

Gender and Political Representation

Session 12: Wrap-Up

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Today's session

- Review of your learnings
- If necessary: Evaluation criteria of term papers
- How to write a political science paper

What did you learn?

Take a few minutes to reflect on what you are taking away from the seminar.

What did you learn?

- If you have to select one thing you learned from the course, what is it?
- If there is one reading you'd recommend to others, what is it?
- If there is one thing you'd change in the course setup, what is it?
- Is there anything you want to study in more detail in the future?

What I hoped to communicate...

As stated in the syllabus, proposed learning outcomes were related to an understanding of...

- ...political representation
- ...social norms
- ...the current state of gender (in)equality in politics
- ...explanations for these inequalities
- ...tools to tackle gender equality
- ...different methodological tools to assess gender equality

On representation

Learning Outcome: The course will familiarize you with key concepts in the study of gender and political representation. You will learn what we mean by 'representation' and how different types of representation matter for our understanding of female underrepresentation in politics.

- concepts: formal, symbolic, descriptive, substantive representation
- arguments: essentialism and democratic procedures vs. balancing discriminatory legacies and improving deliberation
- empirics: descriptive representation might help to put feminized policy interests on the agenda but also elicits backlash
- reading(s): Mansbridge (1999), Ladam, Harden, and Windett (2018), and Breyer (2024)

On social norms

Learning Outcome: Moreover, you will acquire an understanding of social norms and their transmission through socialization and culture.

- concepts:
 - social norms = (1) empirical expectations, (2) normative expectations
 - cultural transmission through vertical, horizontal and oblique mechanisms
- empirics: norms on gender equality are highly persistent
- reading(s): Alesina, Giuliano, and Nunn (2013), Bicchieri, Muldoon, and Sontuoso (2011), Giuliano (2020), and Robinson and Gottlieb (2021)

On gender inequalities

Learning Outcome: You will get a general picture of the current state of gender equality in politics.

Women's equality in politics can be evaluated by measures focusing on input, throughput or output (*number of female politicians, feminized policy backed by male legislators or the pink tax*):

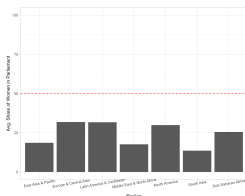


Figure: Share of Women in Parliaments by Region

Literature: Betz, Fortunato, and O'brien (2021), Clayton (2021), Krook and Restrepo Sanín (2020), and Paxton, Kunovich, and Hughes (2007)

On explanations for gender equalities

Learning Outcome: You will engage with different explanations of gender inequality in politics and understand how societal legacies, the demand-side (voters) and supply-side dynamics (political actors) contribute to it.

On demand-side discrimination

- argument: voters discriminate against female politicians
- empirics: mixed evidence on direct discrimination but assignment of stereotypes (e.g., through language) and different standards
- reading(s): Alexander, Charron, and Off (2024), Anderson-Nilsson and Clayton (2021), Breyer (2024), Bauer and Carpinella (2018), and Teele, Kalla, and Rosenbluth (2018)

On explanations for gender equalities

Supply-side patterns

- argument: women are less likely to pursue political career
- empirics: taste-based or statistical discrimination in encouraging women to run exist which might explain lower levels of political ambition aside from socio-structural resource factors; ideology matters
- reading(s): Bernhard, Shames, and Teele (2021), Thomsen and King (2020), and Fox and Lawless (2004)

On explanations for gender equalities

Institutions

- argument: the rules of the game are biased against women and prevent them from entering politics
- empirics: institutional designs, such as plurality-based voting systems or insufficient working conditions might prevent women from running
- reading(s): Singh (2025), Smith et al. (2025), and Thesen and Yildirim (2023)

On tools to tackle inequalities

Learning Outcome: You will be able to critically evaluate instruments that aim to tackle gender equality, understanding their potentials and challenges.

- concepts: feminist institutionalism, critical mass and linguistic relativity
- arguments vary: challenging male-centric rules, bringing more women into leading positions or preventing gender stereotypes from developing
- reading(s): Clayton et al. (2019), Kim (2019), Betz, Fortunato, and O'Brien (2021), Pérez and Tavits (2019), Marx (2025), Broockman (2014), Ladam, Harden, and Windett (2018), Foos and Gilardi (2020), and Robinson and Gottlieb (2021)

On methods

Learning Outcome: Through reading and discussion, you will get a glimpse on different methodological approaches to assess gender equality.

- We have focused on quantitative readings but discussed qualitative evidence as well
- Main methods: survey (experiments), quasi-experimental settings
- Other methods: field work and interviews Robinson and Gottlieb (2021)

Evaluation of the project work

Formal criteria

As a reminder:

- Submission of the term paper by **September 30, 2026**; late submission leads to downgrade
- Submit your term paper as a .pdf file.
- Length of the paper: 5,000 words (excluding abstract and bibliography)
- Correct citation, transparency in the use of AI (fail to do so leads to automatic fail or oral exam)
- Are all tables and figures labeled and referenced?
- All other formal criteria, especially the Word template to be used, can be found [here](#)

Content-related criteria

- Does the structure correspond to that of a scientific paper?
- Focus particularly on the following criteria:
 - Clarity of the research question
 - Motivation and relevance is clearly outlined
 - Systematic literature review
 - Theoretical argument (including the four components we talked about in class)
 - Discussion of alternative explanations
 - Use of appropriate data source and good description of operationalization (IV, DV, moderating variables etc.)
 - Choice of method and explanation of its implementation as well as weighing the pros and cons of a method
 - Addressing strengths and limitations of the proposed design (theoretical limitations, practical shortcomings)

Structural criteria

- Do the individual parts of the paper transition well into one another?
- Were repetitions avoided?
- Is there a golden thread throughout the term paper, particularly on the lit review and theory?

Common challenges in political science papers

- Research question too case-centered
- Unsystematic literature review
- Missing mechanisms in theory
- No discussion of alternative explanations
- Mismatch between theoretical concepts and empirical measurements
- Unstructured results section

Two exercises

1. **Option A:** If you don't have a research question for any term paper, think about your most liked paper and try to identify how it resolves the common challenges in political science papers.

Two exercises

1. **Option A:** If you don't have a research question for any term paper, think about your most liked paper and try to identify how it resolves the common challenges in political science papers.
2. **Option B:** If you do have a term paper you're working on, form pairs. One of you presents their question, theory, data. The other is the devil's advocate, and asks you about the *relevance, related literatures, mechanisms, alternative explanations* and questions your *design*.

On formulating research questions

Different questions, different goals

1. Should women represent women?
2. What would have happened to *Roe vs. Wade* if Hillary Clinton won the U.S. presidential elections in 2016?
3. How has the implementation of gender quotas developed over the last 10 years?
4. How does direct democracy affect women's turnout?

Which type of questions do these examples pose?

On formulating research questions

1. Should women represent women? → Normative questions
2. What would have happened to *Roe vs. Wade* if Hillary Clinton won the U.S. presidential elections in 2016? → Hypothetical questions
3. How has the implementation of gender quotas developed over the last 10 years? → Descriptive questions
4. How does direct democracy affect women's turnout? → Causal-explanatory questions

For your term paper, you should focus on the latter, **causal explanatory questions**.

On formulating research questions

How does a good research question look like?

On formulating research questions

Powner (2014) lists some **dos** and **don'ts** in drafting research questions. **Dos**

- start with a puzzle for which there's no good answer available (on a subject you know already)
- a question should have a question mark (e.g., *how...?* or *why...?*)
- highlights the outcome, not the causes (these will be nevertheless important later!)
- relate to theory

On formulating research questions

Don'ts

- ...have a clear, even tautological answer
- ...focus on a single case (do not use proper nouns, like states or persons in the research question, they should be more general)
- ...translate the relationship into empirical indicators in the question (e.g., talk about attitudes on gender equality, not attitudes on the question whether men and women should have equal rights on the labour market)

Excursion On choosing a research design

In the empirical social sciences, we can choose between two types of research designs:

1. quantitative designs
2. qualitative designs

The design should be selected based on your research question and theory and not the other way around!

What are the advantages of quantitative and qualitative approaches?

Excursion On choosing a research design

Often, both types of designs are possible, both allow to test causality and follow a positivist-empirical approach to the social sciences. Their research goals might, however, slightly differ:

Quantitative designs

- ...aim to identify systemic patterns across cases; disregards non-systemic, residual part
- ...focus on average effects
- ...zoom in on how on a specific cause X that leads to outcome Y
- ...often involves large- N (many cases)

Excursion On choosing a research design

Qualitative designs

- ...emphasize more often on the non-systemic, idiosyncratic part
- ...dedicate more space to case/event knowledge
- ...establishes nuances, seeks to explain within-case variation and occurrence of rare cases
- ...typically involve small- to medium-N

Excursion On choosing a research design

	Quantitative analysis	Qualitative analysis
Type of Data	Survey (experiments), annotated text and/or audio, administrative data, web data	(Un)structured interview data, archival text or audio sources, data on processes
Methods	• cross-tabulation • regression • scaling models (e.g. item-response, factor analyses) • quantitative content analyses and machine-learning approaches (text, images, audio)	• <i>within-analysis</i>: process tracing, analytic narratives, ethnography • <i>between-analysis</i>: structured comparisons (most-similar / most-differences) • <i>medium-N</i>: qualitative content analysis

Literature

Powner LC (2014) *Empirical Research and Writing: A Political Science Student's Practical Guide*. CQ Press. ISBN: 978-1-4833-7065-1

- Introduction to academic writing in political science
- Overview of all sub-steps of an empirical paper
- Particularly helpful are the first 3 chapters (research question, theory, and literature review)

On writing style in academic articles:

Schimmel J (2012) *Writing Science: How to Write Papers That Get Cited and Proposals That Get Funded*. Oxford University Press, USA. ISBN: 978-0-19-976023-7

If you want to continue your studies with us...

- Block seminar on challenges to democracy (myself)
- R course (Elena Leuschner) and quantitative methods (Daniel Bischof)
- 'Evidence on Democracy and Markets Lab' with international speakers
- supervision of theses that follow a comparative, empirical-analytic logic

Thank you for your attention!
Any further questions?

Literature



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-  **Clayton A et al. (2019)** In Whose Interest? Gender and Mass–Elite Priority Congruence in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Comparative Political Studies* **52** (1), 69–101.
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Literature



Krook ML and Restrepo Sanín J (2020) The Cost of Doing Politics? Analyzing Violence and Harassment against Female Politicians. *Perspectives on Politics* **18** (3), 740–755.



Ladam C, Harden JJ, and Windett JH (2018) Prominent Role Models: High-Profile Female Politicians and the Emergence of Women as Candidates for Public Office. *American Journal of Political Science* **62** (2), 369–381.



Lawless JL and Fox RL (2010) *It Still Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office, Revised and Expanded Edition*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.



Mansbridge J (1999) Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent "Yes". *The Journal of Politics* **61** (3), 628–657.

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-  **Marx P (2025)** Is There a Backlash Against Identity Politics? Experimental and Focus Group Evidence on the Conflict Over Gender-Neutral Language in Germany. *Comparative Political Studies*, 00104140251328038.
-  **Paxton P, Kunovich S, and Hughes MM (2007)** Gender in Politics. *Annual Review of Sociology* **33** (Volume 33, 2007), 263–284.
-  **Pérez EO and Tavits M (2019)** Language Influences Public Attitudes toward Gender Equality. *The Journal of Politics* **81** (1), 81–93.
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