

Workshop Title

Beyond Supply and Demand: Gender and Political Recruitment in Comparative Perspective

Workshop Directors

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Outline of Topic

Political parties can make or break women's attempts to stand for political office, yet there have been surprisingly few systematic studies into the 'secret garden' of political recruitment in the gender and politics literature. As a result, political parties are still the 'missing variable' in the study of women's political participation and representation (Baer, 1993). This workshop aims to shed new light on this under-researched area, bringing together scholars working on a range of empirical cases and using different theoretical and methodological approaches to investigate the dynamics of candidate selection in comparative perspective and to explore new directions for theorizing about women, gender and political recruitment.

There are few political phenomena as universal as the political under-representation of women. The emergence of women's representation as an important political issue is matched by a large and wide-ranging body of work in feminist political science that has sought to understand why women are under-represented in political office and how numerical increases in women's political presence might be achieved. Central to these analyses is the question of which factors shape access to political office. Much of the work in this area has focused on the political, socioeconomic and cultural variables that explain cross-national variations in women's numerical, or descriptive, representation (see for example Reynolds, 1999; McAllister and Studlar, 2002; Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Tripp and Kang, 2008). Yet these studies have often missed significant variations between political parties, overlooking the fact that individual parties differ in the number of female candidates they nominate and the proportion of women they send to parliament (Caul, 1999). In most countries, parties are the key gatekeepers to political office (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995). They control which candidates are recruited and selected and are, therefore, the main vehicles for delivering women's numerical presence in parliaments and governments. They are also the central actors involved in adopting candidate selection reforms such as gender quotas, and provide the main route through which these measures are implemented (Threlfall, 2007; Murray, 2010; Kenny and Verge, 2013). Thus, in order to explain women's descriptive under-representation, we need to understand how parties encourage or inhibit women's access to political office.

Yet, while the importance of the political recruitment process is widely recognized in the gender politics literature, there have been relatively few studies that directly examine the role of political parties in shaping women's descriptive representation (Murray, 2010; Bjarnegård, 2013). Meanwhile, although the study of political parties is a central focus in political science more broadly, the majority of

mainstream studies make only brief mention of issues of women or gender (see for example Katz and Mair, 1994; Webb et al., 2002; Swenden and Maddens, 2009), an omission that is surprising given wider global developments including the feminization of party politics – that is, the political integration of women and women’s policy concerns – and the rise of gender quotas. As a result, to date, it has been difficult to draw broader conclusions about the party-level mechanisms that enable or inhibit women’s political participation in parties and parliaments.

This workshop sets out to fill this gap, inviting participants to explore how gender shapes the structures, practices and rules of political recruitment (both formal and informal) within parties and how this enables or constrains women’s political participation. The directors welcome both theoretically and empirically driven papers that address the effects of candidate selection processes on representative outcomes. To facilitate the development of a wider research agenda on gender and political recruitment, the workshop will have a comparative focus. While it will collectively examine research evidence from papers that focus on single country case studies, it particularly welcomes papers that examine candidate selection dynamics in comparative perspective, either across different party or political levels, or across different countries.

Relation to Existing Research:

This workshop seeks to build on several distinct research traditions: including the large literature on gender and political representation and electoral quotas, as well as a small but growing body of work on gender, political parties and candidate selection. In doing so, the workshop aims to facilitate a wider research agenda on women, gender and political parties that speaks to and engages with central debates in political science around issues of political behavior, political participation, and democracy and representativeness.

The majority of work in the field of women and politics continues to focus on documenting women’s numerical presence, identifying the institutional and cultural variables that influence the likelihood of women being present, and exploring what women politicians do once they are elected (Murray, 2010). Many of these studies focus on whether women politicians ‘make a difference’ once they are actually in office, asking whether increases in women’s numerical presence (descriptive representation) result in increases in attention to women’s policy concerns (substantive representation) or changes in the perceptions, attitudes and behavior of women citizens (symbolic representation) (Dahlerup, 1988; Childs, 2004; Lawless 2004; Lovenduski, 2005; Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler, 2005; Celis and Childs, 2008).

This work is supplemented by a rapidly growing body of research on the origins and impact of gender quotas, as the most visible and direct mechanisms used to increase women’s political presence (see for example Dahlerup, 2006; Krook, 2009; Franceschet et al., 2012). Scholars working in this area have offered a variety of explanations for variations in quota adoption and implementation, including, for example, the importance of women’s mobilization inside and outside parties (Kittilson, 2006); cultural norms and understandings of equality and representation (Davidson-Schmich, 2006); and pressures from international organizations (Krook, 2006). Yet, while quotas are intended to counter gender biases in the distribution of

political positions, the academic literature on gender quotas often underplays the importance of internal party dynamics, a key arena in which the politics of distribution play out. As several scholars have noted, the relationship between political parties and gender quotas has not been extensively theorized and the intra-party mechanisms that explain how quotas are effectively adopted and implemented in practice remain largely unexplored in the field (Davidson-Schmich, 2006; Threlfall, 2007; Murray, 2010; Kenny and Verge, 2013). Thus, while research in these areas has raised important questions and yielded significant insights, both theoretical and empirical, the gendered mechanisms of political parties remain understudied in political science.

In focusing on this under-researched area, this workshop contributes to a small but growing body of work on gender, political parties and candidate selection (see for example Lovenduski and Norris, 1993; Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Kittilson, 2006; Opello, 2006; Murray, 2010; Bjarnegård, 2013; Kenny, 2013). These studies demonstrate that political parties play a key role in the selection and election of female politicians and also provide considerable evidence that aspiring women candidates face significant obstacles in the recruitment process. In this literature, the dominant framework for understanding the political recruitment process has been the supply and demand model (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995), which suggests that the outcome of particular parties' selection processes can be understood in terms of the interaction between the *supply* of candidates wishing to stand for political office and the *demands* of party gatekeepers who select the candidates. Research in this area has largely focused on establishing which set of factors is more important in explaining women's descriptive under-representation, with some scholars emphasizing the importance of supply-side explanations (Lawless and Fox, 2005), while others point to the limiting power of party demand, despite increases in the supply of women candidates (Lovenduski, 2005; Kittilson, 2006; Ashe et al., 2012).

However, while this research has provided new data on pathways to political power, there are still notable theoretical and empirical gaps in the literature. Much of the work in the field continues to focus on single party or country case studies (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Murray, 2010; Childs and Webb, 2012), while comparative edited volumes of gender and party politics are now outdated (Lovenduski and Norris, 1993). Given the lack of comprehensive and comparative research in this area, scholars have reached different – and sometimes contradictory – conclusions about the supply- and demand-side factors behind variations in women's political presence, making it difficult to draw broader generalizations (Krook, 2010a). As a result, several recent studies question whether the supply and demand model remains a convincing framework for the study of gender and political recruitment (see for example Krook, 2010b, 2010c; Ashe and Stewart, 2012; Childs and Webb, 2012; Kenny, 2013). These scholars draw attention to the ways in which the dynamics of supply and demand are shaped by the surrounding gendered institutional context and are subject to different spatial and temporal constraints that can help or block the selection of women candidates. Thus, gendered interactions at the individual level in the political recruitment process take place within a framework of formal and informal party rules and practices which are shaped and structured by gender norms, as well as a wider context of systemic and

structural barriers which have a differential effect on men and women as institutional actors (cf. Lovenduski, 2005).

Building on these research trends, this workshop proposes that participants look beyond numbers and focus on the gendered institutions through which candidate selection and recruitment takes place. Participants in the workshop are invited to explore and map the formal architecture and informal rules, norms and practices of the political recruitment process and investigate the active and ongoing ways in which gender is created and recreated in these institutions (Lovenduski, 2005; Krook and Mackay, 2011). In doing so, this workshop will improve our knowledge of the ways in which the gendered 'rules of the game' in the recruitment process (both formal and informal) shape the opportunities and constraints available to women candidates (as well as other marginalized groups), thus enabling a better understanding of how increases in women's numerical presence can be achieved.

Type of Papers

The workshop directors welcome both comparative and single-country case-study research papers that examine the ways in which the formal and informal rules, structures and practices of candidate selection and recruitment impact on patterns of women's representation. We also welcome theoretical papers that seek to contribute new frameworks and methodological approaches for the study of gender and political recruitment. The directors especially welcome papers that adopt a comparative approach, which can involve comparisons across multiple countries or different party or political levels.

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