

Gender and Political Representation

Session 3: Making a Case for (Women's) Representation

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Event announcement

Next week, we'll kick-off a speaker series on *Understanding Democracies: Challenges and Solutions*.

- Diane Bolet will be our first guest
- Presentation on “The Globalization Backlash in Rural Areas: Price Shocks, Far Right Support, and the Limits of Agricultural Subsidies”
- you are all invited to join us directly after our seminar next Wednesday, 12-13 in Room SCH 100.3

What we did last week...

- introduction into comparative research design
- discussion of main concepts in the study of gender
- listening to testimonies from female politicians and the challenges they are facing

Plan for today

1. Discuss testimonies from last week
2. Conceptualize different types of representation
3. Does descriptive representation matter?

Testimonies

Reconvene in the groups from last week and briefly discuss the challenges female legislators encountered in your videos.

1. Video:
 - WOC experiences in office -> verbal + physical threats
 - expectations and responsibility
2. Video: Female US politicians
 - physically assaulted and harassed
 - no advice and role models
 - no acknowledgement of competency
3. Video:
 - day-to-day sexism
 - stereotypical expectations
 - importance of gender quotas

Testimonies

- patriarchal power relations and how they persist after the first step (into office)
 - sexual harassment
 - physical abuse
 - cementing male dominance through gestures
- public/private divide: women stereotyped to be caregivers
- gender as a defining element of female politicians' work
 - pressure
 - identity conflicts
- intersectionality and varieties of experiences
- lack of critical mass and role models

Discuss...

If we are thinking of a system facilitating women's representation, how would it be designed? Which criteria are required to speak of fair gender representation?

How Women's Representation Might Look Like...

● ...

Dimensions of political representation

Initially, Pitkin (1967) distinguishes between four types of representation:

1. **formalistic** representation: legal rights concerning representation
2. **symbolic** representation: representation of an abstract body (like the people)
3. **descriptive** representation: candidates mirror group characteristics of voters
4. **substantive** representation: demand-side preferences shape supply-side behaviour

Does descriptive representation matter (for women)?



Does descriptive representation matter (for women)?

In groups of four, discuss: should women represent women and blacks represent blacks (cf. Mansbridge 1999)? Why? Why not?

Does descriptive representation matter (for women)?

Question by Katharina: Does the continued influence of patriarchal socialization distort how we interpret e.g. women's behavior in political office and so undermine conclusions drawn about the effectiveness of descriptive representation? And might that need to be considered more as an impact of descriptive representation argument?

Which elements does descriptive representation encompass?

One can distinguish between *ascribed* and *achieved* qualities (Linton 1936, p. 115).

- *ascribed* characteristics capture visual aspects, often tied to the outward appearance of individuals (sex, race, etc.)
- *achieved* characteristics deal with qualities that individuals developed through their own behaviour (education, jobs, etc.)

Criticisms of descriptive representation

“When nondescriptive representatives have, for various reasons, greater ability to represent the substantive interests of their constituents, this is a major argument against descriptive representation” (Mansbridge 1999, p. 630)

Criticisms of descriptive representation

Potential problems include...

- essentialism: overemphasis of group identities (polarization?)
- tension with democratic ideals (quotas or re-districting)
- loss of influence in other districts
- reducing emphasis on substantive accountability

Why descriptive representation might matter...

- re-balance historic patterns of exclusion and re-defining stereotypes
- facilitate linkage between constituents and representatives (shared codes and experiences), particularly if interests are uncrystallized
- increase quality of legislative proposals
- addresses concerns of lacking legitimacy

Functions of democracy and representation



Figure: On the abortion debate in the UK (Video by BBC)

Functions of democracy and representation

Mansbridge (1999) distinguishes between two functions of representative democracy.

- Which ones?
- What's their significance for descriptive representation?

Functions of democracy and representation

1. *aggregative function*: decisions by law-makers should comply with the interests of the principals → they need to weigh in the proportion of a group in the electorate
2. *deliberate function*: representation of law-makers informs other law-makers of a group's experiences and preferences

Functions of democracy and representation

According to Mansbridge (1999), descriptive representation notably guarantees the deliberative function. The aggregative function can be achieved by other means...

- politicians want to be re-elected
- if interests of the citizens are not represented, they can prevent politicians' re-election
- anticipating elections, they remain accountable

Does the number of representatives matter?

Mansbridge (1999) argues that there need to be as many representatives of a social background as proportionality allows.

- synergy effects
- critical mass
- dispersion of influence
- intra-group preference heterogeneity

What do the empirics say?



(a) Group A



(b) Group B

Figure: On descriptive representation in practice

After reading (translate if necessary!), please find a partner from the other group. Does descriptive representation matter? Or not? Why?

Large scale empirical analyses

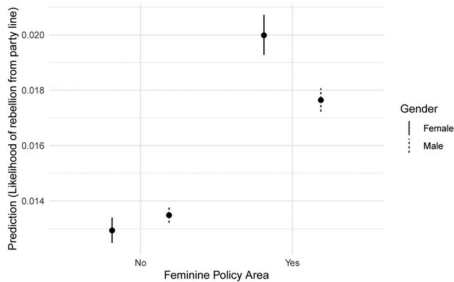


Figure 3. Marginal Effects of Gender and Policy Content on the Likelihood of Vote Defection (with 90% Confidence Intervals)
 Note: Figure based on Model 3 in [Table 1](#).

Figure: Results on descriptive representation in the German Bundestag (Dingler and Ramstetter 2023)

Large scale empirical analyses

TABLE 5 Gender and Women's Representation

	(1)	(2)
Female	0.079 (0.020)	0.083 (0.021)
Commonspace Ideology	-0.196 (0.015)	
District Ideology		-0.256 (0.024)
Congress Fixed Effects	✓	✓
N	2,194	2,194
Adjusted R ²	0.21	0.19

Note: Dependent variable is a dichotomous indicator for intervention on behalf of women in the agencies in Table 1; the unit of analysis is legislator-congress; least squares coefficients with standard errors are clustered by legislator in parentheses; all models control for chamber; Congress intercepts are omitted for readability.

Figure: Results on policy interventions in the US Congress (Lowande et al. 2019)

The role of the political system

The importance of descriptive representation varies depending on the electoral system. *Why?*

The role of the political system

- In single-member districts, the linkage between candidates and voters gains prominence
- In multi-member districts, parties become more relevant; often candidates are voted through party lists, thus being more dependent on them
 - This affects the principal-agent relationship between voters and delegates!

Advancements of the basic representation model

Wolkenstein and Wratil (2021, p. 863) considers, “how citizens want to be represented and whether representatives meet these expectations”

- **Surrogation:** do candidates care about those voters which did not directly vote for them?
- **Justification:** how do candidates justify their political decisions [pluralist vs. particularistic]?
- **Personalization:** how strong are candidate-party ties?
- **Responsiveness:** how much do policy-makers follow public opinion?

Why might these concept be important?

What we've learned today...

- what good representation of women entails for you
- what the concept of representation is about
- the costs and benefits of descriptive representation

To prepare for next week...

- next week: socialization and transmission of gender norms
- Readings:
 - Cavalli-Sforza, L. L., Feldman, M. W., Chen, K. H., & Dornbusch, S. M. (1982). Theory and Observation in Cultural Transmission. *Science*, 218(4567), 19–27.
<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.7123211>
 - Bicchieri, C. (2017, February). Diagnosing Norms. In C. Bicchieri (Ed.), *Norms in the Wild: How to Diagnose, Measure, and Change Social Norms* (p. 0). Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190622046.003.0001>

Thank you for your attention!
Any further questions?

Literature

- Bicchieri, C. (2017, February). Diagnosing Norms. In C. Bicchieri (Ed.), *Norms in the Wild: How to Diagnose, Measure, and Change Social Norms* (p. 0). Oxford University Press.
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<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.7123211>
- Dingler, S. C., & Ramstetter, L. (2023). When Does She Rebel? How Gender Affects Deviating Legislative Behaviour. *Government and Opposition*, 58(3), 437–455.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2021.40>

Literature

Linton, R. (1936). *The study of man: An introduction*.
Appleton-Century.

Lowande, K., Ritchie, M., & Lauterbach, E. (2019). Descriptive and Substantive Representation in Congress: Evidence from 80,000 Congressional Inquiries. *American Journal of Political Science*, 63(3), 644–659.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12443>

Mansbridge, J. (1999). Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent "Yes". *The Journal of Politics*, 61(3), 628–657. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2647821>

Pitkin, H. F. (1967). *The Concept of Representation*. University of California Press.

Literature

Rehfeld, A. (2009). Representation Rethought: On Trustees, Delegates, and Gyroscopes in the Study of Political Representation and Democracy. *American Political Science Review*, 103(2), 214–230.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055409090261>

Volkenstein, F., & Wratil, C. (2021). Multidimensional Representation. *American Journal of Political Science*, 65(4), 862–876. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12563>