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Double Jeopardy or Multiple Advantage? Intersectionality and Political Representation

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This special issue revisits traditional group-based approaches to political representation by examining how multiple advantages and disadvantages interact and multiply in specific settings. The contributions examine how intersections of age, religion, gender, sexuality, ability, nationality, generation and ethnicity influence entrance to elected office and the power elected officials eventually wield. We propose a new intersectional framework for studying the mechanisms that lead to inclusion (advantage) and exclusion (disadvantage) in political representation, and find that (1) similar mechanisms produce different outcomes for different (sub)-groups in society, and (2) the effect of identity mixes is contextual and differs across dimensions of representation.

Keywords: Electoral Politics, Feminism, Identity Politics, Intersectionality, Mechanisms, Political Representation

1. Introduction

Representative institutions in the West are responding to the politics of diversity, witnessed in efforts to increase the numerical presence of disadvantaged social groups and to enlarge their opportunities to influence policy outcomes. Examples include the introduction of gender quotas, racial redistricting, reserved seats for ethnic groups and target figures for the young and old. But given the growing number of groups in society demanding access to political power, efforts by elected assemblies to reflect society's diversity often become a political minefield.

Although social differences, hierarchy and power relations between and within identifiable groups characterise the politics of diversity in European countries today, these remain largely unaccounted for in current theory and scholarship on political representation (Mügge and De Jong, 2013). While numerous studies have

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focused on the parliamentary representation of a single group—most often 'women'—they have generally shied away from examining interactions *between* groups. Studies that do compare the experiences of groups in society often approach them as separate and homogeneous entities, paying scant attention to differences *within* groups. Such approaches are challenged from an 'intersectional' perspective. Intersectionality refers to the idea that citizens' experiences, identities and interests are not shaped by their membership of one particular group, but are always created by their memberships of multiple groups. Categories such as gender, race and class are intertwined, inter-related and mutually constitutive (Crenshaw, 1991). Experiences of discrimination and marginalisation as well as those of power and privilege play out between and within social groups, shaping social and political reality.

This special issue revisits traditional group-based approaches to political representation by examining how intersectionality shapes political representation in Western democracies. Borrowing from social theory, we approach political representation as a process where outcomes are mediated by a variety of mechanisms. These mechanisms include recruitment and selection, quotas and targets, networks and alliances, electoral systems, and the formal and informal rules and norms of group representation. We propose a new *intersectional framework* for studying the *mechanisms* that lead to inclusion (advantage) and exclusion (disadvantage) in political representation—a framework that, we argue, provides a more realistic picture of how citizens find their intersecting identities represented in daily democratic processes.

Building on existing studies, the following section describes the mechanisms that lead to inclusion and exclusion in political representation. We then outline what an intersectional framework implies and what it can add to the study of political representation. The final section introduces the individual contributions to the special issue.

2. Mechanisms in political representation

Contemporary thinking about political inclusion and exclusion has been heavily influenced by pioneering studies in the 1990s that pointed to a variety of social biases that skewed political representation in liberal democracies (e.g. Phillips, 1995; Mansbridge, 1999). The overarching argument of these studies was that all citizens must be able to access and have a voice in decision-making processes in order to influence outcomes, and that democracy fails when historically disadvantaged groups are absent from elected bodies.

This special issue gets to the bottom of this debate empirically by focusing on the mechanisms that lead to inclusion and exclusion in political representation. Despite the lack of consensus within and across social science disciplines, mechanisms—in the most general sense—provide explanations that illuminate causal links between

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elements (Demeulenaere, 2011) or the dimensions of a process (Tilly, 2001). Mechanisms are causal in that they transform an input into an output, a trigger into an effect. They are described in the form of I-M-O, where *I* stands for input, *O* for output and *M* for the mechanism in the middle (Hedström and Swedberg, 1998, p. 9). Mechanisms capture processes and trace the logic of events in the making: 'they explain how the operations of the system generate the observed phenomena' (Sawyer, 2011, p. 78). The difference with a black-box approach to describe a causal relation is that a mechanism addresses a deeper problem: 'how (i.e. through what process) was the relationship brought about?' (Hedström and Swedberg, 1998, p. 10). Studying mechanisms is particularly useful for understanding *how* outcomes are influenced by socially constructed identities such as gender (Prügl, forthcoming) and ethnicity. Translated to the study of political representation, citizens belonging to disadvantaged groups in society are the *input* and the *outcome* is their (under-)representation in elected office. What are the mechanisms that mediate this relationship?

The process of political representation consists of various steps including becoming a candidate, getting elected and the representation of interests once in office (Pitkin, 1967; Krook and Norris, 2014). The structural under-representation of historically disadvantaged groups in each of these steps has been studied extensively (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Bird *et al.*, 2011). Building on the existing literature on the representation of women, ethnic minorities and other identifiable groups, we identify several—often interacting—mechanisms that explain political inclusion and exclusion in the steps that constitute the process of representation (see Figure 1). Our description of the mechanisms is not exclusive in the sense that it does not aim to include all the possible mechanisms at play in the complex process of political representation. Here, we focus on the mechanisms that are highlighted in established scholarship as some of the most important ones. It is these mechanisms that are the focal point of analysis of the contributions of this special issue. The mechanisms furthermore play out at different analytical levels, including the individual level, the party level, the district level and the macro/institutional level.

2.1 Mechanisms in Step 1

In Step 1, the input is the (eligible) citizen and the outcome is (not) becoming a candidate for political office. The mechanisms expected to produce this outcome are as follows.

2.1.1 Recruitment and selection European studies on political recruitment emphasise that candidate selection is a 'secret' process[1] (Gallagher and Marsh, 1988). These

[1]The process is arguably less 'secretive' in countries with primaries or party caucus systems, where candidate selection is less elite-driven and follows a more open procedure. We thank one of the reviewers for pointing this out to us.

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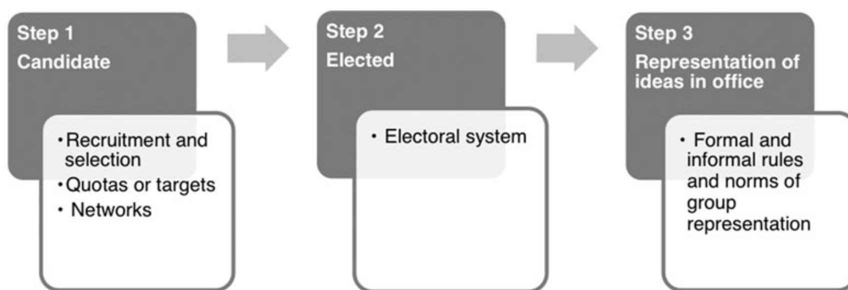

Figure 1. Mechanisms in political representation

studies furthermore suggest that the deals that precede formal nomination procedures matter enormously. Research has shown that candidate recruitment usually takes place through existing networks, disadvantaging outsider groups such as women, ethnic minorities and blue-collar workers (Soininen, 2011). The incentives for political parties to recruit ethnic minorities or women may be driven by selection procedures, ideology, expected electoral gains or mandated quotas. Centralised and less inclusive selectorates usually offer more opportunities for new groups such as women (Hinojosa, 2012) and ethnic minorities (Sobolewska, 2013). However, when the ethnic population in a particular constituency is large, more candidates with an ethnic background will arguably be selected to attract votes from their communities, especially in decentralised systems where local ties are stronger. Research in Canada has furthermore shown that female candidates are more likely to be nominated when the gatekeeper is a woman (Cheng and Tavits, 2011). At the same time, structural conditions in society affect the pool of available candidates. In order to become candidates, eligible citizens need a certain set of attitudes (e.g. political interests, ideological commitments) and access to political resources (e.g. time, political knowledge, mobility and civic skills) (Lawless and Fox, 2005).

2.1.2 Quotas or targets In order to overcome the historical and structural barriers that turn women away from politics, parties and governments have increasingly adopted gender quotas. Studies have found that gender quotas and targets are most successful when women's lobbies play an active role in their adoption and implementation. Measures are more likely to be implemented when they fit with the ideological programmes of political parties and governments, and with the power- and vote-seeking strategies of party leaders (Celis *et al.*, 2011). While quotas are one of the leading instruments to increase the number of women in elected office, they are far less common for other groups (Bjarnegård and Zetterberg, 2014).

2.1.3 Networks Strong personal networks as well as networks and alliances between civic and political organisations increase an aspirant's chances of becoming visible to

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party gatekeepers. For instance, women's movements have traditionally been able to promote candidates as they are close to politics and can provide women with the skills needed to become viable candidates (Kittilson, 2006). Research in Denmark has found ethnic minority candidates to be disconnected from 'ordinary' ethnic minority citizens (Bird, 2005). It is precisely this disconnect—or put differently, their visibility in the networks of the dominant ethnic group—that makes such candidates attractive to selectors. In contrast, aspirants who are not embedded within, or have no alliances with, networks of the dominant group will rarely be recruited or selected due to their invisibility within the circle of power.

2.2 Mechanisms in Step 2

In Step 2, the candidate (input) will be elected or not (outcome). This is expected to be driven by the following.

2.2.1 Electoral systems The design of an electoral system determines how parties define their constituencies. Proportional list systems generally offer more incentives for the representation of diverse identities and interests than majority or plurality systems (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995). Candidate lists in proportional systems are more likely to reflect the diversity of the population, especially when the list system allows for preferential voting. While proportional systems are strong indicators for women's presence in elected assemblies, their impact on the representation of other identifiable groups is debatable. Ethnic minorities' presence can, for instance, be strong under both proportional electoral systems and plurality systems (Ruedin, 2013; Hughes, forthcoming this issue).

2.3 Mechanisms in Step 3

In Step 3, the elected individual (input) will represent her or his ideas (or the ideas of his or her party as presented in the party programme) in elected office (output). Although a substantive literature addresses the question of whether women in elected office indeed represent women's interests, for the purpose of this special issue, we limit the discussion to prevailing informal and formal rules and norms of group representation.

2.3.1 Norms related to citizenship models Citizenship models legitimise or delegitimise the group-based integration of ethnic minorities. In models based on assimilation, or in countries experiencing a 'multicultural backlash', ethnic minority Members of Parliament (MPs) usually do not exhibit too close links with immigrant organisations (Bird, 2005). In multicultural models, ethnic minority candidates ideally have ties with their 'own' groups and ethnic minority MP act as 'group representatives', especially when they operate in districts with a large immigrant

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population. Regardless of party-strategic considerations during the campaign, however, ties to ethnic organisations may also prove politically compromising for ethnic minority MPs once they are elected.

2.3.2 Parliamentary rules and norms What can be considered an advantage during the campaign (ethnic ties lend access to new pools of voters) may turn into a liability after the election. Elected MPs are expected to conform to existing parliamentary norms, which do not always embrace diversity and still often reflect the experiences of dominant (male/white/highly educated) parliamentarians (Celis *et al.*, 2015). In other words, informal and formal rules and norms determine whether politicians are able or expected to articulate the interests of 'their' groups.

3. Double jeopardy or multiple advantage?

To date, the bulk of the literature that offers an insight into the mechanisms of political representation has approached identifiable groups in society—women, ethnic minorities, age and class groups—as uniform entities. For instance, only a handful of studies have examined whether the conditions that foster access to power for ethnic majority women do so for ethnic minority women. Studies that do integrate intersectionality in research on political representation focus mostly on the US case (Hardy-Fanta, 2006; Fraga *et al.*, 2008; Scola, 2013). European-focused research on the topic remains largely underdeveloped. The result is that experiences of particular (sub)-groups within society remain invisible. The intersectional lens that we apply fundamentally challenges the notion that we can understand processes of group representation by looking at particular groups in isolation from other groups, and without examining inter- and intra-group relations (Hancock, 2007). Intersectionality sheds light on hierarchies and power relations both between and within groups. The core assumption is that various advantages and disadvantages interact, producing and reproducing multiple inequalities in society and politics.

Which groups in society encounter most prejudice and discrimination in the representational process? There are two opposed hypotheses here. Especially the earlier work on intersectionality emphasised the 'double jeopardy' (Beale, 1970) hypothesis, which claims that the barriers attendant to a person's membership in multiple disadvantaged groups have a cumulative effect, leading to ever more marginalised positions in society and politics (Hill Collins, 1998). For example, Black's (2000) study of visible minority women—defined as those persons who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour[2]—in Canadian politics found that they experience greater prejudice in the candidate recruitment process than both white women and visible minority men. Successful visible minority women compensated for

[2]http://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/concepts/definitions/minority01a, accessed 23 October 2015.

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their double disadvantage with higher qualifications and greater resources. Individuals who belong to two or more disadvantaged groups are more invisible than those who belong to only one disadvantaged group because they are not prototypical members of the respective identity groups (Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach, 2008). In a similar vein, research on the impact of gender and ethnic quotas shows that quotas only further the inclusion of groups that are already dominant in other ways: white women benefit from gender quotas, ethnic minority men from ethnic quotas (Hughes, 2011). In her study of how advocacy groups in the USA represent the interests of women, racial minorities and the poor, Strolovitch (2006) finds that the interests of those experiencing 'double disadvantages' in society (e.g. poor or black women) are the worst represented in politics.

In opposition to the 'double jeopardy' hypothesis, recent studies have shown that multiple social inequalities do not always 'add up', but sometimes also lead to multiple advantages. Research in the USA has shown that among elected officials with Latino backgrounds, women have made greater inroads than men (Fraga *et al.*, 2008). Studies in Europe have likewise found that women with immigrant backgrounds are better represented in some elected assemblies than their male counterparts (Celis *et al.*, 2014). Ethnic minority women in such cases apparently experience a 'multiple-identity advantage' (Fraga *et al.*, 2008) or a 'complementarity advantage' (Celis and Erzeel, 2015). Owing to their double identity, they experience less racial discrimination and less negative racial stereotyping in the political process, have more opportunities to form strategic coalitions with either white women or men and better fit the vote-seeking and power-maintenance strategies of party elites (Celis *et al.*, 2015).

This special issue aims to further the debate on 'double jeopardy' versus 'multiple advantages' by adding new cases to the mix and by offering new theoretical and empirical understandings of how multiple (dis)advantages play out in different contexts. Following intersectionality theory, we assume that no social group is universally 'advantaged' or 'disadvantaged' in the political process (even white men who are often considered to be the 'universally dominant group' can be disadvantaged in districts where African Americans are the electorally dominant group). Advantage and disadvantage are outcomes created by a multitude of social and political processes. They furthermore develop under very particular conditions. The different contributions assembled here focus on identifying these specific conditions. In line with theory on group representation, the contributions still focus first and foremost on the political representation of identifiable groups that, due to their structurally disadvantaged position in society, risk being overlooked in the political process (such as women and ethnic minorities, but also older people). However, it should be clear that their (dis)advantaged status *in politics* is an empirical question, not a theoretical given. A disadvantaged position in society can but need not be translated into a disadvantaged position in politics.

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The contributions assembled here test these hypotheses beyond the context of the USA. Scholars of European politics have rarely integrated intersectionality in their research on representation, but such research is necessary because European systems differ from the US system, and mechanisms—such as the electoral system—lead to different outcomes. The authors in this issue break new ground by focusing on features of identity and variation within groups that have received little or no attention. The intersectional mixes under study include gender–age, gender–religion, gender–sexuality–ability–age and gender–ethnicity–national background–generation. The result is a highly contextualised interpretation of how multiple advantages and disadvantages, or equalities and inequalities, play out in Western democracies.

4. Understanding the political representation of social groups

Studying the mechanisms of political representation intersectionally shows (i) how and why some (sub)groups in society are better able to access representative institutions than others, and (ii) how and why these (sub)groups exercise power and influence once they are elected. Each contribution to this issue addresses a mechanism or combination of mechanisms in the representational process: recruitment and selection (Mügge, Randall and Hughes), targets or quotas (Mügge and Murray), electoral systems (Hughes), networks (Mügge and Evans), the formal rules of group representation (Murray) and the informal rules and norms of group representation (Randall). The contributions show that combinations of disadvantaged identities do not simply produce double jeopardy or multiple advantages in political representation. The effects of identity mixes are flexible and context dependent. A particular identity mix may have an advantageous effect in one mechanism, but a disadvantageous effect in another.

Liza Mügge (forthcoming this issue) examines the multiple advantage for ethnic minority women in parliaments of European immigration countries by extending the intersectional analysis to generation and (parental) birth country. Focusing on a combination of overlapping mechanisms in recruitment and selection, the ideological, organisational and structural integration of ethnic minority and gender groups within parties as well as the influence of target figures, she finds that the multiple advantage of ethnic minority women in the Netherlands is not structural. Multiple advantage is dynamic and influenced by the political context, notably the party that is in power and how this party incorporates gender and ethnic diversity, as well as a groups' political starting position. Consequently, multiple advantage and disadvantage varies across and within groups and time.

Vicky Randall (forthcoming this issue) analyses the experiences of older women in London politics. Older women often report the sensation of becoming invisible as they age, a silence also reflected in the political science literature and research. But older women in local politics are not just disadvantaged; they bring three essential

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resources to the party: time, experience and money. Owing to their longevity, older women are numerically better represented than older men 'who seem to have disappeared'. At the same time, older women face hurdles of limited mobility and the frustrations of advancing old age, as well as marginalisation and discrimination by younger party members.

Drawing on data from 20 Western democracies, Melanie Hughes (forthcoming this issue) examines the influence of electoral systems on the political representation of male and female Muslim immigrants. Muslim women have been increasingly elected in proportional electoral systems, especially in Belgium and the Netherlands; Muslim men have been elected in both proportional and single-member district systems. This is largely due to party leaders' strategic calculations based on how they believe voters will respond to Muslim candidates. As parties try to build party lists with broad appeal under proportional electoral rules, highly gendered anti-Muslim sentiments make female candidates more attractive. On the other hand, single-member district systems are particularly disadvantageous to Muslim women because parties field Muslim men in districts with concentrated minority populations.

Comparing the under-representation of women in the US congress and the UK parliament, Elizabeth Evans (forthcoming this issue) finds that some women are more under-represented than others. In both the USA and the UK, elected women are on average between 50 and 60 years old; younger and older women are largely absent. Women of colour are present in both legislatures, more so in progressive than in conservative parties. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) and disabled women are virtually absent. Evans seeks explanation in the activities of party and non-partisan women's groups. Although both types of organisations in both countries agree on the importance of diversity, their main goal is to increase the number of women in general and not to further diversity among female elected officials. As the activities of women's groups are not specifically geared to include older or younger, disabled or LGBT women, they are disadvantaged by their intersectional positions.

Taking France as its case, Rainbow Murray's contribution (forthcoming this issue) finds that—as in Belgium and the Netherlands—visible minority women have an advantage over visible minority men. But this advantage is primarily numerical. The women who are elected are highly assimilated and selected by parties to appear inclusive, to meet the demands of gender parity and to reinforce social cohesion. Elected visible minority women work in an environment whose formal rules are tied to French universalism and secularism, and where subtle and less subtle forms of racism and sexism continue to exist. In this climate, there is little room for difference and discourses surrounding visible minority women and particularly Muslim women remain negative. The women who manage to enter the political bastion conform to French assimilationist norms.

By studying the mechanisms of political representation intersectionally, the contributions to this special issue reveal that processes of inclusion and exclusion interact in

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complex and highly conditional ways. What plays out as an advantage in one context does not necessarily produce the same advantage in a different context. Approaching representation as a process influenced by intersectionality reveals that interacting mechanisms do not work in similar ways for different 'women' and 'ethnic minorities'. Mechanisms produce different outcomes for different women, ethnic minorities, LGBT groups, the elderly, disabled people and Muslims. The intersectional lens to political representation thus challenges the widespread tendency in the literature to approach identifiable groups in society—women and men, religious and ethnic minorities, class, age and ability groups—as uniform entities. To better understand how and why some people are included and some are excluded from politics, we need to consider differences both between and within groups and across contexts.

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