



Gender Inequality among Political Elites in Comparative Perspective

Jenny L. Hansson

Ph.D. thesis defence on 18 November 2013

Abstract

Are gender inequalities in work/life outcomes apparent among those positioned at the powerful top of society's hierarchy, and if so, why? There is currently a lack of consistent knowledge about what happens to those women who have reached the most influential positions of society, and about whether (and how) their situation differs from that of their male counterparts. This is particularly so in the case of political elites, about whom very few current studies exist. This thesis investigates gender and individual-level work/life outcomes among political elites (national parliamentarians) comparing two cases: Sweden and Germany. The research builds on empirical investigations from self-collected survey data covering finite populations of Swedish and German national parliamentarians. Parts of this political elite data are further matched to existing, large-scale databases from the European Social Survey, consisting of representative samples of general citizens, and of general elites, of the two nations. This allows reference comparisons to be made between the political elites and average citizens of the respective countries. To provide additional depth to the findings, the quantitative investigation was also complemented by a qualitative interview study. The results showed gender *inequality* in the strength of demand and support experienced in the *home-sphere* of the political elites (such as concerning household work and functional partner support). These gender discrepancies were more pronounced in the case of Germany than in Sweden. However, gender *equality* was observed concerning perceived career and influence possibilities in the *work-sphere*, and concerning general subjective well-being, in both the German and Swedish case of political elites.



Jury: Karin Kurz (University Göttingen), Fabrizio Bernardi (EUI) (Supervisor), Juho Härkönen (Stockholm University), Jaap Dronkers (Maastricht University) (formerly EUI)

Bio

Jenny Hansson's Ph.D. thesis investigates gender effects on the work-life balance and career prospects of political elites (national parliamentarians) in Sweden and Germany. She has conducted major surveys as well as in-depth interviews of Members of Parliament (MPs), and a comparative study of these MP-specific data against existing surveys for the general citizens and elite groups.

Jenny Hansson holds an M.A. in Sociology and a B.A. in Political Science from Lund University (Sweden), and has been a visiting researcher at Stanford University.

Jenny Hansson is published in the *European Sociological Review*.

Research interests: Elites, Political Sociology, Gender, Sociology of Work, Sociology of Families, Comparative Sociology, Stratification, Survey Methods, Econometrics, Mixed-Methods, Parliament.

Webpage and contact details: <http://hansson.webs.com>.