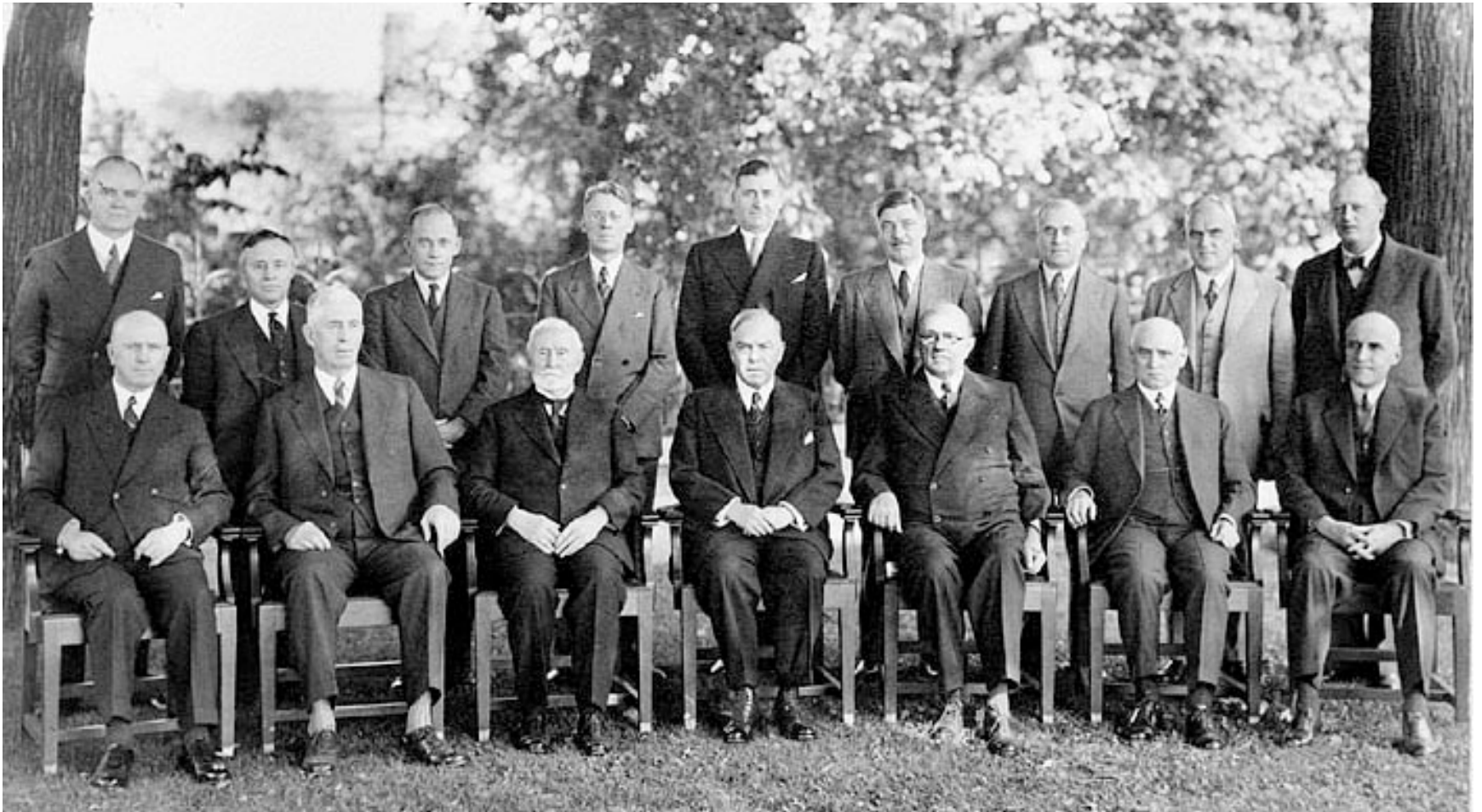


# To Ireland





# From Canada



to Singapore



# A vanished world

Now, at the top, men and women  
study together, work together, live  
together

Change is far more rapid in emerging countries  
than it was in the West

- 31% of senior managers in large privately held Chinese businesses are women
- Sri Lanka: first elected female prime minister
- Rwanda: highest proportion of elected female legislators in the world
- Countries headed by women currently include Germany, Brazil, Bangladesh, Chile



# The up escalator - EDUCATION

Formal criteria and rules can be the  
friends of the excluded and the  
powerless

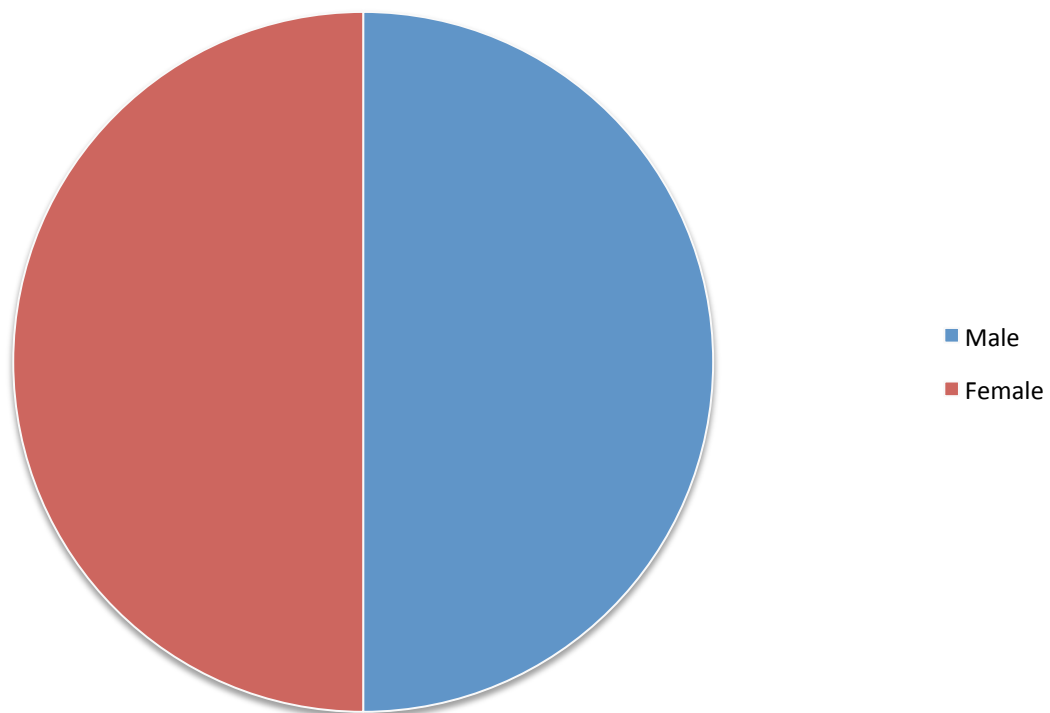
Women are the majority of  
university students everywhere

Importance of formal education in  
modern societies is key to women's  
success

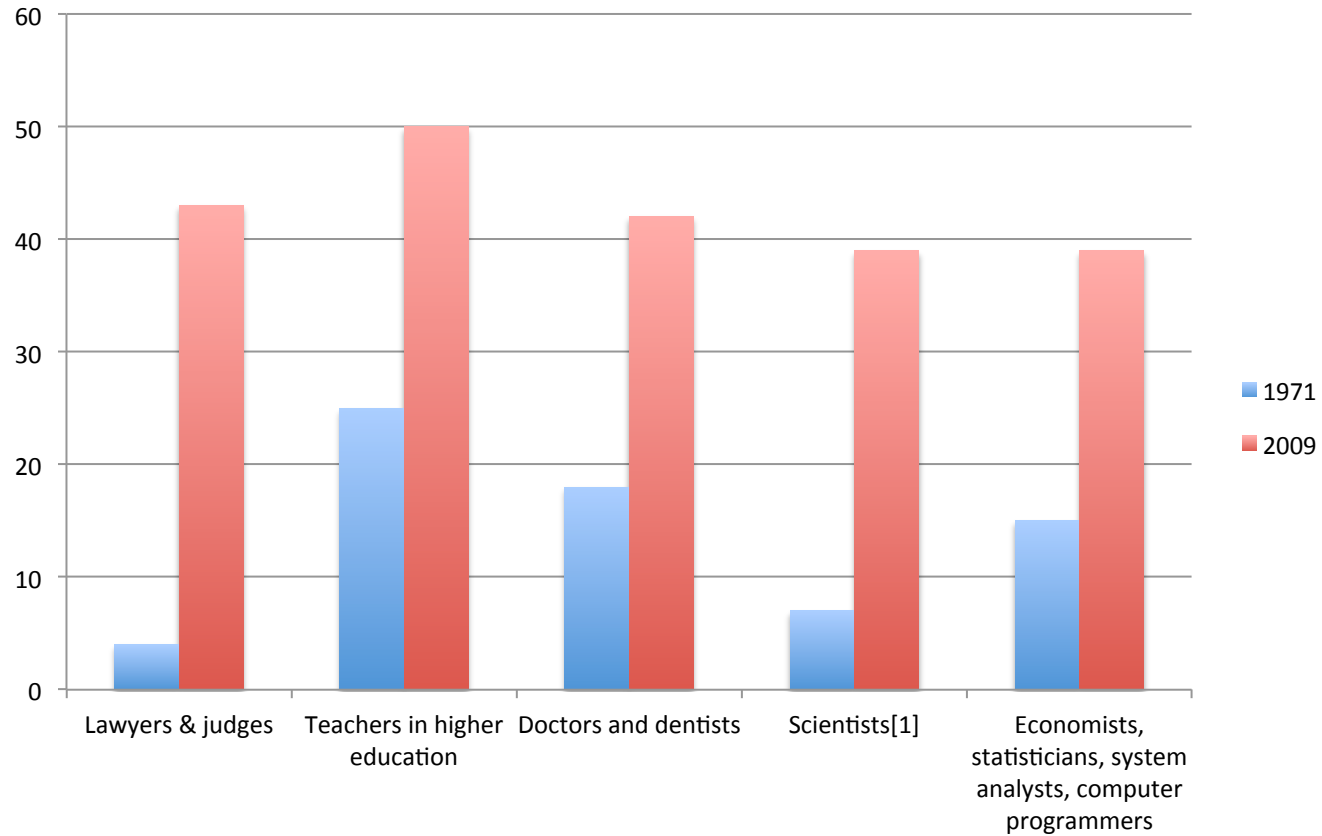
# Opening up the elite

- Ivy League colleges in the US are now majority female (just)
- Oxford and Cambridge have hit gender-parity
- Dramatic change in the course of 40 years

**% Class 1 jobs held by men and women: OECD  
2000**



## % female: selected professions UK





# New marriage patterns (1)

- The educated and the successful marry each other.
- Money marries money in a whole new way. High salary marries high salary. MBA marries MBA.
- Both men and women want companions AND high-class parents for their children

# New marriage patterns (2)

- Many highly educated people – male and female – do not marry
- Many highly educated people – male and female – do not have children
- Family sizes are small among the successful
- This is true across the world. Being single is a new normal, and one the world will have to get used to.

A huge, world transforming change  
to be celebrated

**BUT NEW – AND OLD -  
CHALLENGES TO BE FACED**

# An end to sisterhood

*For 15% a life increasingly like men's. For 85% a life that remains highly 'gendered'*

*Part-time work and interrupted work-patterns lie at the root of the gender pay gap*

### Number of women and men employed, by occupation

Secretaries and  
administrative  
assistants

97% female



Registered  
nurses

92% female



Nursing,  
psychiatric and  
home health aides

89% female



Maids and  
housekeeping  
cleaners

90% female





# Two tribes?

- Work for identity not just money
- Work in 'mixed' workplaces
- Very brief or no career breaks
- Work for money
- Work in traditional 'female' occupations
- Break off work when children young. Very often work part-time

# And yet, and yet...

- At the very top men still dominate
- In their 20s, women are paid slightly more than men, in a given occupation – from age 30 onwards, gaps open
- Women change jobs away from the short-notice late nights high-travel world
- Part-time jobs become gold-dust

It's because of children, of  
course

But is it inevitable that mothers are  
the prime carers, the default  
'responsible person'?

# Culprits

- Social expectations
- Legal and financial policies
- Pressure from medical and psychology establishments
- Path dependency
- Short-termist labour markets (employers & employees)

# And also our own conscious and unconscious demands

- Females always want 'good' fathers for their offspring
- Among primates, high status females seek out high status males
- In industrial societies, men increasingly want wives who are not just pretty, not just rich, but can also educate intelligent children
- In modern, 'post-industrial' societies, women want the same of their men



# New work patterns

- Men and women put in the same average number of 'work' hours, counting external paid work *and* work around the house
- NO-ONE believes this but it's true
- Also, the more a woman earns relative to her male partner, the more the man shifts his hours towards home-based unpaid work
- This means there is often MORE equality over child-care and domestic duties among middle-income than top-income households.

We know more and more about the  
power of emotions and unconscious  
reactions and motives

But we need also to be more  
conscious of them in what we do and  
how we respond to others

# Costly signalling

We all, men and women, want to show that we are 'fit', successful and highly rated – and we use the signals that other human beings respond to.

Peacocks take it to extremes



But these are also pretty costly...





And a sign that you don't care about cost.



# Signalling is...

- Ubiquitous
- Effective
- About a lot more than sex (and rather rarely about sex in the office)
- It's why politicians dye their hair
- It's why good-looking thin people – male and female - get paid more, the world over
- And it is, sadly, more expensive and time-consuming for women than it is for men

**But knowledge is power**

See your hair appointments as an  
investment. Feel good about them.  
And thank you!