

The Status of Women in Germany:
East, West and after Unification

	West	East	Unity
Pensions (for mothers)	1 year	9 years	1 year
Wages	60–70% of male	80% of male	
Women working (1991)	63%	90%	
Unemployment	10% women 8.7% total (1988)	Unknown	1 year later: 60% of women are unemployed
Child Care	5% up to age 3 70% ages 4–5 85% ages 5–6	almost universal	promises
Abortion	Highly restricted	Free and legal	2 years of dispute, now highly restricted
Parental Leave Children	M/F: up to 2 years Most couples have 1–2	F: 1–3 years 90% of couples have 1	M/F: up to 2 years
Child Allowances	25% of cost	70% of cost	
Social Security	40–50% of men's	About 90% of men's	
Women in Parliament	1983: 10%	32%	20%

this assumption and to give students a better sense of reality.

Present students with the following chart drawn principally from Ute Gerhard's article "German Women and the Social Costs of Unification" in *German Politics and Society*, (Winter 1991–1992), special issue on Germany and Gender; and the chapter by Eva Kolinsky in *Developments in German Politics*, edited by Gordon Smith, William E. Paterson, Peter H. Merkl, and Stephen Padgett (1992).

Have the students read Gerhard's article, and then explain the chart. Ask students who the winner is now. As these works point out, the state made it easier for women to have children in the East. Since paid employment was less highly valued than it was in West Germany, a much

higher value was placed on love and family than on career advancement. During our workshop, Dorothee Wierling, University of Washington, pointed out that in a survey commissioned in the Eastern part of Germany, "love" as a value ranked in first place, while "climbing up the career ladder" ranked sixteenth.

Whether women were winners or losers in unification has been a hotly debated issue in Germany (the aforementioned issue of *German Politics and Society* is a good reference piece on this debate). Many see the short-term negative impact that unification has had upon women in East Germany. But over the long term, these women will benefit from the overall im-

provement in living conditions. In addition, young East German women are more interested in career opportunities than the previous generation. Nonetheless, it is instructive to ask your students how they would feel about unification if they were East Germans.

Conclusion

The study of gender is an integral part of the research agenda of political science; it should therefore be seen as an integral part of the curriculum. I have attempted to demonstrate a number of ways in which it can be integrated into courses on European politics in a manner that is both stimulating and intellectually enriching. The exercises I have described can help students understand that gender is a concept that underpins the modern political system just as other areas that are given wide coverage in popular textbooks. These exercises are modular, and can be incorporated at minimal cost and disruption to existing syllabi. Hopefully, they can engage students on a personal level and help them relate their own experiences to the more analytical points that arise from coverage of women and politics.

About the Author

Sonja Elison is an assistant professor in the department of political science at Gonzaga University.

Integrating Gender Into the Political Science Curriculum: Challenges, Pitfalls, and Opportunities

Christine Di Stefano, *University of Washington*

The relationship between gender and politics is both obvious and elusive. The term "gender" refers to socially constructed and politically enforced notions of what it means to be male or female. Gendered notions acquire their plausibility and force by claiming to represent a pre-political universe of gendered mean-

ings and social arrangements. This mythical universe serves, in turn, to legitimize gender norms. Gender is most obviously political in the sense that it shapes the opportunities and liabilities of gender-coded subjects. But it is also political because it has the power to impose meaning and value upon our activities and social

relationships and to deflect attention from the politics of meaning.¹

The elusiveness of the politics-gender connection derives from its very success as a political formation. To the extent that gender is assumed to be an emanation of "nature" rather than an artifact of "culture," its politicalness is rendered invisible.

Unseen and unchecked, gender not only failed, until quite recently, to qualify as a topic worthy of study by political scientists; it also influenced the discipline itself. In this respect, the notion that we have only recently begun to bring gender into political science misleads. Gender has been with political science from the start.² Now, gender is finally coming under the critical purview of researchers. But why now? Or, more precisely, why did gender emerge as a topic within political science during the 1970s, and why have efforts to integrate gender into the political science curriculum continued into the 1990s?

As Leslie Eliason points out in this collection of essays, gender research in European societies results from “the explosion in women’s paid employment outside the home, their increasing participation in public life, and their presence in the academic research community.” These trends can be seen in other regions of the world, including the United States and Canada. While Eliason and others are correct to note the correlation between women’s entry into economic, political, and academic spheres and research on women and gender issues, we should be on guard against the tendency to equate “women” with “gender.”³ A complementary tendency in the United States, which has come under long-overdue critical scrutiny, is the tendency to equate “race” with persons of color. Just as whites in the United States are surely just as racialized as persons of color, so too are men just as gendered as women. When “gender” is understood to mean “women,” we underestimate the reach of the category of gender even as we succumb to the blandishments of gender politics. Because gender politics has largely proceeded by casting the male as the model of citizenship and leadership, researchers miss a great deal by limiting our research to women’s various efforts to secure citizenship and leadership opportunities. In particular, we risk underestimating the obstacles to equity and empowerment for women who are unwilling or unable to assume masculine postures in economic, social and political arenas.

This is not to say that courses on

women and politics should not be offered, although there are those (including Camille Paglia) who have made this claim.⁴ Instead, we should be attentive to the analytical and substantive differences entailed by research and teaching directed towards the women-politics connection, on the one hand, and the gender-politics connection, on the other. While the differences between these two are by no means mutually exclusive (one cannot teach women in politics without reference to gender; nor is it possible to teach gender and politics without reference to women), they do not comprise a unified research agenda.

If we want to understand the correlation between *women’s* increased participation in the public sphere and the relatively recent salience of *gender* as a category of analysis, then we need to articulate how changes in women’s lives and activities reflect influence, and perhaps destabilize gender systems in a variety of political, cultural, and social settings. It is likely that gender has come into view precisely because it is in some disarray. Feminist political agitation on behalf of women is both a response and a contributing factor. We cannot yet discern whether and how gender—as a mechanism of social differentiation, order and control—will adapt and reconfigure, or even decline, in response to this disarray. What distinguishes feminist from non-feminist research on gender is a specifically political interest in contributing to the demise of gender systems.

Just as I discourage the conflation of “gender” and “women,” I argue that “feminism” must be separated from each of these terms as well. While it is true that much of the gender-oriented and women-oriented research in political science has been conducted by self-described feminists, it is conceivable (though unlikely) that such research might be conducted by researchers who do not subscribe to feminist political goals. Contrary to popular opinion, feminists disagree mightily among themselves, though they are generally united in their commitments to the empowerment of women and to the eventual elimination of gender hierarchy.⁵ These commitments, in

turn, render the study of women in politics and gender in politics more compelling. They do not, however, automatically predict research outcomes. Feminists will continue to disagree among themselves, for example, about preferable paths to women’s empowerment. Joni Lovenduski, in arguing that “institutions of representation matter more than the strength of feminist organization . . . to the politics of increasing women’s political visibility and power” has leveled a significant challenge to feminist strategists who believe that non-governmental, separatist feminist organizations are the key to women’s political empowerment. As comparative research on women and politics continues to grow, we can expect enhanced disagreement and debate among feminists.

It is precisely because feminists do and will disagree that we must suspend the automatic imputation of “feminist” to research that is attentive to women and to gender. Just as research on class is not automatically Marxist, neither is research on women or gender automatically feminist. While political scientists who subscribe to the goal of value-neutrality may be heartened by my suggestion that we stop using “the f word” as if it were synonymous with “women” and “gender,” I do not mean to devalue the feminist influence on political science. Rather, I propose to save feminism from unwarranted academic legitimation. Of course, feminism does not suffer from a surfeit of academic legitimation. During our workshop, we were often reminded of the professional risks entailed by doing avowedly feminist research and teaching.

Why, then, do I raise the specter of unwarranted academic legitimation as a problem? Much of our discussion during the course of the two day workshop took it for granted that research on gender and politics and women and politics is, quite obviously, “feminist.” It is time to resist this imputation. If we do not, we risk defusing “feminism” of its specifically political dimensions. Those of us who characterize our research as feminist should be prepared to make the case for the feminist implications of our work, and we should be prepared to debate the feminist merits

of our research with other feminists. Anything less does a disservice to feminism.⁶

This is an exciting and propitious time for gender scholarship in political science. As Dorothy Stetson and others have observed, democratization offers an especially promising venue for the study of women and of gender. In 1984, the historian Joan Kelly Gadol asked, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" The question, and its depressing answer, raised a host of issues involving basic categories of historiographic periodization and assessment. We face a similar challenge in political science, particularly with respect to the concept of democracy. Not only have women never had a democracy, but in several notable cases (historical, as well as contemporary), "democratization" has meant political set-backs for women. How might democracy be made not only accessible, but safe, for women? This question will sound peculiar only to those researchers who have not taken the time to consider "democracy" from the perspective of those who have been politically subordinated in the name of democracy. Answering it will require sustained, strategic, and critical deployment of the separate categories of "women," "gender," and "feminism."⁷

Notes

1. To say that the connection between gender and politics is obvious is not to say that this connection is transparent or theoretically undemanding. For recent efforts to complicate theoretical understandings of gender, see the following: Butler 1990, Butler 1993, Garber 1992, Morrison 1992.

2. Studies on the genderization of political science include the following: Brown 1988, Di Stefano 1991, Hartsock 1983, Hirschmann 1992, Jaquette 1992, Lovenduski 1981, Pateman 1989, Stiehm 1984, Zerilli 1994. For excellent overviews of feminist efforts to confront, contest, and undo this genderization in the academy and in the political world at large, see Carroll and Zerilli 1993, and Jones 1990.

3. This point is effectively made by Terrell Carver's choice of title for his new book *Gender Is Not a Synonym for Women* (1995).

4. On a recent lecture tour, Paglia proposed that Women's Studies programs should be dismantled altogether and replaced by Sex Studies Programs.

5. For a recent collection which displays spirited theoretical disagreement among feminist theorists, see Benhabib, Butler, Cornell, and Fraser 1995.

6. I do not want to be misunderstood on this point. My interest is in keeping the discursive and practical edge of feminism *politicized*, by which I mean that feminism be regarded as a political project that is incessantly open to contestation and debate. Such contestation is compromised when it is assumed that research on women or research on gender is *prima facie* feminist. I have no interest in policing or purifying the concept of feminism. Rather, my concerns have to do with the academic domestication of political feminism.

7. Because of space limitations, I have not discussed one of the most important new challenges for feminist theory, which centers on the concept of "women." In particular, social, cultural, and political diversity among women raises a series of important questions about the misleading cogency of the term "women" when it is taken as a signifier of shared experience and interests. For a helpful discussion of the issues, see Carroll and Zerilli (1993). Specifically comparative research on women and politics and gender and politics is especially promising with respect to this issue.

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About the Author

Christine Di Stefano teaches political theory at the University of Washington. She is the author of *Configurations of Masculinity: A Feminist Perspective on Modern Political Theory* (1991) and co-editor, with Nancy J. Hirschmann, of *Revising the Political: Feminist Reconstructions of Traditional Concepts in Western Political Theory* (Boulder: Westview, 1996). Her current research interests include contemporary feminist reassessments of the political theory of Karl Marx, and the status of "autonomy" as a normative political concept.