Hitting Glass Ceilings: The Representation of Women in Elected Office

Jessica Fortin-Rittberger
Inaugural Lecture
9 June 2015
If the world was a village of 100 people...
Yet, parliaments of the world in 2015...

Source: Inter parliamentary Union, gender distribution in Lower Houses of parliaments
Puzzle
Breaking down the arrow
Candidate selection in context

Figure: adapted from Norris 2004, p. 183
Breaking down the arrow
Candidate selection in context

Political Culture & Societal Modernization
- Egalitarian or Traditional Attitudes

Institutions:
- Electoral Laws
- Gender Quotas
- Reserved Seats

Supply of Candidates

Candidate Selection Procedures

Pool of Candidates

Gatekeepers (parties)

Representatives

Voters

Figure: adapted from Norris 2004, p. 183
Causes I: Structural Barriers

- Women’s standing in society: traditional gender stereotypes lead to discrimination and structural disadvantage of women.
- Education, labor force participation.
Parliaments of Europe in 2015: Large differences in the representation of women

Source: *Inter parliamentary Union*, gender distribution in Lower Houses of parliaments
Breaking down the arrow
Candidate selection in context

Political Culture & Societal Modernization
Egalitarian or Traditional Attitudes

Institutions:
- Electoral Laws
- Gender Quotas
- Reserved Seats

Supply of Candidates
Candidate Selection Procedures
Pool of Candidates
Gatekeepers (parties)
Representatives
Voters

Figure: adapted from Norris 2004, p. 183
Causes II:
Institutional Barriers: Electoral rules

- Proportional Representation (PR) vs. First-Past-the-Post (FPTP)
- Adoption of gender quotas
Germany: Two electoral formulas
Comparing the proportion of women elected to the Bundestag from two electoral tiers, 1961-2009

Source: Fortin-Rittberger and Eder 2014
National vs. European Parliament:
Comparing the proportion of women between 1979-2014

Source: Fortin-Rittberger and Rittberger 2014
National-European Parliament Gender Gap:
Percent women in EP minus % in Lower Houses, 2014

Source: Fortin-Rittberger and Rittberger 2014
Breaking down the arrow
Candidate selection in context

Figure: adapted from Norris 2004, p. 183
Causes III
Recruitment procedures by political parties

Who are the individuals selecting candidates?
• Selectorates that are more inclusive nominate more women than “top-down” practices.

What are the selection procedures?
• Can candidates come forward, or must they be nominated by others?
Austria: National vs. subnational
Comparing the proportion of women at different levels of government in 2013
Breaking down the arrow
Candidate selection in context

**Political Culture & Societal Modernization**
- Egalitarian or Traditional Attitudes

**Institutions:**
- Electoral Laws
- Gender Quotas
- Reserved Seats

**Supply of Candidates**

**Candidate Selection Procedures**

**Pool of Candidates**

**Representatives**

**Gatekeepers (parties)**

**Voters**

Figure: adapted from Norris 2004, p. 183
Causes IV: Recruitment and Selection Problems

Recruitment Problem (supply):
• Women are less disposed to run for public office in general, and even less likely at the local level.

Selection Problem (demand):
• Women are less frequently included on party lists at the municipal level due to informal recruitment practices.
In a nutshell:

The process from selection to election is multilayered

Figure: adaptation based on Norris and Lovenduski, 1995, p.184.
Current research


Work in Progress

- The Consequences of Electoral System Change in Modern Democracies (with Philipp Harfst) jointly funded by the Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung/Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft.

- The Electoral Success of Women at Different levels of Government (with Christina Eder) Funded by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation.

- Candidate selections procedures in Europe (with Berthold Rittberger). Grant proposal in progress.