

Theories

- Descriptive (Hannah Pitkin, Jane Mansbridge)
- Substantive: Politics of presence (Anne Phillips)
- Critical Mass: (Moss Kanter, Drude Dahlerup)
- Critical Actors & Acts: (Sarah Childs, Mona Lena Krook)
- Feminist Democratic Representation (Karen Celis, Sarah Childs)

Feminist Democratic Representation

- emphasizes gender equality and empowerment in political decision-making processes to ensure fair and inclusive governance.
- It challenges traditional power structures that marginalize women in political leadership roles.
- Advocates for policies promoting women's rights and gender equity within institutions.
- Seeks to increase women's representation in government through mechanisms like quotas or affirmative action.
- Aims to create a more diverse and inclusive political landscape reflective of the population.

Critical Mass

- refers to the minimum amount of something needed to initiate a reaction or bring about significant change
- can be used to describe a threshold required to achieve a specific outcome or trigger a particular event
- in social movements, reaching critical mass signifies momentum and potential for widespread impact
- the concept is often employed in discussions about nuclear reactions or population dynamics

Critical Mass (cont)

- reaching critical mass can lead to a cascade effect, where rapid and widespread change occurs due to a tipping point
- critical mass is important
- to justify women in politics
- explain why small numbers of women in politics have limited impact on policymaking
- crucial tool for gender quotas campaigners as it succinctly illustrates the need for quotas as a 'fast-track' measure to increase women's political representation

Representation in Feminist Scholarship

- representation is multi-dimensional; has 4 distinct aspects
- formalistic: focuses on how the relationship between the representative and the represented is established
- symbolic representation: what does a politics with or without women symbolise about that country; it values and belief systems; laws; the legitimacy of the political process
- **descriptive representation:** The number or proportion of women in parliament – the extent to which parliament resembles society. Who do representatives stand for?
 - promotes democracy, democratic values and citizen's political involvement
 - used by scholars of identity politics, women in politics, multiculturalism and minority
- **substantive representation:** Assesses if women, when elected, act for women?
 - focuses on how well elected representatives advance the interests and needs of the groups they represent → 'who do they act for?'

Representation in Feminist Scholarship (cont)

- involves representing the interests and perspectives of marginalised groups effectively
- quality of representation is assessed based on tangible policies and actions that address the concerns of constituents
- substantive representation aims to ensure fair and equitable decision making processes
- the relationship between descriptive and substantive is the 'critical mass' concept hypothesis
 - once women reach a particular proportion of parliament, they are able to exert a 'real' influence on decisions

Critical Acts

- = an alternative approach to 'critical mass'
- > focused not on when women make a difference, but on how the substantive representation of women occurs; not on what women do, but on specific actors do
- Critical actors as legislators who initiate policy proposals on their own and/or embolden others to take steps to promote policies for women, regardless of the numbers of female representatives
- critical acts = acts that improve the lives of women
- we must always consider how the following shape opportunities for representation:
 - institutional constraints/opportunities
 - party ideology and affiliation
 - legislators' identities and interests



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Page 1 of 2.

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Importance of Women in Political Office

- the presence of women in political office is *normatively desirable*
- women's presence in political leadership may act to *sever* the strong *association between masculinity and political leadership*
- women's presence *reduces partisan hostility*
- women's presence in political office in one country may have a *contagion* or *diffusion effect on women's participation* in public life in other nations
- women in political office, in particular cabinet, *influence policy outcomes*
- Phillips (1998): identified four arguments to support women's political representation
 1. women politicians act as role models for aspiring women candidates
 2. women should be equally represented for justice reasons as they compose 50 percent of most populations
 3. women's interests are inadequately addressed in a politics dominated by men
 4. women's political representation revitalises democracy



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