

Conclusion: The future status of women in European political science

Bates, Stephen

DOI:

[10.1057/eps.2015.9](https://doi.org/10.1057/eps.2015.9)

License:

None: All rights reserved

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

Citation for published version (Harvard):

Bates, S 2015, 'Conclusion: The future status of women in European political science', *European Political Science*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 131-136. <https://doi.org/10.1057/eps.2015.9>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

Publisher Rights Statement:

Eligibility for repository: Checked on 28/09/2015

General rights

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

Take down policy

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.

Conclusion: the future status of women in european political science

Stephen Bates and Heather Savigny

Department of Political Science & International Studies

University of Birmingham

Edgbaston

Birmingham

B15 2TT

UK

s.r.bates@bham.ac.uk

The Media School

Weymouth House

Bournemouth University

Poole

Dorset

BH12 5BB

hsavigny@bournemouth.ac.uk

This symposium has provided a snapshot of both the status and presence of women in Political Science in Europe. In the three articles which looked at particular countries – Finland, Germany, Spain – and the articles that looked at particular aspects of academia – publishing and higher education reform in the UK – there is cause for cautious optimism, particularly in relation to women’s overall presence and their seniority within the discipline. Women have made steady, if sometimes unspectacular, progress in these regards. Kantola reports that 37% of senior lecturers are women and that women are a majority (62%) among postdoctoral researchers and PhD students in Finnish Political Science, Abels and Woods report that there were a record high number of female Political Science professors in Germany in 2013, and Elizondo shows that, in Spain, despite a fall in the percentage of female undergraduates from 54% to 45%, the number of female PhD students has risen 10 percentage points to 49% over the past six years and the proportion of women in the field of

Political Science now accounts for more than a third. Furthermore, Briggs and Harrison contend that, while wary of further ‘ghettoisation’ of women within teaching, higher education reforms in the UK offer an opportunity to female political scientists both in terms of the ‘impact’ agenda and the greater emphasis on teaching and learning within universities. Finally, Williams *et al.* argue that, with regard to their analysis of three prominent British Political Science and international relations journals, there are grounds to believe that women are no longer at (such) a disadvantage with regard to publication and citation rates.

However, while these developments are undoubtedly real and should be recognised and welcomed, the articles in this symposium also point to some continuing and novel barriers to the progress of women within the profession, some peculiar to particular national contexts, some more widespread in their affects. These barriers tend to relate to one (or more) of three main themes: the transformation of higher education institutions and related employment practices in response to political and socio-economic pressures; the path dependencies of particular institutional arrangements at the national level; and the gendered practices and behaviour associated with what is considered to be a ‘good’ or ‘successful’ political scientist (Cowden *et al.* 2012: 20-21). Thus, for example, Kantola points to the gendered dimensions of major structural reforms in Finnish higher education which turned universities into public law institutions outside the state budget – similar dangers also being recognised by Briggs and Harrison in their analysis of UK higher education reform, Elizondo notes the precarious employment of many female political scientists in Spain, Abels and Woods show how the peculiar institutional arrangements of German academia make it difficult to plug the gender gap, and Williams *et al.* highlight a persistent and, in the instance of one journal, a recently increasing underrepresentation of women as first or sole authors. Furthermore, Abels and Woods, Elizondo, Kantola, and Briggs and Harrison all point to the slowness of advances and the relative lack of women in senior positions within German, Spanish, Finnish and UK

Political Science respectively. Indeed, as Bates *et al.* (2012) argue in their study of British Political Science, if the present rate of progress is maintained, it will not be until the late 2030s that the percentage of female political scientists will be comparable with the percentage of female undergraduate students. As such, those concerned with the status and presence of women within Political Science and academia more broadly will need to be vigilant to ensure that the welcome developments mentioned above continue at a faster pace and do not stall or, indeed, go into reverse within a more corporate and potentially less democratic higher education environment. In this light, we list below a number of practices, policies and projects that, we believe, might be adopted, modified or copied to improve further, as far as possible, the status of women in the profession. This list is not in a particular order, nor is it exhaustive, and we recognise that some suggestions may have their own potential problems and issues. Furthermore, none of our suggestions, even in combination, may challenge fundamentally deeper societal structures and more durable meanings and expectations surrounding the place and role of women and men in Political Science, academia, the workplace and society. However, they may mitigate their effects somewhat by lowering particular hurdles, making some barriers more permeable and widening cracks in any glass ceilings that persist at specific stages of women's careers within the discipline.

- *Remove direct and indirect discrimination*

This is perhaps an obvious point but one that we feel needs stating nevertheless. The position of female academics would be improved if universities properly adhered to relevant national and EU equalities legislation. For example, a persistent pay gap exists in many European countries because equal pay legislation is not strictly enforced.

- *Athena SWAN*

The Athena SWAN Charter was launched in the UK in 2005 with the aim of advancing the representation of women in science (www.athenaswan.org.uk). The Charter is currently aimed at STEMM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine) but, after a successful pilot study, the Equality Challenge Unit (www.ecu.ac.uk) has recently agreed to extend the scheme to all academic disciplines. Departments and universities are awarded bronze, silver and gold awards when they are able to demonstrate different levels of commitment to the following six principles which underpin Athena SWAN:

- To address gender inequalities requires commitment and action from everyone, at all levels of the organisation;
 - To tackle the unequal representation of women in science requires changing cultures and attitudes across the organisation;
 - The absence of diversity at management and policy-making levels has broad implications which the organisation will examine;
 - The high loss rate of women in science is an urgent concern which the organisation will address;
 - The system of short-term contracts has particularly negative consequences for the retention and progression of women in science, which the organisation recognises;
 - There are both personal and structural obstacles to women making the transition from PhD into a sustainable academic career in science, which require the active consideration of the organisation.
-
- *Length of the working day*

Anecdotal evidence (Savigny 2012, Bates 2013) suggests that, at least in the UK, the core working day is being extended (further) beyond the traditional 9 to 5 and is thus becoming (more) unsuitable for those – mainly but not solely women – with childcare or other caring commitments. In this regard, it would be beneficial if universities were to commit, as far as possible, to all meetings, research seminars and teaching (beyond life-long or similar learning aimed at those in employment) being held within a family-friendly timeframe to ensure that those with caring commitments can make a full contribution to the research culture and decision-making process of the institution.

- *Workload on the return from maternity (and paternity) leave*

One issue often highlighted in the literature (e.g. Morrison *et al.* 2011) is that of the ‘baby penalty’ in which (mainly) women are adversely affected in their career trajectory because of the time taken out due to the onset of parenthood. One way of offsetting this effect is to have additional study leave for those returning from (a long period of) parental leave. This arrangement entails a light, or non-existent, teaching and administration load for a given period of time so that academics can get back up to speed with their research, still the most important factor in gaining recognition and promotion. It can also be accompanied by a mentoring scheme to manage workload and research strategies both before and after parental leave, often as part of more general ‘gendered’ mentoring designed to allow people to navigate a higher education terrain which tends to reward particular kinds of masculine behaviour. This additional study leave could also be supplemented by light administrative loads for those parents with pre-school children, again to ensure that research agendas are maintained during what is usually the most intensive (and sleep-deprived) stage of parenthood.

Another example can be found in Germany where doctoral scholarships from the trade union, churches and more left-leaning political foundations extend scholarship coverage for parents up to a year longer than scholarships for PhD candidates without children. Accounting for child care can also be reflected in hiring evaluations. Many universities in Germany assess professorial candidates with a points system that accounts for time taken out for the care of children. For example, Tübingen University counts each child of a candidate with an equivalent of one book in their points system for hiring.

- *Gender Monitoring*

As Maliniak *et al.* (2013) report, some journals are already monitoring citation patterns and the ratio of male to female citations in the articles they publish. This, along with monitoring submission and publication rates of male and female political scientists, appears to be a relatively simple way of ensuring that bias within the publishing process – or at least the appearance of it – is recognised as and when it occurs. In a similar manner, the German Association for Political Science (DVPW) monitors the gender of active members at their conferences.

- *Learn from other countries and national associations*

Both the 2012 Report of the Australian Political Studies Association Women's Caucus on Women's Advancement in Australian Political Science (Cowden *et al.* 2012; <http://www.auspsa.org.au/about/womens-caucus>) and the 2005 Report of the American Political Science Association Workshop on the Advancement of Women in Academic Political Science in the United States (www.apsanet.org/content_3693.cfm) contain a lot of useful information and suggestions which can be adopted and adapted

by others. The American Political Science Association also offers an official mentoring program, which often benefits young women because of their lack of informal networks, and the Women's Caucus for Political Science provides funds to consult a lawyer if a woman feels that she might have been discriminated against. In the event of sexual harassment or in questions around a hiring or promotion process, a woman can then gather information about her options. In Germany, the DVPW reports every three years on internal developments with respect to gender and this gender monitoring was the inspiration for a systematic survey across national Political Science Associations by the International Political Science Association in 2012 (http://www.ipsa.org/sites/default/files/gender_report.pdf).

- *Campaign and organise*

One of the most important feminist contributions to the literature on political power is that of the concept of 'power with' (Allen 1998). In this light, we believe that feminists and those concerned with the representation of women in academia should cooperate and link up with unions and other organisations, such as the Campaign for the Public University (www.publicuniversity.org.uk) and the Council for the Defence of British Universities (www.cdbu.org.uk). These organisations and networks challenge the current trajectory of higher education policy that, as Kantola notes, can (potentially) have a detrimental impact on the position of women within academia, among other things.

This list is of course non-comprehensive but its aim – and that of this symposium more generally – is to open up discussion by offering suggestions and sharing information in the hope that the progress highlighted in these articles can continue at a faster rate than at present.

References

- Allen, A. (1998) 'Rethinking Power', *Hypatia*, 13(1): 21-40
- American Political Science Association (2005), *Women's Advancement in Political Science*, Washington, DC: American Political Science Association.
- Bates, S. (2013) 'Combining family life and an academic career', PSA Diversity & Equality Group Discussion, Political Studies Association Annual Conference, Cardiff, 27th March 2013.
- Bates, S., Jenkins, L. and Pflaeger, Z. (2012) 'Women in the Profession: The Composition of UK Political Science Departments by Sex'. *Politics*, 32 (3): 139–152.
- Cowden, M., McLaren, K., Plumb, A. and Sawer, M. (2012) *Women's Advancement in Australian Political Science*. Canberra: Australian Political Science Association.
- Maliniak, D. Powers, R.M. & Walter B.F. (2013) 'The Gender Citation Gap in International Relations', *International Organization*, 67(4), 889-922.
- Morrison, E., Rudd, E., and Nerad, M. (2011) 'Onto, up, off the academic faculty ladder: the gendered effects of family on career transitions for a cohort of social science Ph.D.s', *The Review of Higher Education*, 34(4): 525-553.
- Savigny, H. (2012) 'Women. Know your limits. Cultural sexism in academia'. Paper presented at the Feminism in the Age of Austerity Conference, University of Nottingham, 28 September 2012.