

# **The Centrality of Women in Hutu Militias**

**Hollie Nyseth Nzitatira, Jared F. Edgerton, Elizabeth L. Brannon, and Dagmar Heintze**



AFP

In just 100 days in 1994, about 800,000 people were slaughtered in Rwanda by ethnic Hutu extremists. They were targeting members of the minority Tutsi community, as well as their political opponents, irrespective of their ethnic origin.

## Rwanda's minister for women's affairs at the time of the 1994 war is accused of an incomprehensible evil — inciting Hutus to rape thousands of female Tutsis. Pauline Nyiramasuhuko is now the first woman ever on trial for genocide. A Woman's Work

By Peter Landesman

**S**

laughter, and then worse, came to Butare, a sleepy, sun-bleached Rwandan town, in the spring of 1994. Hutu death squads armed with machetes and nail-studded clubs had deployed throughout the countryside, killing, looting and burning. Roadblocks had been set up to cull fleeing Tutsis. By the third week of April, as the Rwanda genocide was reaching its peak intensity, tens of thousands of corpses were rotting in the streets of Kigali, the country's capital. Butare, a stronghold of Tutsis and politically moderate Hutus that had resisted the government's orders for genocide, was the next target. Its residents could hear gunfire from the hills in the west; at night they watched the firelight of torched nearby villages. Armed Hutus soon gathered on the edges of town, but Butare's panicked citizens defended its borders.

Enraged by Butare's revolt, Rwanda's interim government dispatched Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, the national minister of family and women's affairs, from Kigali on a mission. Before becoming one of the most powerful women in Rwanda's government, Pauline — as everyone, enemy and

crisscrossed Butare's back roads, announcing that the Red Cross had arrived at a nearby stadium to provide food and guarantee sanctuary. By April 25, thousands of desperate Tutsis had gathered at the stadium.

It was a trap. Instead of receiving food and shelter, the refugees were surrounded by men wearing bandoliers and headresses made of spiky banana leaves. These men were Interahamwe, thuggish Hutu marauders whose name means "those who attack together." According to an eyewitness I spoke with this summer in Butare, supervising from the sidelines was Pauline, then 48, a portly woman of medium height in a colorful African wrap and spectacles.

Before becoming Rwanda's chief official for women's affairs, Pauline was a social worker, roaming the countryside, offering lectures on female empowerment and instruction on child care and AIDS prevention. Her days as minister were similarly devoted to improving the lives of women and children. But at the stadium, a 30-year-old farmer named Foster Mivumbi told me, Pauline assumed a different responsibility: Mivumbi, who has confessed to taking part in the

# Puzzle

Which characteristics defined women who played central roles in Hutu militias?

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**Women on the frontline: Rebel group ideology and women's participation in violent rebellion**

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**Abstract**  
Despite the frequent participation of women in armed groups, few studies have sought to explain the variation in their roles across different rebellions. Herein, we investigate this variation. We argue that the political ideology a group adopts plays a central role in determining combat roles. Specifically, we link war hierarchies and gender-based division hypotheses drawn from these arguments to rebel organizations active in the study area. We find that groups with a more radical ideology increase the prevalence of female fighters. This finding provides general evidence that a general inverse relationship between political ideology and the prevalence of female fighters exists. We also find that political ideology plays a role in the incorporation of female fighters into their combat roles.

**Keywords**  
female combatants, rebel ideology, war

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**Conflict, Peace, and the Evolution of Women's Empowerment**

Kaitlyn Webster, Chong Chen, and Kyle Beardsley

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**Abstract** How do periods of conflict and peace shape women's empowerment around the world? While existing studies have demonstrated that gender inequalities contribute to the propensity for armed conflict, we consider how the anticipation and realization of armed conflict shape women's opportunities for influence in society. Some scholars have pointed to the role that militarization and threat play in entrenching male dominance, while others have argued that periods of warfare can upend existing gender hierarchical orders. We posit mechanisms by which the preparation for and experiences during war affect change in women's empowerment. We develop and test observable implications using cross-national data from 1900 to 2015. We find that, at least in the short and medium term, warfare can disrupt social institutions and lead to an increase in women's empowerment via mechanisms related to role shifts across society and political shifts catalyzed by war. Reforming institutions and mainstreaming gender during peace processes stand to have important legacies for gender power relations in postconflict societies, though much more may be needed for more permanent change.

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## Abstract

Despite the frequent participation of women in armed groups, few studies have sought to explain the variation in their roles across different rebellions. Herein, we investigate this variation. We argue that the political ideology a group adopts plays a central role in its gender roles. Specifically, we link variations in rebel organizations and gender-based divisions of labor to the ideological hypotheses drawn from these arguments. We use a sample of rebel organizations active in Africa to find evidence that nationalism increases the prevalence of female fighters, whereas a gendered relationship between nationalism and politics increases that political ideology plays a role in incorporating female fighters into their ranks.

### Keywords

female combatants, rebel ideology, re

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## Abstract

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# Gender Inequality and Grievances

## Women on the frontline: Rebel group ideology and women's participation in violent rebellion

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### Abstract

Despite the frequent participation of women in armed groups, few studies have sought to explain the variation in their roles across different rebellions. Herein, we investigate this variation. We argue that the political ideology a group adopts plays a central role in determining the extent of women's participation, particularly their deployment in combat roles. Specifically, we link variations in women's roles to several measures of differences in rebel group ideology. Hypotheses drawn from these arguments suggest that rebel organizations active in ideology increases the prevalence of female fighters. We find little evidence that nationalism general inverse relationship between sexes that political ideology plays a role in incorporating female fighters into their

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## Conflict, Peace, and the Evolution of Women's Empowerment

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# Fear and Peer Pressure

## Sex and Death: Gender Differences in Aggression and Motivations for Violence

Rose McDermott

**Abstract** Greater theoretical consensus and cohesion could offer critical insights for the broader community of international relations scholars into the role that gender plays in spawning and sustaining processes of violence. This review essay examines the role of gender in generating and perpetuating violence and aggression, both in theory and practice. I make four central claims. First, in many studies involving the role of sex and gender in violence, specific causal models tend to remain underspecified. Second, a divergence in fundamental assumptions regarding the ontological basis of sex differences implicitly permeates and shapes the theoretical models themselves. Third, and women are more or less likely to fight. ering that men and women may pose under different circumstances and for in the variant psychologies of men and defense exert predictable conduct of war in particular.

## Honor and political violence: Micro-level findings from a survey in Thailand

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### Abstract

Who participates in political violence? In this study, we investigate the issue at the micro-level, comparing individuals who have used violence in political uprisings with those who have not. We develop our argument from the observation that men are strongly overrepresented in political violence, although most men do not participate. Literature on masculinities emphasizes the role of honor and its links to different forms of violence, such as domestic abuse, criminal violence, and violent attitudes. Building on this literature, we discern two separate but related aspects of honor: honor as male societal privilege and control over female sexuality, that is, *patriarchal values*, and honor as ideals of *masculine toughness*, that is, the perceived necessity for men to be fierce and respond to affronts with violence or threats of violence in order to preserve status. We argue that *patriarchal values* combined with ideals of *masculine toughness* together constitute honor ideology, which contributes in turn to the explanation of who participates in political violence. We present new and unique individual-level survey data on these issues, collected in Thailand. We

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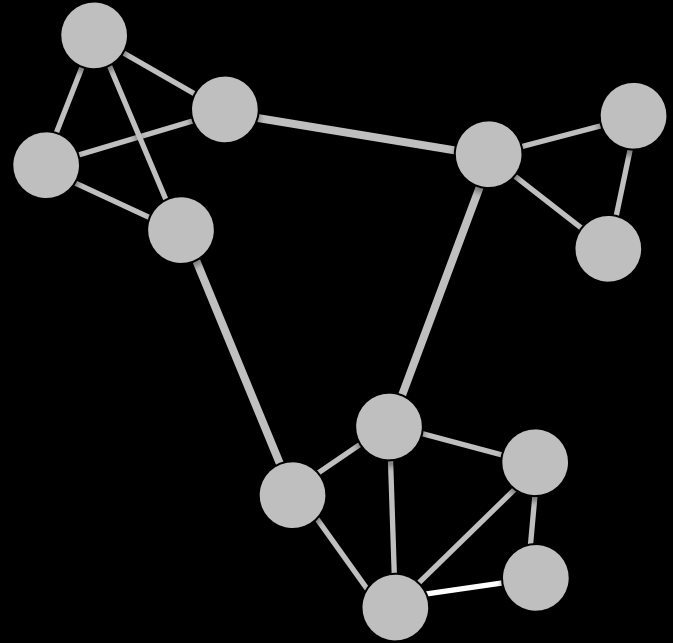


# Our contribution

Women's participation in Genocide  
What makes women more influential in  
participation in violence?

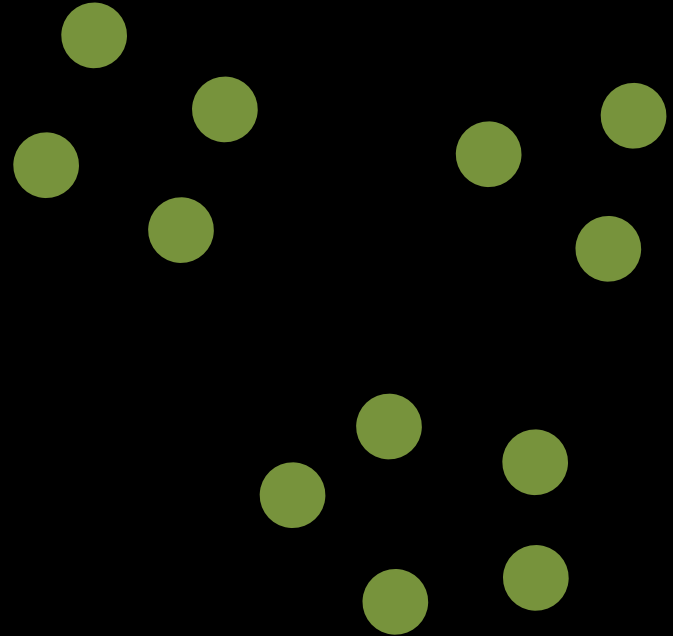
**What is a co-  
participation network**

Network terms:





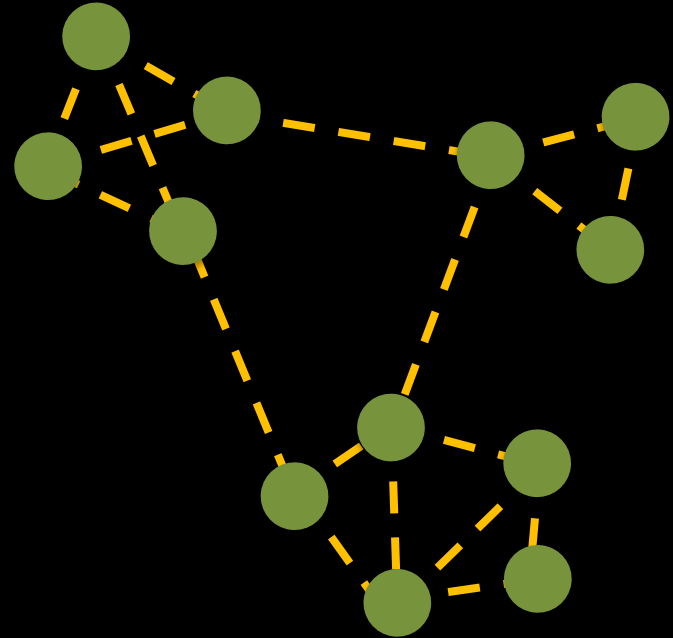
Network terms:  
Nodes/vertices



Network terms:

Nodes/vertices

Edges/ties

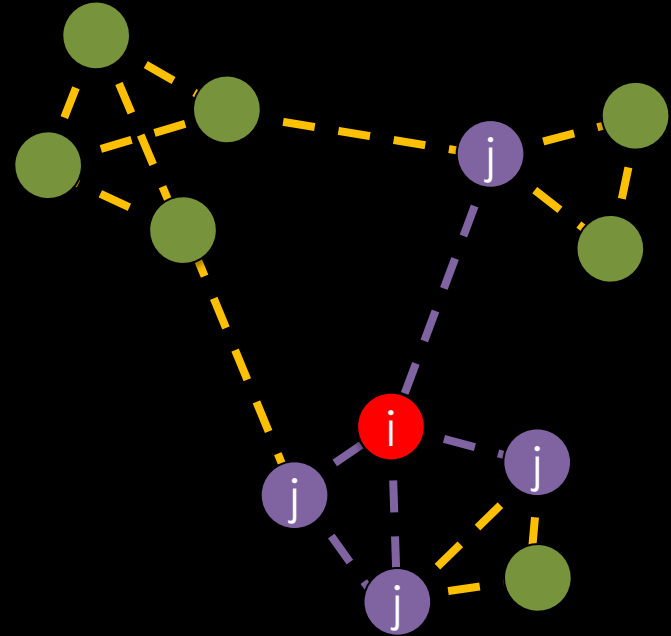


Network terms:

Nodes/vertices

Edges/ties

Degree centrality



# Women Centrality in Hutu Militias

Nodes: Participants

Ties: Number of Co-Participants

Degree of Centrality: Number of violent acts with co-participants

# Hypotheses

H1: Higher Age leads to more  
Centrality

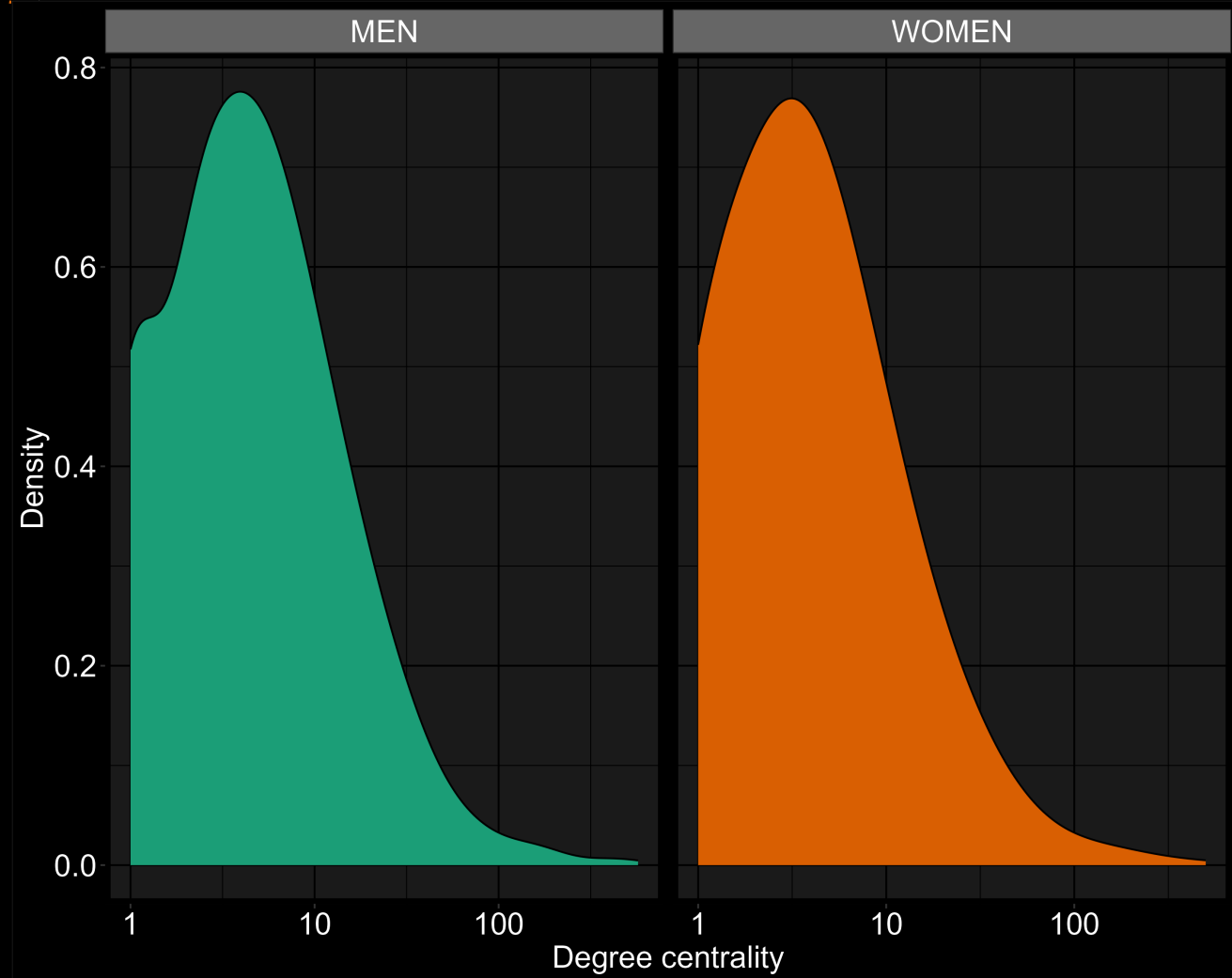
# Hypotheses

H1: Higher Age leads to more  
Centrality

H2: Higher Education leads to more  
Centrality

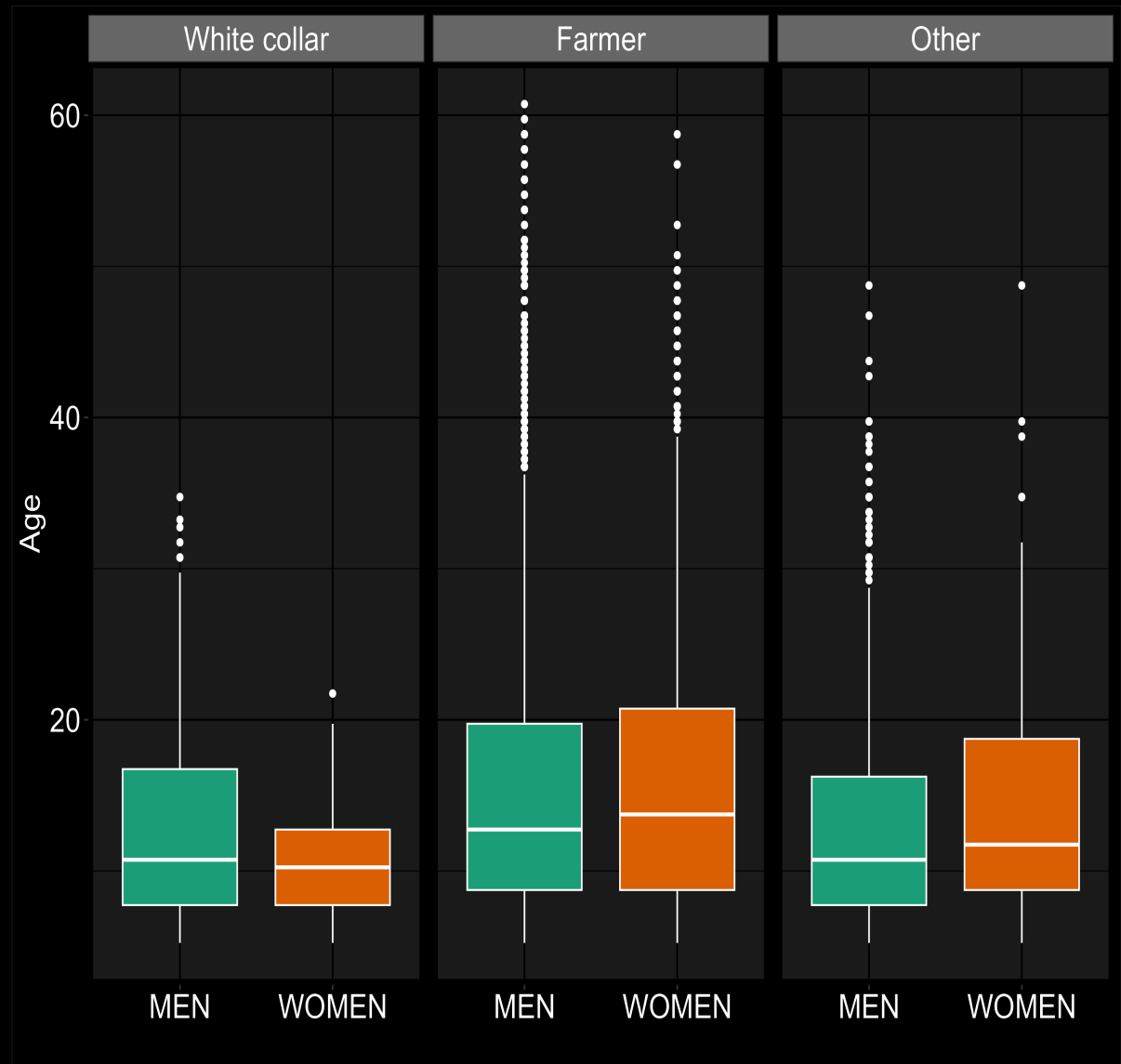
# Questions

- *Network centrality*



# Questions

- *Age x Women*
- *Education*  
*“Occupation” x*  
*Women*





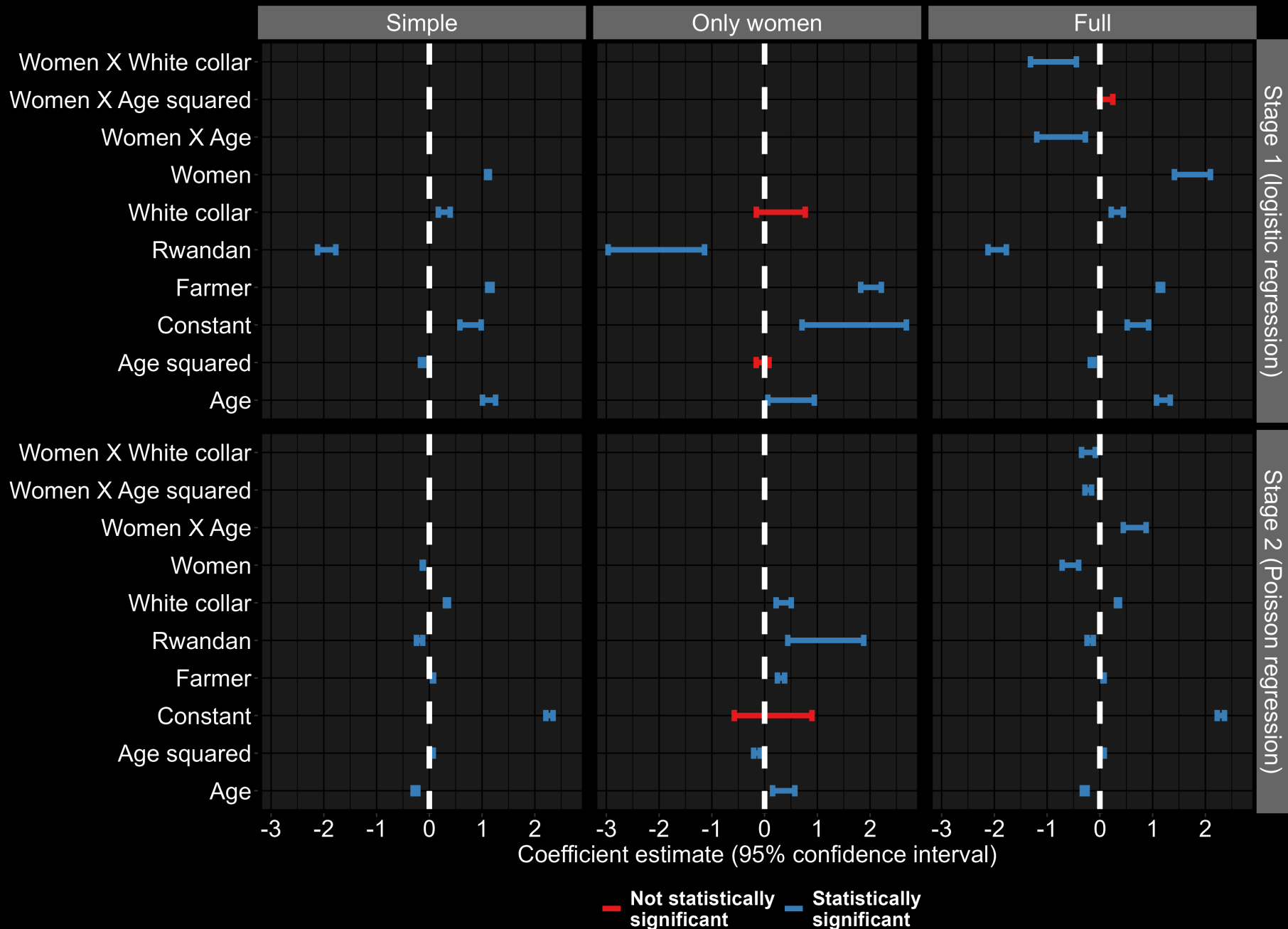
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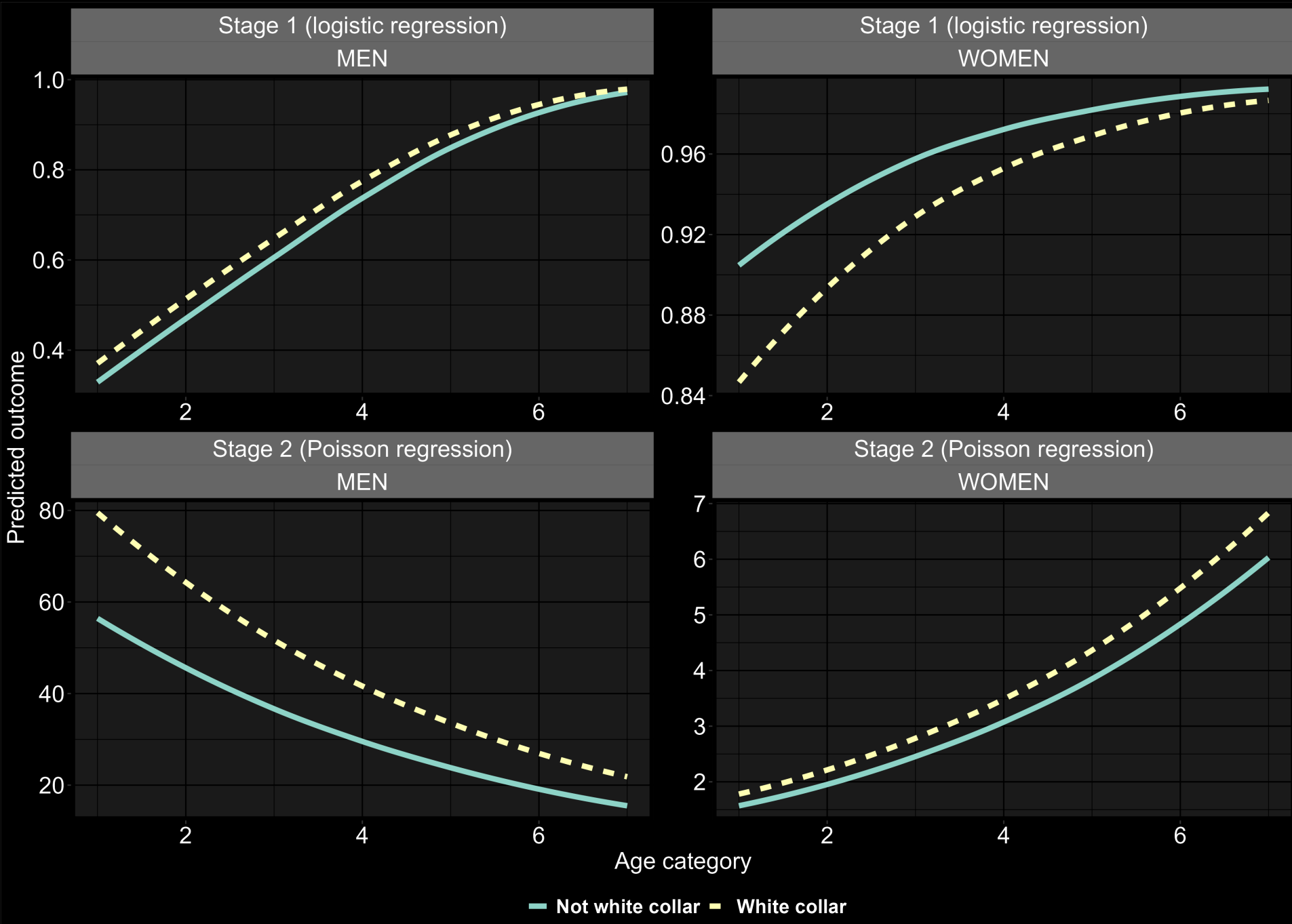
- *Nationality*
- *Main effects*



# Questions

- *Network centrality* → Dependent variable (violent/ how central?)
  - *Age x Women*
  - *Occupation x Women*
  - *Main effects*
  - *Nationality*
- Independent variables of interest
- Control variables
- 
- ```
graph LR; A[• Network centrality] --> B[Dependent variable (violent/ how central?)]; C[• Age x Women] --- D[Independent variables of interest]; E[• Occupation x Women] --- D; F[• Main effects] --- G[Control variables]; H[• Nationality] --- G;
```





# Summary

## Conditional on participation -

Women are more likely to be violent in genocide

Women are less central in genocide

Women who are central are older and better educated

# Next steps

Use different specifications to measure centrality  
Different types of violence  
Alternate sensitivity

Thank you

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