

Institution: Birkbeck, University of London

Unit of Assessment: 21 Politics and International Studies

Title of case study: Changing policy and influencing public ideas on gender and political representation

1. Summary of the impact

Research started by Professor Joni Lovenduski in 1992 and developed with Dr Rosie Campbell since 2003, influenced both policies about party political representation of women and the understandings of women's role in politics of party officials and activists. Showing that political recruitment, representation and participation are highly gendered – masculine – processes, Lovenduski and Campbell have successfully challenged the attitudes and contributed to changing processes that determine political equality between women and men. Both are routinely consulted about policy on political representation by political parties, UK government and parliament, the EU, and national and international organisations.

2. Underpinning research

The underpinning research began with Lovenduski's work (with Professor Pippa Norris, Harvard) on political recruitment in the 1990s (Ref 1) and *Feminizing Politics* (Ref 2), continued with Rosie Campbell (and Professor Sarah Childs, Bristol) in the 2000s. It also includes Campbell's work on voting behaviour and attitudes since 2004 (e.g. Refs 3 & 4). The two strands of work are brought together in advocacy for increasing women's presence in a fairer, more modern system of political representation. Their research has demonstrated that there is a gender gap in political attitudes among the population that is also evident at the party elite level (among party, members, candidates and MPs).

The research maps and analyses patterns of gender disadvantage in women's political representation, party politics and political behaviour, using an adapted supply and demand model to demonstrate that political parties are an obstacle to women. Party selector **demand** impedes the selection of women candidates which in turn affects their supply because (1) selectors undervalue women's qualifications and capacities; (2) requirements for politician roles are interwoven with traditional attitudes; (3) candidacy itself entails requirements for candidates from brokerage (e.g. lawyers and teachers) and instrumental occupations (e.g. special advisors), excludes some women and interacts with class and race to reduce demand for women candidates; (4) outright sexism and some sexual harassment still occurs. **Supply** problems add to the exclusion of women because they (1) do not see themselves as potential politicians; (2) are put off by reported experiences of selector sexism and problems of work-life balance in the politician role. However the research demonstrates there are more than enough qualified women who want to be candidates to achieve parity in the House of Commons.

This research has been widely disseminated through academic and public outputs, including articles, reports and presentations. The Electoral Commission Report on *Gender and Political Participation* (Ref 5) and the Hansard Report *Women at the Top* (Ref 6) received considerable media attention and are cited by policymakers. The participation and voting research found that (1) women voters have subtly different attitudes from men; (2) women are needed to represent these differences which are affected by perceptions and mobilisation efforts of women candidates; (3) women are more likely to participate in electoral campaigns where there are women candidates; (4) women candidates are not penalised by voters; (5) there are political consequences that should incentivise parties to promote women; (6) the substantive representation of women might require more women MPs, even though women voters are not actively demanding them.

Lovenduski's argument that had all voters been women there would have been continuous Conservative governments in the post-war period influenced all three main political parties, who from the mid-1990s began to treat women voters as a particular constituency. Campbell's research extended Lovenduski's findings, to show that the Labour Party was particularly successful at

targeting the votes of middle and high income mothers in the early 2000s.

3. References to the research

1. Joni Lovenduski and Pippa Norris *Political Recruitment: Gender Race and Class in the British House of Commons*. Cambridge University Press 1995.
2. Joni Lovenduski *Feminizing Politics*. 2005 Polity Press. Submitted to RAE 2008.
3. Campbell, Rosie. 2012. [What do we really know about women voters?](#) Gender, elections and public opinion. *Political Quarterly*, 83, 703-710
4. Campbell, R. 2013. [Leaders, foot soldiers and befrienders](#): The gendered nature of social capital and political participation in Britain. *British Politics*, 8, 28-50.
5. Rosie Campbell, Sarah Childs and Joni Lovenduski, [Do Women Need Women Representatives?](#) *British Journal of Political Science* 2010 40 (1): 171-194
6. Pippa Norris, Joni Lovenduski, Rosie Campbell: *Gender and Political Participation*. UK Electoral Commission Research Report. 2004 isbn 1-904363-41-5.

Grants

- 1 Apr 05–1 Sep 05 British Academy small grant (£6000) awarded to Rosie Campbell to research Gender & deciding how to vote prior to the 2005 British general election. The results were used to make a successful application to the ESRC for further funds.
- 1 Oct 06 - 30 Sep 07 ESRC Gender & Voting Behaviour in Britain (RES-000-22-1857, £47,706 FEC 80%). PI: Rosie Campbell. Graded good.
- 2008-2011 Leverhulme (£870,000): Gendered Ceremony and Ritual in Parliaments: Disciplining Representation awarded to Lovenduski and scholars from Bristol, Sheffield and Warwick Universities.
- 2012-2013 British Academy small grant (£10,000) awarded to Lovenduski and Campbell to examine the public and MPs' own attitudes to the role of an MP

4. Details of the impact

Professor Joni Lovenduski and Dr Rosie Campbell are members of influential networks of political scientists of gender (including the Political Studies Association (PSA UK), Women and Politics Group and the ECPR Standing Group on Gender and Politics), where their research, since first publication in 1995, has had a significant, long-standing and far-reaching impact on knowledge, ideas and practices relating to women's party political representation and voting behaviour. (Sources 1,4,7,10) Working in collaboration with party officials and activists who sought to increase the representation of women in UK politics, their research has contributed to a process which resulted in the main political parties changing their policies on candidate selection (e.g. introduction of All Women Shortlists, equality auditing of candidate selection processes, training of selectors and candidates) and attitudes to women voters (Sources 2,7,10). The impact has extended beyond the UK to the EU, Italy, Poland, Estonia (Source 11) and beyond policymakers, through the media, to the general public. Lovenduski and Campbell are regularly called upon to contribute to policy and advocacy discussions, public debates and media events in the UK, the rest of Europe and North America. (Sources 6,12)

UK political parties and advocacy groups

Lovenduski's and Campbell's research is used by political parties and parliament. Fiona Mactaggart MP wrote of Lovenduski 'From the debates about that bill, where her work was referenced in the House of Commons Research Paper 2001 on Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Bill to more recent debates on parliamentary representation on the floor of the House of Commons on 12 Jan 2012 her work has underpinned many of the positive changes we have seen. I was a member of the Speakers' conference on representation which again depended substantially on Joni's work, nearly all the major parties' submissions to that body included reference to her publications.' (Source 5)

The utility of the research is exemplified by a number of recent invitations. In 2011 Lovenduski was asked by the Policy Unit at 10 Downing Street to advise on sex equality strategies and invited to participate in the exchange of views on best practices for promoting gender equality in political

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parties at the Council of Europe in Paris. In 2012 Campbell was invited to join the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority's experts panel in its consultation on MPs' pay and pensions. On 17 December 2012 both advised the Liberal Democrat policy working group on Political and Constitutional Reform. They were cited in the Speaker's conference report on Political Representation and Hansard. Campbell and Lovenduski presented their British Academy funded research on MPs' roles at a House of Commons Library seminar on 16 May 2013. In 2012, Lovenduski was invited to make a keynote presentation on her research at the International Parliamentary Conference on Gender and Politics. Jointly hosted by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK and the British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union, the conference took place in the Houses of Parliament 6-8 November 2012, and was attended by 60 international parliamentarians. (Source 7)

Advocacy organisations and think-tanks have also used their research:

- The Centre for Women and Democracy used it to identify and develop practical strategies to engage more women in politics and to substantiate their campaign work. (Source 1)
- The Vice-President of Rand Europe indicates that Lovenduski's work has both shaped research by the organisation and influenced her leadership role in it. (Source 2)
- The Fabian Women's Network (FWN) has used Lovenduski's and Campbell's research to inform their support and training programmes for women entering political life. They helped to design FWN's innovative training and evaluation programme (2011-2013). (Sources 3 and 9)
- The Director of the Hansard Society writes, 'Their work provides us with the necessary evidence base to address often widely held misconceptions and misunderstandings about women's political recruitment and representation, including among party staff and the media, and is something that we consequently turn to regularly in our political and media engagement work. ... Their work and support has therefore made a real difference to the coalition's approach.' (Source 4)
- The Fawcett Society published a short report (June 2013) on the findings of Campbell's research on gender and voting behaviour and has consulted her in its pre-election strategy meetings (2010 and 2015). (Source 8)
- Other organisations using their research include Equality and Human Rights Commission and Electoral Reform Society.

European impact

Lovenduski's and Campbell's research has acquired a reputation among practitioners throughout Europe generating frequent invitations for them to participate in policy seminars and write reports. Most recently,

- Lovenduski was asked to advise on equality of representation policy by the Council of Europe Committee on Equality between women and men (December 2011), the EU Social Affairs directorate (2009) and L'Assemblea delle Donne per lo Sviluppo e la Lotta all'Esclusione (ASDO) programme in Italy (2008).
- Lovenduski's work is cited and recommended in UN, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Advantage (IDEA) and the IPU (InterParliamentary Union) publications and on their websites. (Source 10)
- In 2012, Lovenduski advised the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on candidate selection mechanisms and the impact of quotas. She was assessor of the forthcoming OSCE Handbook, 'Promoting Women's Leadership in Elected Office'. She was also invited to speak at the International Parliamentary Conference on Gender and Politics hosted by the UK Parliament.
- The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights report, *Gender Equality in Elected Office a Six Step Action Plan* (2012) makes extensive reference to Lovenduski's and Campbell's work.

Impact on public discourse

Continuing from the early impact of Lovenduski's landmark research on sexism in the House of Commons, public debate on the behaviour of MPs remains active. *OpenDemocracy.net* commented, 'Research by Joni Lovenduski bears out the notion that women's presence connects

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to policies that address women's concerns. Lovenduski said that the 'huge debate' about sexual abuse and violence against women could not have taken place without an increase in women's representation, along with the new policy focus on childcare, work/life balance, single mothers or improved equality legislation' (November 13, 2011). In May 2013, the Sheila McKechnie Foundation, an influential charity connecting, informing and supporting political campaigners, invited Campbell to present her work. Her presentation was podcast. (Source 11)

There are frequent references to their research and requests for interviews and advice by the broadcast and news media. Their work has been cited in papers such as *The Times*, the *Daily Mail*, *The Economist* and *The Guardian*, and they have been interviewed on several editions of Radio 4's *Woman's Hour*, *Westminster Hour* and *Beyond Westminster*, as well as on national television. Campbell's work on attitudes and behaviour was used for example in a special *Analysis* programme on for BBC Radio 4 (*Why Do Men and Women Vote Differently?* 8/03 & 14/03/2010). (Source 12)

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Testimonials

1. Director of Women and Democracy (Factual statement)
2. Research Director/Vice-President, Rand Europe (Factual statement)
3. Director, Fabian Women's Network (Factual statement)
4. Director and Head of Research, Hansard Society (Factual statement)
5. Fiona Mactaggart MP, UK Parliament (Factual statement)

Other evidence

6. Citations in parliamentary papers include: [Report of Speakers Conference on Parliamentary Representation](#); [Women in the House of Commons Factsheet](#); [All-women shortlists – Commons Library Standard Note](#) in which their work is cited 13 times in 27 pages:
7. [Conference in the Houses of Parliament](#) 6-8 November 2012
8. 'Candidate gender and voter preference', advocacy paper produced by Preethi Sundaram of the Fawcett Society for their Counting Women In campaign (June 2013) can be supplied on request. Also see: [Sex and Power 2013: Who Runs Britain](#), which cites Campbell and Lovenduski.
9. Fabian Women's Network report on their training programme can be supplied on request
10. Citations in European political documents include: [International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Advantage](#); [Quota Project](#) (IDEA and InterParliamentary Union)
11. Podcasts of Campbell's talk at the Sheila McKechnie Foundation can be found [here](#) or [here](#).
12. Media citations and articles: Broadcast media citations include: [Why Do Men and Women Vote Differently?](#) (Radio 4 *Analysis* 8/03 & 14/03/2010); *Westminster Hour* 1/08/2010; *Beyond Westminster* 7/01/2012; *Woman's Hour* 3/7/2013, 12/09/2012, 5/10/2011, 18/04/2011. Print media citations include *The Sunday Times* 14/3/2010; *The Economist* 8/04/2010; *The Guardian* 15/02/2013. Online publications include [Campbell's blog](#) in *The Guardian's* 'Comment is Free' presenting their research on attitudes to public spending cuts and in [The Guardian](#) on 15/2/2013. Further details can be supplied on request.