

Does Exposure to Gender Role Models Increase Women's Political Ambition? A field experiment with politicians*

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Abstract

There is a persistent gender gap in motivations to run for political office. While exposure to role models is widely believed to increase women's political ambition, there is little field experimental evidence on whether exposure to female politicians in realistic settings can increase political ambition. We conducted a field experiment in which a sample of 612 female students was randomly assigned to receive emails inviting them to an event which included career workshops with female politicians, or no email. The treatment increased interest in the ongoing national election campaign, but against expectations, did not have any positive effect on political ambition. Our results suggest that female politicians who discuss their experience bluntly instead of following a motivational script may fail to motivate other women to pursue a political career. These results highlight the need for more research into the type of events and messages which bring more women into politics.

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1 Introduction

Women are less willing to run for political office than men (Lawless and Fox, 2010). There are many reasons for the persistent gender gap in political ambition, including perceptions of ability and qualifications (Fox and Lawless, 2004), attitudes towards competition (Kanthak and Woon, 2015; Preece and Stoddard, 2015), socialization (Fox and Lawless, 2014), work-life balance considerations (Silbermann, 2015), political recruitment (Karpowitz et al., 2017), and confidence in one’s own abilities (Preece, 2016).

In this paper, we focus on gender role models. Based on evidence from observational studies, it is widely believed that exposure to role models—politicians of the same gender with which potential aspirants can identify—has a positive effect on political engagement (Campbell and Wolbrecht, 2006; Wolbrecht and Campbell, 2007; Lawless and Fox, 2010; Fridkin and Kenney, 2014; Mariani et al., 2015), as well as on political ambition more specifically (Ladam et al., 2016; Beaman et al., 2009, 2012). Significantly fewer studies report null findings, or conditional effects (Broockman, 2014; Gilardi, 2015; Clayton, 2015).

We add to this evidence base with a field experiment based on a sample of 959 students attending a prominent Swiss university, a natural pool for the future Swiss political elite, whom we recruited to participate in an online panel. Within the female subsample in the online panel, 612 students, we randomly assigned invitations to a large event—organized together with the *Frauenzentrale Zürich*, a non-partisan Swiss NGO—in which students listened to a motivational female speaker, participated in workshops led by four prominent female politicians, and mingled with them over drinks. A few weeks after the event, the *Frauenzentrale Zürich* gave us the names of the women who applied to a mentoring program for young women interested in a political career, which the NGO organizes every year independently from this study. All women in the online panel received an invitation from the program director to apply to the mentoring program, independently of treatment assignment. Application to this program constitutes the behavioral outcome. We consider also an attitudinal outcome, self-reported motivation to run for office, as measured in both waves of our online panel. In addition, we

look at information-seeking behavior during the ongoing national election as a third set of outcomes.

We find that exposure to role models made women more likely to follow the news about the election campaign, but it did not have a positive effect on women’s motivation to run for office. The point estimates are small and negative, and the effects are not statistically significant at conventional levels, neither on the behavioral, nor on the attitudinal outcome measure of political ambition. Research in psychology and economics points to reasons why positive effects of role models might not materialize. First, women might perceive successful female politicians as exceptional individuals whose accomplishments are unattainable for normal people. Second, close contact with gender role models might also provide insights into the challenges awaiting women pursuing a political career. We provide some qualitative evidence based on transcripts from the workshops illustrating that role models might fail to encourage young women to pursue a political career if they do not follow a motivational script.

2 Do role models increase women’s political ambition?

It is widely believed that role models help bring more women into electoral politics.¹ Successful female politicians make other women more likely to consider running for office by altering their perceptions of their suitability for a political career (Lawless and Fox, 2010, 174). Fox and Lawless (2004, 272) conclude that “the gender gap narrows considerably and becomes statistically insignificant as women perceive themselves as increasingly qualified to run for office.” Women know more about, and are more active in politics when they are represented by women (Wolbrecht and Campbell, 2007; Fridkin and Kenney, 2014); Wolbrecht and Campbell (2017) found this difference particularly relevant for younger women exposed to new female candidates. Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006, 233) conclude that “the presence of visible female role models does in fact increase the propensity for girls to express an intention to be politically active.” Mariani et al. (2015) found a positive effect of very prominent female politicians

¹The operationalization of role models in the studies cited in this section is presented in Appendix A.

on young women's political participation, whereas Hoyt and Simon (2011) emphasize the importance of role models being "non-elite," i.e. easier to identify with. Ladam et al. (2016) found that electing a female governor has a significant effect on the number of female candidates for the state legislature. Positive causal effects of role models on political ambition are well established in the Indian case (Beaman et al., 2009, 2012). Based on these studies, we expected that exposing female students to female role models would increase their political ambition, and interest in running for office.

Although the political science literature has not given much attention to the possibility that role models might fail to increase women's political ambition, null and negative effects have been identified in other fields such as psychology and economics. As Asgari et al. (2012, 371) write, "seeing successful women leaders sometimes produces a contrast effect, making women see themselves as far less leaderlike compared to successful female leaders." This happens especially when subjects cannot identify with the role models, for instance because their successes are seen as unmatchable (Betz and Sekaquaptewa, 2012). Role models have encouraging effects if two conditions are fulfilled: they must be perceived as relevant, and their achievements must be perceived attainable (Lockwood and Kunda, 1997). If role models are relevant but their successes seem unattainable, they "can demoralize and deflate less outstanding others" (Lockwood and Kunda, 1997, 91). Another reason why role models can be discouraging is that their experience might confirm negative preconceptions or otherwise reveal challenges, for instance in combining career with family life (Bamberger, 2014).

3 Experimental design

3.1 Context

Our field experiment was conducted on a sample of female students at a leading Swiss university. The university provides a natural environment for the recruitment of future political leaders. In fact, two of the four politicians who acted as role models for this experiment were former students of the university. Despite its specificities—most importantly, the late introduction

of women's suffrage at the national level in 1971, as well as the militia system in which only few politicians are professional—Switzerland is not an outlier in cross-national comparisons of women's political representation. On the contrary, it might be regarded as a “typical case,” as shown in Appendix B.

With the help of the Career Services and the student union we registered a sample of 959 students, 612 female and 347 male², in an online panel, which was ostensibly unlinked to the field experiment. The gender distribution reflects that of the student population. We prominently advertised the panel on campus via emails, flyers and on social media, emphasizing the chance to win one of five weekend trips worth 1,400 Swiss Francs each. We also advertised 18 remunerated assistant positions among political science undergraduate students. Out of 33 applicants for the positions, 15 women had also registered in the online panel study. We hence stratified our sample on whether respondents had applied for an assistant position.

Right after enrollment in the online survey, participants answered the baseline wave, which included questions on gender attitudes and political careers embedded in a longer survey on career and study issues. The survey also measured demographic, as well as social and political background attributes. The full list of covariates includes age, marital status, citizenship, years of study, father's employment, mother's employment, father's education, mother's education, field of study, career goals, child wish, social skills, presentation skills, networking skills, gender attitudes, political interest, economic interest, and political knowledge. Table 1 shows the distribution of political interest, knowledge, and political ambition, by gender in the baseline wave. Based on Table 1 it is clear that female students reported to be less politically interested than male students, they were able to correctly identify fewer Swiss politicians, no matter if politicians were male or female, and they also reported lower political ambition than male students.

²The male subsample was not part of the experimental sample. Its purpose was to serve as a baseline comparison between male and female students' political ambition and, more specifically, to establish the presence of a gender gap.

Covariate	Male			Female			Gender Gap
	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	DiM
Political interest	7.31	2.42	320	6.36	2.61	586	0.95***
Knowledge male candidate	0.47	0.25	317	0.39	0.24	574	0.08***
Knowledge female candidate	0.51	0.27	317	0.41	0.25	575	0.09***
Political ambition	1.70	1.27	325	1.13	1.10	596	0.57***

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 1: *Political interest: 0–10 scale; know male candidates: 0–1 scale; know female candidates: 0–1 scale; ambition: 0–4 scale.*

3.2 Field experiment

To identify the effects of exposure to female role models on political ambition, we randomly assigned invitation emails to the mentoring event, “Women and Career Beyond the Glass Ceiling,” among all women who responded to the first wave of the online survey. We used blocked random assignment to allocate two thirds of the subjects to the treatment group, and one third to the control group. Random assignment was blocked on registration period, and on whether the student had applied for one of the assistant roles at the event. Assistants helped with organizational issues at the day of the event, making sure that politicians knew where to go. They also documented the workshops. Positions were remunerated. The treatment groups received an e-mail invitation to attend the event, asking subjects to reply whether they would attend via an online form (see Appendix Figure C1). The control group did not receive any invitation, and admission was invitation-only. The invitation was followed by two personalized reminders. After the registration deadline passed, registered participants received an email confirming their attendance.

We organized the mentoring event in collaboration with several institutional partners including the *Frauenzentrale Zürich*, a Swiss non-partisan NGO that promotes gender equality, the Career Services of the University, and the University’s Gender Equality Commission. Advertisement materials for the event were designed by the partner organisations, and the title was also selected by the partner organisations. The event was held two weeks before the Swiss National Assembly elections. Female politicians were recruited by the *Frauenzentrale*

Zürich to conduct career workshops with female university students, and to match the number of sign-ups, four politicians confirmed their attendance. Politicians were not given specific instructions regarding the themes to be covered in the workshops, but were asked to convey their own personal career experience. Table C1 in the Appendix shows that the workshop-leaders represented four different Swiss political parties from across the political spectrum, and that there was variation both in age, ranging from 37 to 51, and position in the National or Cantonal Council. Moreover, we recruited a prominent business woman to give a motivational speech. The event was followed by an evening reception that provided further opportunities for students and politicians to mingle.

Two weeks after the event, all Wave 1 respondents, regardless of gender, received an invitation to participate in the second wave of the online panel that measured the outcomes of the field experiment. The outcomes are meant to capture an interest in a political career, including the self-reported likelihood of running for political office in the future. Moreover, the *Frauenzentrale* circulated an application to enroll in a political mentoring program among all female survey participants. In the post-treatment wave we also asked students how closely they followed the election campaign, how often they read about the campaign online, and we assessed students' political knowledge by asking them to identify the candidates who were directly elected to the Swiss Senate a few days earlier.³ The set-up of the study is displayed in Appendix Figure D1. Table E1 in the Appendix shows that treatment and control groups are well balanced on our extensive set of pre-treatment covariates collected in survey wave 1.⁴ Moreover, based on randomization-inference, Appendix Figure E1 shows that we cannot reject the sharp null hypothesis that treatment assignment does not predict survey attrition in wave 2 ($p = 0.56$).

³There is some potential for a violation of the non-interference assumption if subjects in treatment and control groups talk to each other about the invitation or the event. We cannot entirely rule this out since subjects attend the same university. However, only around 5% of all female university students were part of the experimental sample, and our data show that they were distributed across different faculties.

⁴All treatment and control group means are based on the sample used for the subsequent analysis. We also use randomization inference to test whether we can reject the sharp null hypotheses that the pre-treatment covariates do not jointly predict assignment of any subject to treatment or control over and above what we would expect from random sampling variability alone ($p=0.56$; see Appendix Figure E1).

4 Results

We know that 71% of subjects in the treatment group opened the email. Despite the attractive program and the proximity to national elections, only around 15% of subjects in the treatment group ($n = 60$) engaged with our invitation by replying whether they would attend, and 8% of students ($n = 32$ out of 405), attended the event. This is despite the event being prominently advertised to subjects in the treatment group, providing information on invited guests, and including up to two reminders. The first important result of the field experiment is hence that subjects were not very keen to meet politicians. In the following analysis we always report randomization-inference based two-tailed hypothesis tests and 95%-confidence intervals for the ITT (Gerber and Green, 2012), and use Two-Stage-Least Squares regression with robust standard errors (HC2) to estimate the CACE, and 95% confidence intervals surrounding the CACE. The covariate-adjustment is done including all available pre-treatment covariates collected in survey wave 1 (see Table E1 in the Appendix).

Table 2 reports the key results of the paper, the effects of treatment assignment on whether students applied for the mentoring program offered by the *Frauenzentrale Zürich*, and whether they could see themselves running for political office in a few years. The behavioral outcome is binary, application (1) or no application (0), and the attitudinal outcome is measured on a 0-4 scale. In Table 2 we report estimates of the Intent-to-Treat (ITT) effect, that is, the effect of sending the email including the invitation to participate in the event on applying to the mentoring program, and self-reported political ambition.

The treatment effects are not statistically significant for applications to the mentoring programme and for self-reported political ambition, and the direction of both treatment effect estimates is negative. The point estimates amount to -1 percentage-point on the application to the mentoring programme, and -0.16 on the 0-4 attitudinal scale.⁵

Table 3 displays estimates of the Complier Average Causal Effect (CACE), that is, the effect of attending the event, instrumented by the (randomly assigned) invitation to attend under

⁵We provide power simulations for the attitudinal outcome in Figure F1 in the Appendix. They show that assuming a Cohen's d of 0.2, our study has 50% power, and assuming a Cohen's d of 0.3, it has 84% power.

	Applied to mentoring program	Political ambition
	ITT	
Control mean	0.02	0.35
Effect of invitation	-0.01	-0.16
	[-0.03, 0.01]	[-0.37, 0.06]
Covariate-adjusted	-0.01	-0.13
	[-0.03, 0.01]	[-0.29, 0.03]
Blocks	Yes	Yes
N	612	450

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 2: *Applied to mentoring program (1 = yes, 0 = no), “could see myself running for office in a few years” (0–4 scale), 95% confidence intervals in brackets. Generalized Difference Estimator for ITT (Aronow and Middleton, 2013).*

	Applied to mentoring program	Political ambition
	CACE (attendance)	
Attendance rate	0.08	0.08
Effect of attendance	-0.09	-1.96
	[-0.37, 0.19]	[-4.93, 1.00]
Covariate-adjusted	-0.10	-1.51
	[-0.38, 0.18]	[-3.51, 0.48]
Blocks	Yes	Yes
N	612	450

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 3: *Applied to mentoring program (1 = yes, 0 = no), “could see myself running for office in a few years” (0–4 scale), 95% confidence intervals in brackets. 2SLS for CACE, HC2 standard errors.*

the exclusion restriction that the email only affected behaviors and attitudes via attendance at the event. It is of course possible that the email had an independent effect on applications to the mentoring program and political ambition. The CACE estimates displayed in Table 3 therefore provide an upper bound on the CACE. If we assume that the email only affected attitudes and behaviors via attendance at the event, the CACE is estimated to amount to 10 percentage-points for subjects’ application to the mentoring program, and -2 points on the 5-point attitude scale for the behavioral outcome measure. In Table G1 in the Appendix we display the results using a more conservative measure of compliance, whether the subject RSVPed to the invitation.

These results raise the question whether the event failed to excite students. However, this does not appear to be the case. Table 4 displays the effects of the email invitation on interest in the ongoing election campaign, and on political knowledge. Subjects in the treatment group report following the campaign more frequently via traditional media than subjects in the control group, and also report higher levels of online media consumption and political knowledge, albeit the latter effects are not statistically significant.

	Following the news	Following the news online	Political knowledge
	ITT		
Control	2.85	1.29	0.73
Effect of invitation	0.18	0.02	0.04
	[-0.13, 0.50]	[-0.20, 0.24]	[-0.04, 0.14]
Covariate-adjusted	0.30*	0.13	0.02
	[0.02, 0.60]	[-0.08, 0.35]	[-0.07, 0.10]
	CACE - Attendance		
Attendance rate	0.08	0.08	0.08
Effect of attendance	2.26	0.24	0.53
	[-1.72, 6.24]	[-2.55, 3.04]	[-0.57, 1.64]
Covariate-adjusted	3.54*	1.54	0.19
	[0.03, 7.04]	[-0.88, 3.95]	[-0.76, 1.13]
Blocks	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	452	452	444

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 4: “How often have you followed the news about the election campaign”, 0–6 scale, “How frequently did you follow the campaign online?”, 0–6 scale, and political knowledge “which politicians got directly elected in the first round of the Swiss Federal Senate election?”. 95% confidence intervals in brackets. Generalized Difference Estimator for ITT, 2SLS for CACE, HC2 standard errors.

5 Discussion

The event organised in collaboration with a Swiss NGO and the University Careers Services did not increase women’s political ambition. Consistent with our findings, qualitative evidence from the workshops shows that politicians gave a candid assessment of the challenges women can expect to face when running for office (see transcripts in Appendix H). For instance, one politician emphasized that when she first took office, she was the only woman in the

legislature who had small children and lived far from the capital. The same politician also presented herself as someone “with above-average energy resources.” It is not difficult to see how some young women, or indeed men, might be put off by such statements. Moreover, another politician put considerable emphasis on the challenges women face when combining a demanding professional career with family life. This was a common thread in all workshops.

The qualitative evidence collected during the workshops is consistent with findings from psychology and economics, showing that role models can fail to inspire if their achievements seem unattainable (Lockwood and Kunda, 1997; Asgari et al., 2012; Betz and Sekaquaptewa, 2012; Bamberger, 2014; Lerner and Malmendier, 2013). If even women who are objectively successful face high barriers, then what would it be like for women who believe that they might not have the same degree of motivation and skills?

An important specificity of the Swiss case is its militia system. Only few politicians are professionals; most pursue their political career on top of a day job. This compounds work-life-balance problems for women, and transcripts confirms that life-balance issues were one of the main themes discussed in the workshops. Nevertheless, the issue of work-life balance is not specific to the Swiss case. Political careers are extremely demanding on politicians’ private lives.

While the results of this field experiment are far from conclusive, they merit a call for further investigation, and a larger number of field experiments that expose women to role models in realistic settings. If civil society organizations can develop more effective encouragements for women to attend such events, the design of this study can serve as a blue-print for further field experiments, which can deliver more precise answers to the question under which conditions exposure to female politicians encourages women’s political ambition. One hypothesis arising from this study is that role models can fail to motivate women to pursue a political career if they discuss their experience bluntly instead of following a motivational script—a plausible situation in real-world contexts that mentoring programs need to consider, and future research could explore further.

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Appendix

A Operationalization of role models in the literature

- Asgari et al. (2012): experimental exposure to pictures and biographies of successful professional women
- Bamberger (2014): female scientists and engineers
- Beaman et al. (2009, 2012): gender quotas (reserved seats)
- Betz and Sekaquaptewa (2012): experimental exposure to magazine-type interviews with female university students described as successful
- Broockman (2014): election of additional women in competitive US state legislative elections
- Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006): total number of female candidates and number of viable candidates
- Clayton (2015): quota-mandated female representatives
- Fridkin and Kenney (2014): female senators
- Gilardi (2015): number of women elected in municipal executives
- Ladam et al. (2016): female governors
- Lerner and Malmendier (2013): share of peers with a pre-MBA entrepreneurial background
- Lockwood and Kunda (1997): experimental exposure to fake newspaper article describing professional women who had recently won an award for their outstanding career achievements
- Mariani et al. (2015): election of Nancy Pelosi as the first female Speaker (2007), Hillary Clinton's presidential run (2007-2008), Sarah Palin's nomination as the Republican vice-presidential candidate (2008)
- Wolbrecht and Campbell (2007): percentage of women in a country's lower legislative house
- Wolbrecht and Campbell (2017): number of female candidates

B Switzerland as a “typical” case

Despite its specificities—most importantly, the late introduction of women’s suffrage at the national level in 1971, as well as the militia system in which only few politicians are professional—Switzerland is not an outlier in cross-national comparisons of women’s political representation. On the contrary, it might be regarded as a “typical case,” that is, “a case that exemplifies a stable, cross-case relationship” (Seawright and Gerring, 2008, 299), or, in other words, “a low-residual case (on-lier)” (Seawright and Gerring, 2008, 297). As shown in Figure B1, Switzerland is precisely such an on-lier in three studies of women’s representation in national parliaments.

Women's political representation:
Switzerland is a "typical" case

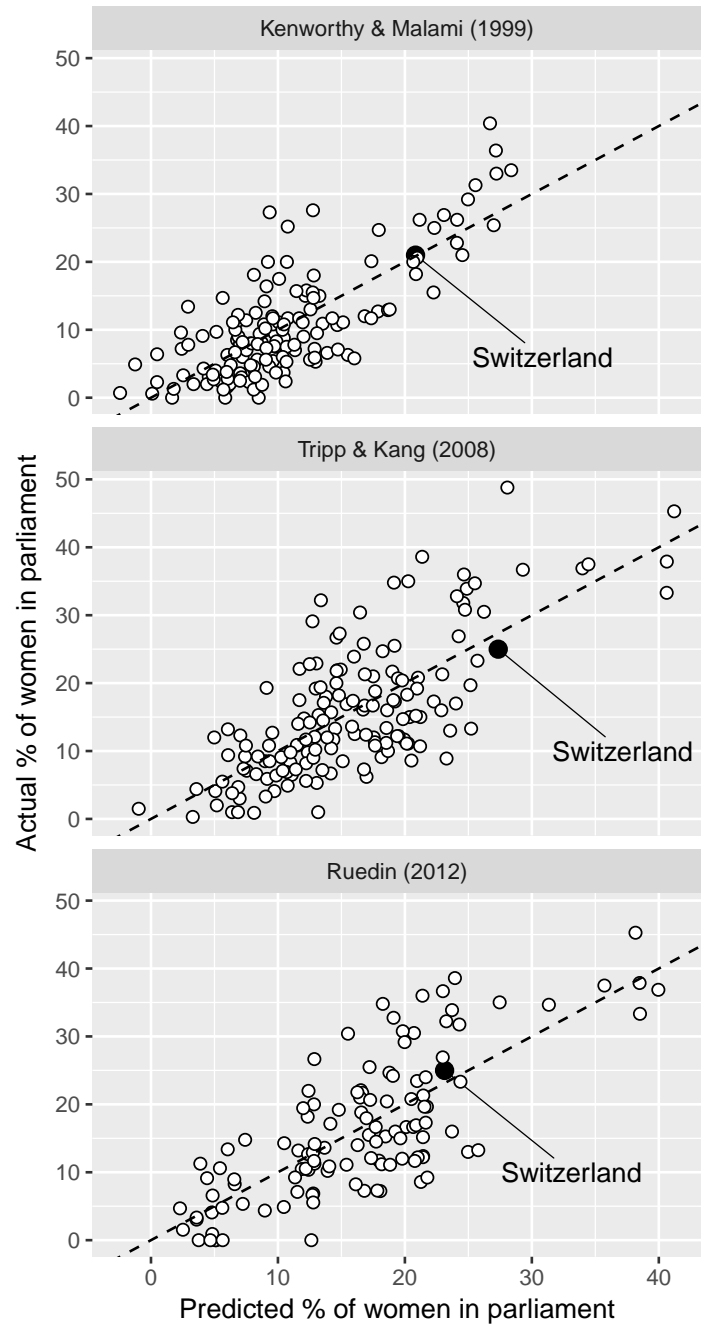


Figure B1: *Switzerland as a “typical” case.* The analyses replicate Kenworthy, Lane and Melissa Malami. 1999. “Gender Inequality in Political Representation: A Worldwide Comparative Analysis.” *Social Forces* 78(1): 235-269; Tripp, Aili Mari and Alice Kang. 2008. “The Global Impact of Quotas: On the Fast Track to Increased Female Legislative Representation.” *Comparative Political Studies* 41(3): 338-361; and Ruedin, Didier. 2012. “The Representation of Women in National Parliaments: A Cross-national Comparison.” *European Sociological Review* 28(1): 96-109.

C Event: invitation and flyer e-mailed to the treatment group

Einladung: „Frauen und Karriere jenseits der Glasdecke“
Gleichstellungskommission UZH

Samstag, 26. September 2015 15:
Details anzeigen

An:
Liebe

Wie kann ich meinen beruflichen Einstieg vorbereiten? Muss ich meine Karriere planen? Mit welchen Hürden ist zu rechnen? Wie bringe ich in Zukunft Familie und Beruf unter einen Hut?

Antworten auf diese Fragen finden Sie am 8. Oktober auf der Veranstaltung „Frauen und Karriere jenseits der Glasdecke“ an der Universität Zürich. Die Veranstaltung mit bekannten Personen aus Wirtschaft und Politik ist für Sie kostenlos.

Anmeldung oder Abmeldung bis spätestens 30. September: [Hier geht's zur Registrierung](#)

19 Politikerinnen und Politiker (aus dem National- und Kantonsrat) berichten in Workshops über ihren beruflichen und politischen Werdegang und beraten Sie mit konkreten Tipps zum Thema Karriereplanung. Das Input-Referat hält Heliane Canepa. Die erfolgreiche Managerin war zwei Mal Unternehmerin des Jahres und in der Geschäftsleitung von grossen Unternehmen. Heute ist Heliane Canepa CEO beim FC Zürich und berät kostenlos Frauen bei Firmengründungen. Zudem hat auch sie verschiedene Verwaltungsratsmandate.

Organisiert wird der Anlass vom Institut für Politikwissenschaft, der Frauenzentrale Zürich, den Career Services UZH und der Gleichstellungskommission UZH.

Weitere Details finden Sie in der [Einladung](#).

Es ist nur eine begrenzte Anzahl von Plätzen vorhanden. Die Einladung ist deshalb nicht übertragbar.

Wir freuen uns auf Sie!



Career Services
Institut für Politikwissenschaft und
Gleichstellung



Wie plane ich meine Karriere?

Welches sind die grössten Herausforderungen? Wie kann ich meinen beruflichen Einstieg erleichtern? Wie bringe ich Familie und Beruf unter einen Hut? Politikerinnen und Politiker berichten in Workshops über ihren beruflichen und politischen Werdegang und beraten Studentinnen bei der Karriereplanung mit konkreten Tipps.

Datum: **Donnerstag, 8. Oktober 2015, 18.00 Uhr**
Ort: **Universität Zürich, Aula**

18.00 Uhr **Begrüssung, Ziele der Veranstaltung**
Inputreferat: Heliane Canepa, Unternehmerin,
Delegierte des Verwaltungsrates FC Zürich

19.00 Uhr **Workshops**

20.00 Uhr **Apéro im Lichthof**

Organisiert wird der Anlass vom Institut für Politikwissenschaft, der Frauenzentrale Zürich, den Career Services UZH und der Gleichstellungskommission UZH.

LEITUNG WORKSHOPS

- Angelo Barrile (SP), Kantonsrat
- Barbara Steinemann (SVP), Kantonsrätin
- Beat Walti (FDP), Nationalrat
- Beatrix Frey-Eigenmann (FDP), Kantonsrätin
- Corinne Thomet-Bürki (CVP), Kantonsrätin
- Esther Guyer (Grüne), Kantonsrätin
- Esther Straub (SP), Kantonsrätin
- Jacqueline Badran (SP), Nationalrätin
- Judith Stofor (AL), Kantonsrätin
- Kathy Riklin (CVP), Nationalrätin
- Maria Rohwedder-Lischer (Grüne), Kantonsrätin
- Markus Bischoff (AL), Kantonsrat
- Michael Zeugin (gip), Kantonsrat
- Nik Gugger (EVP), Kantonsrat
- Regine Sauter (FDP), Kantonsrätin
- Regula Rytz (Grüne), Nationalrätin
- Rosmarie Quadranti (BDP), Nationalrätin
- Thomas Hardegger (SP), Nationalrat
- Tiana Moser (gip), Nationalrätin



Figure C1: Invitation and flyer e-mailed to the treatment group

The schedule of the event is described in the flyer shown in Figure C1. The title of the event, “Women and Career Beyond the Glass Ceiling”, was selected by the Frauenzentrale Zürich and the University of Zurich’s Career Services, not by us. The image used in the flyer was selected by the Frauenzentrale Zürich. Therefore, the flyer reflects the experience of the Career Services and of the NGO, not our own assumptions.

The event started at 6pm with a keynote by Heliane Canepa, who in 2005 was ranked by the Financial Times as the 6th most successful business woman in Europe as the CEO of the dental implants company Nobel Biocare. She continues to be well known in Switzerland as the Delegate of the Board of Directors of the FC Zurich soccer team, which she co-owns together with her husband. Heliane Canepa was recruited for the event by the president of the Frauenzentrale Zurich. Her keynote had a strong motivational, empowering tone. Heliane Canepa left the event after her keynote.

After the keynote, which all participants attended, the event continued with four parallel one-hour workshops starting at 7pm. The workshop leaders were recruited by the president of the Frauenzentrale Zürich, who could rely on her professional network. As shown in the Table C1, they represented four major political parties across the left-right spectrum. Three of them were members of the cantonal parliament, and one of the national parliament. The politicians were not given specific instructions regarding the workshop beyond giving career advice to participants based on their own experience. We did not have any contact with these politicians prior to the event.

After the workshops, at 8pm, the event continued for about ninety minutes with a reception with drinks and food.

Gender	Party	Position	Age	University educated
Female	Social Democratic Party	Cantonal Councillor	46	yes
Female	Free Democratic Party	Cantonal Councillor	49	yes
Female	Green Liberal Party	National Councillor	37	yes
Female	Christian Democratic Party	Cantonal Councillor	51	no

Table C1: *Political and demographic attributes of workshop leaders*

D Study set-up

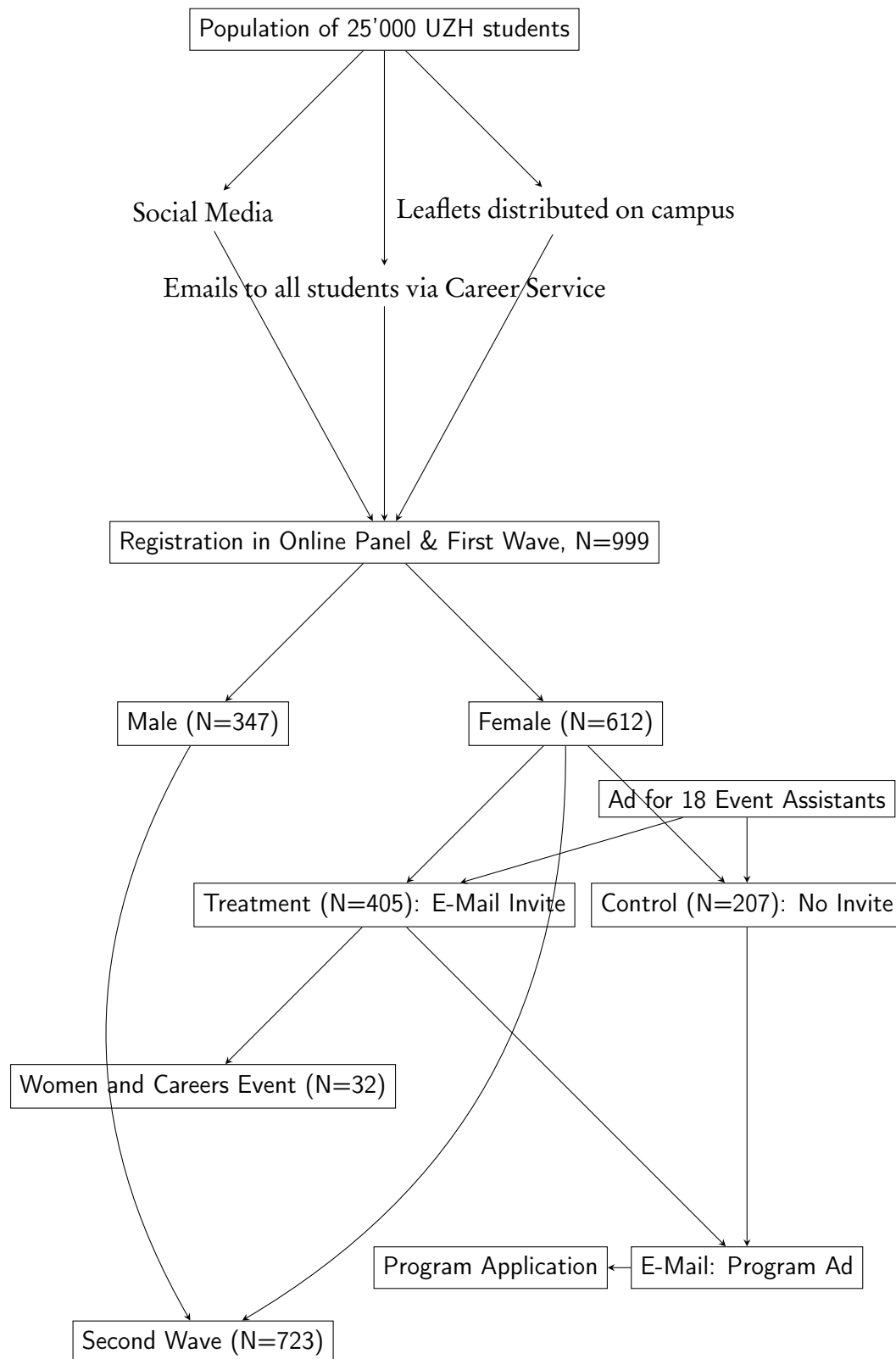


Figure D1: *Study set-up*

	Attended			Did not attend			DiM	P-Value
	mean	sd	N	mean	sd	N		
Political interest	8.06	1.93	31	6.27	2.61	555	1.80	0.00
Knowledge male candidate	0.43	0.25	32	0.39	0.24	580	0.05	0.32
Knowledge female candidate	0.46	0.22	32	0.41	0.25	580	0.05	0.21
Political ambition	1.88	1.18	32	1.09	1.08	563	0.79	0.00

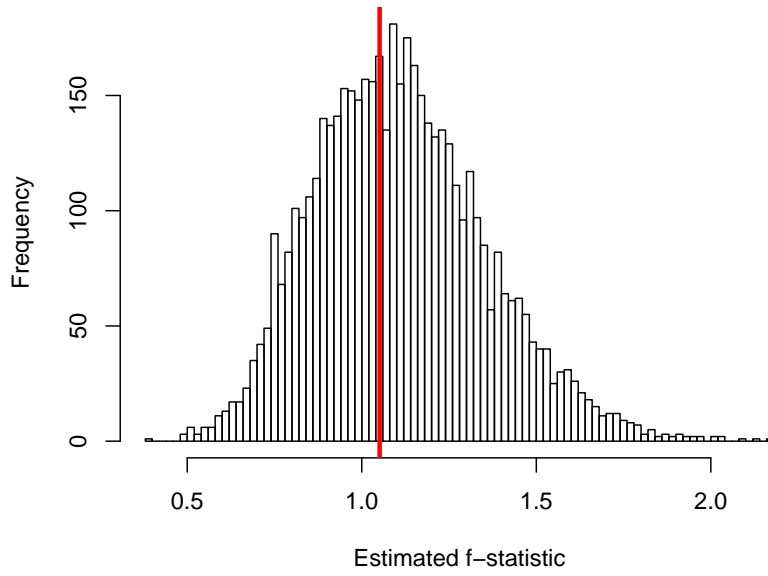
Table D1: *Are women who attended the event different from women who did not attend? Political interest: 0–10 scale; know male candidates: 0–1 scale; know female candidates: 0–1 scale; ambition: 0–4 scale.*

E Balance table

	Mean Treatment	Mean Control	P-value
Knowledge male candidate	0.37	0.40	0.21
Knowledge female candidate	0.40	0.42	0.49
Political knowledge self-report	5.40	5.11	0.12
Political ambition	1.14	1.12	0.79
Political interest	6.73	6.21	0.02
Economic interest	5.43	5.45	0.90
Social skills	3.40	3.32	0.22
Presentation skills	2.62	2.59	0.83
Networking skills	2.63	2.68	0.50
Gender attitudes - children	1.84	1.81	0.74
Gender attitudes - childcare	1.28	1.19	0.35
Gender attitudes - career	2.88	2.80	0.24
Gender attitudes - elections	2.18	2.24	0.49
Gender attitudes - work	2.90	2.96	0.39
Gender attitudes - politics	1.94	1.92	0.84
Perceptions about future	2.82	2.84	0.69
Career goals	0.36	0.35	0.79
Career entry	0.37	0.41	0.33
Child wish	0.64	0.64	0.93
Age	22.93	23.10	0.63
Married	0.04	0.04	0.86
Swiss citizenship	0.83	0.86	0.32
Year entered uni	2013.19	2012.80	0.07
Father employed	0.95	0.95	0.97
Mother employed	0.77	0.73	0.28
Father edu cat 1	0.07	0.05	0.42
Father edu cat 2	0.23	0.26	0.37
Father edu cat 3	0.19	0.22	0.36
Mother edu cat 1	0.08	0.05	0.15
Mother edu cat 2	0.28	0.34	0.12
Mother edu cat 3	0.24	0.25	0.65
Doing BA degree	0.80	0.77	0.37
Doing MA degree	0.14	0.15	0.55
Doing PhD	0.06	0.06	0.83
Faculty of Natural Sciences	0.15	0.14	0.66
Faculty of Medicine	0.05	0.04	0.58
Faculty of Philosophy	0.59	0.59	0.99
Faculty of Law	0.10	0.09	0.68
Faculty of Veterinary Medicine	0.01	0.03	0.10
Faculty of Economics	0.08	0.09	0.73

Table E1: Balance on pre-treatment covariates

Sampling distribution of the estimated f–statistic



Sampling distribution of the estimated f–statistic

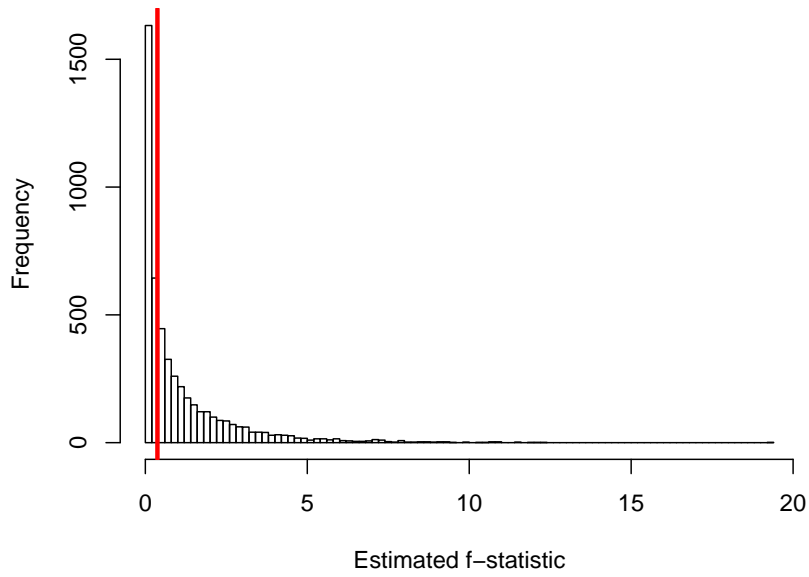


Figure E1: *Sampling distributions of f-statistics; balance (top) and attrition (bottom)*

F Statistical power

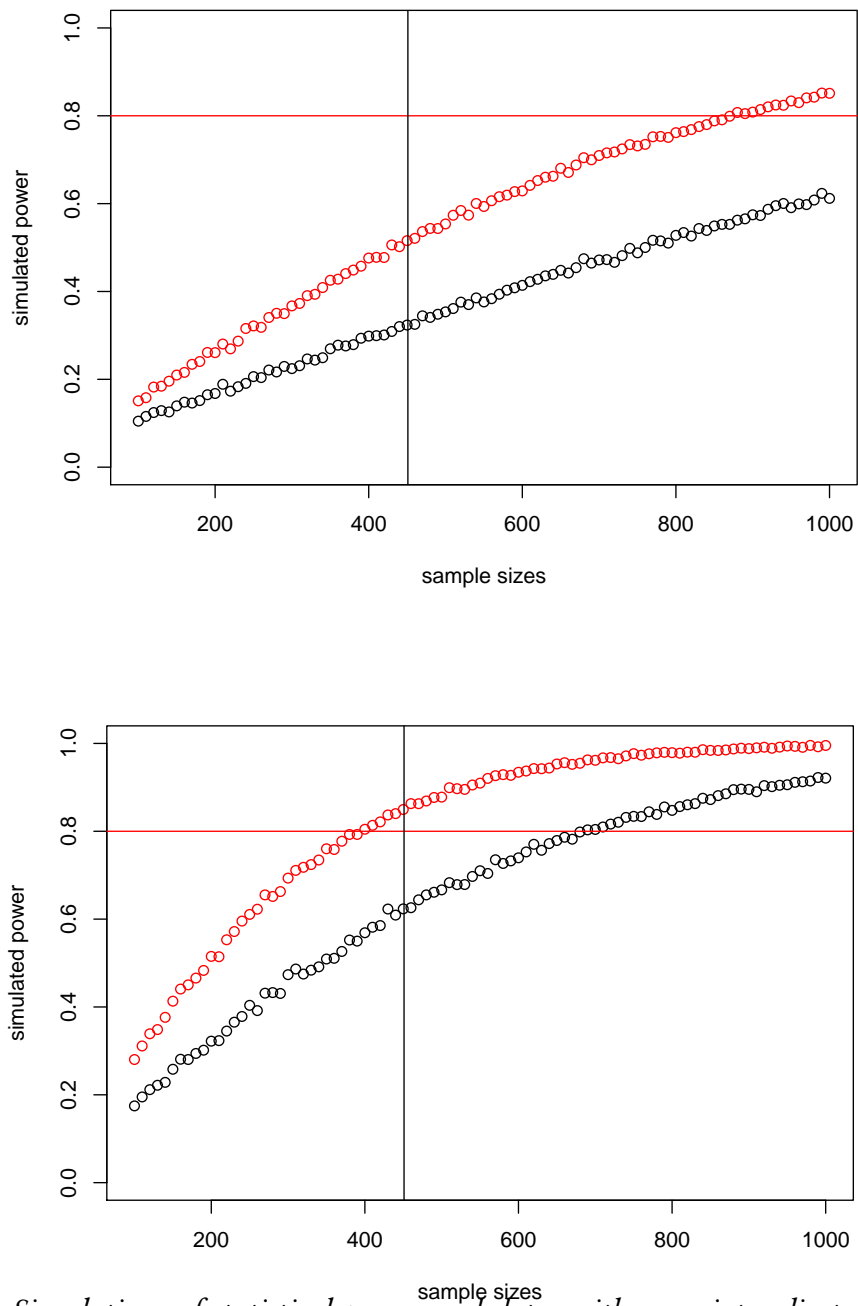


Figure F1: Simulations of statistical power; red dots: with covariate-adjustment, black dots: unadjusted; assumed Cohen's $d=0.2$ and 0.3 (sd attitudinal outcome = 1.10)

G Alternative measure of compliance

	Applied to mentoring program	Political ambition
	CACE (RSVP)	
RSVP rate	0.15	0.16
Effect of RSVP	-0.05	-0.97
	[-0.20, 0.10]	[-2.39, 0.45]
Covariate-adjusted	-0.05	-0.77
	[-0.20, 0.10]	[-1.74, 0.21]
Blocks	Yes	Yes
N	612	450

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table G1: *Applied to mentoring program* (1 = yes, 0 = no), “could see myself running for office in a few years” (0–4 scale), 95% confidence intervals in brackets. 2SLS for CACE, HC2 standard errors.

	Following the news	Following the news online	Political knowledge
	CACE - RSVP		
RSVP rate	0.16	0.16	0.16
Effect of RSVP	1.11	0.12	0.27
	[-0.84, 3.06]	[-1.26, 1.50]	[-0.29, 0.83]
Covariate-adjusted	1.79*	0.78	0.10
	[0.13, 3.45]	[-0.42, 1.97]	[-0.39, 0.59]
Blocks	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	452	452	444

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table G2: “How often have you followed the news about the election campaign”, 0–6 scale, “How frequently did you follow the campaign online?”, 0–6 scale) and political knowledge (“which politicians got directly elected in the first round of the Swiss Federal Senate election?”. 95% confidence intervals in brackets. Generalized Difference Estimator for ITT, 2SLS for CACE, HC2 standard errors.

H Partial workshop transcripts

H.1 Politician #1

So, I really want to give you a warm welcome. I've probably got this invitation from the "Frauenzentrale" because I'm a member and because I'm such a classical example that you're actually looking for. There are young mothers doing politics but they're not that common and above all not in the form as I am. I am – you may know my name – [name redacted]. I studied political and environmental science here at the University of Zurich. I'm a mother of three. I've got three little sons: 3, 4.5 and 6 years old. Two of them are going to the kindergarten. I'm a Member of the National Council since 2007 and act as chairwoman of a parliamentary party since 2011. That's a work quota of about 70-80% which means that I've not been working in my job since the birth of my second child. Before, I've used to work mainly at the ETH, as a research assistant at the Chair of Environmental Policy and Environmental Economics. After my second child I've stopped because of the irregularities and because the work quota was actually very high. I'm 36 years old and live in the city of Zurich but I grew up in the Zurich Oberland region. Just to add this shortly to my profile. Honestly, I've not really been active in feminist politics. Or let's put it this way: in this sense, it was not this issue that mobilized or politicized me. I have been politicized by the environmental issues. But when you're doing politics as a female, you soon realize that - if you do not care about the feminist issue - you sit alone at the table. This is just the reality and thus feminist politics have become more and more important to me. I think, Miss Canepa has already mentioned some quite good points and we've also heard during the introduction – we may later on discuss it a bit further – that we're still stuck at 30%. If we wouldn't care for this issue we would lay much lower. It just needs an active effort, otherwise the representation is just zero. This was an insight which I had after relatively brief time although - if I'm honest - when I got in, I did not care much for the issue. Okay, I would propose... I've been asked to briefly report on my professional and political career and that compatibility is then an issue that we can take a closer look at. Because this is an issue that also moves many people. I always welcome school classes in Bern, even some school classes from Zurich, if it is possible somehow, because that kind of event always takes time - and this is usually the number one issue, as it is for Switzerland in general. Yes... I decided not to just present my CV but rather to emphasize some points which seem important to me and choose them as basis for the discussion. Afterwards you're allowed to ask me every- thing you want. I am also looking forward to this exchange, which is also exciting for me, to see what women, who are a few years behind me and then come to the points where I stand now, what moves them and how they think about these questions. I also find this very interesting in case of the school classes – the high school kids who lie another few years more behind. I see this as an exchange too. Moreover, how Switzerland is perceived, how the polity is perceived concerning these questions. How is perceived, what moves, or what does not move. I hope we can also have a discussion on this later. Before, I said where I stand today. And I believe it's true that – even it can't be proven – that I've been one of the youngest of the female Members of the National Council, even if there were some younger ones. But I think I'm the only mother who has a longer commuter path. I'm from Zurich and always go to Bern. I think I'm the only mother with three children who are that young in the parliament, that's a reality. I'm not telling anyone it's easy, but it's feasible. There are several reasons which are relevant in my opinion if one wants to be politically involved and these are some of the reasons

which have made me do what I can do today. Miss Canepa said that some are always guilty... Some of these are encountered again and again, I think. Certainly, there are always framework conditions. Well, it was not the plan for me – I did not get into politics because I knew that I would like to become a National Councilor or chairwoman of a parliamentary party – but I got into politics because I knew I wanted to get involved. Certain issues are important to me, in my case it has always been this environmental issue. I believe it needs a certain clarity. It needs the clarity of where you stand, of what you want and of where you want to go, maybe not a plan as the husband of Heliane Canepa once said. To break it down now to what I did. For me, politics was relevant as such. I've always known that I want to be involved in shaping it, not simply in going along, that did not interest me. I really wanted to help shaping it.

Today we face the situation that there are consequences. I feel as everything I do has some consequences in an extent that befalls me. And this may be... Yes, a certain ease which disappears one day. And this means that, if I make a decision, I have to tell myself for example: "Do I join a commission, or do I join two commissions?" Afterwards, I must ask myself which commission I am going to join. We are having legislative commissions, I'm a member of the foreign policy commission and before that, I have been joining two commissions, the commission of science, education and culture, as well as the foreign policy commission. And if you want to work politically it's exciting to be in many commissions and it's also exciting to be member of a commission in which you can have a lot of influence and which has many dossiers, legislations. The foreign policy commission is very much in line with my interests and does not have that many legislations. I did this on purpose because I'm the chairwoman of a parliamentary party. But actually, I feel like doing more dossiers and editing more legislations. I already had situations when I first thought: "I'm going to say yes to this trip or this job or this presidency." And then I decided that the balance sheet was no longer correct and then the following question was if the balance sheet was only wrong for the moment, for the next month or if she's incorrect at all. And this is extremely difficult. I find this trade-off more difficult than the resiliency question. And that's actually the career: So, do I bet on career or family or is now another step and more responsibility in it. I like to take responsibility and I like to be fully in charge and not half in charge. It's like that: either I do it or I do not do it. And yes, that's difficult.

Student A: Do you feel like men in the National Council don't have to ask themselves this question between career and family?

Most of the men in the National Council, at the least the ones who are not from Bern, do not have that question in its extent and the neither do the younger ones. So, I also have conversations, that's funny then... I get along... I'm not the type that is afraid of contact with other political camps at all. But there are persons at my age who even don't pack their bags by themselves or don't buy suits on their own. And child care at all is clearly assigned, so that's the way it is, that's another world of value. I do not think they necessarily judge and find terrible what I do, but they probably think: For God's sake, such a woman would not be needed at home. I do think so. Yes, it's for sure very comfortable: Seven days 24 hours of politics, that's what the media want. But I said to myself: "I'll do it the way it is right for me, and if it's not enough to be elected, then that's the way it is." But somehow you have to try to remain true to yourself and from time to time there's a price for this, too. Yes, the price is there, that's clear. That's the visibility. Then, you must take the visibility when you get it. And I've been thinking many times: "You see more internally than externally. Externally, I've got it a bit more under control than at the beginning. You also must accept things". Afterwards you ask

yourself: “Why didn’t I say that?” Because you tend to... That’s kind of like that, I’m like that - you like to take things back sometimes. But this has no place in politics, the withdrawal.

Student B: A question. Before, you said... I guess, there were some points for you when you thought: “Now it’s a lot or already too much.” How has it been then? Did you just get support from your surroundings, or did you just think of yourself like: “No, come on, you can do that, keep going or move on.” I mean did this rather come from the outside or is it an inner urge or ambition?

Well, I think so in the end... Well... I probably am - as I noticed – a type with large energy resources. First, I’ve never thought so myself, but I just realize it, even when I look at others. I think I also have a good basic compass: What can I expect and what can I not expect? And this helps. Furthermore, I think you have to keep track of the medium-term balance, not the short-term and not the long-term. You cannot wait your whole life for things which never come true. But the medium term is sometimes difficult because sometimes things are not going well, but they may be better again. And I have an inner urge as well as a surrounding that carries me. Also, I do have a husband who enjoys what I do. Then, there’s no discussion. If I say: “I’d like to go on a trip!”, he tells me to do it. He also sometimes says: “Isn’t it a bit too much?” But I am the one who expresses afterwards: “I just stay at home, nevertheless.” And I have a family that carries me, even if they think that I do too much, they still carry me anyway. Sometimes they believe that it would be better if I were home a bit more often. But I think I’m at home quite often. *laughs* And then, every now and then, I have – if I can, during the section, it’s not possible because I’m the chairwoman of a parliamentary party - but if I see, it works...

H.2 Politician #2

I’m 49 years old and I’ve got two children who are now 15 and 17 years old. They go to high school and they are completely pubertal. My intention is not to keep you from having children. There are also beautiful phases and pleasing age categories in which you can have a lot of fun with the family. I studied political science at the University of St. Gallen, International Relations was the name of the day. That’s one third of politics, a third of economics and all the public law. And after my studies I went to Bern to first work for the Swiss Federal Office of Energy, for the action program Energy 2000. After two years I became chief of staff. Well, in this case I could benefit a little bit from being a woman. That was quite a male domain, it still is, the Federal Office of Energy, and we had a director who was glad that he was able to accommodate a woman in his team and that he could give her chance, accordingly. Which I then took, of course, even if in the beginning, it... I can remember how I once had been greeted by the press secretary of Mr. [name redacted] who was our boss at that time, the Federal Council thus: “Well now, this is the shining example of a woman from the Federal Office for Energy!” And first, I had a lump in my throat and a stupid saying on the lips. Then, I didn’t say anything and turned my gaze inward and thought: “If they see me as a shining example of a woman, I’m gladly accepting this role - in the sense of taking chances”. In that case, I was very quickly enabled, for example, to join the planning staff of the Federal Council. I would never have had this opportunity - as I dare to say - if I had been a man at this age and in this situation. It turned out to be... I had to say... There was this opportunity, I knew that one of the reasons why I was offered it, was because I am a woman. But I thought: “Why not? I take this chance, go in there and do my best.” I think that’s something I’ve tried to practice over and over again

during my entire political and professional career: Well, not reacting quasi-piquantly, when being put in the shop window as a woman, but to say instead: “Okay, if you give me this chance, then I’ll show that I can do it.”

Hospitals and doctors probably tend to be a special thing. I have to say... Probably, there is... I do not know any job where you have to work so hard to get on with your career. This applies to men and to women. Well, in this case I mean, with your part-time ideas and such stuff you can... That’s going to be extremely difficult anyway. And that has to do with how the job training is done and it has to do with the fact that we make extreme demands from the customer side, on what such a doctor has to be able to do and on the qualifications he must have to be allowed to operate on the small intestine. And this... Acquiring these skills and practice is simply not possible with a 40-hour week. That’s why it’s one of those jobs where it’s really hard to combine work and family. We have a senior doctor with us, I also have a senior doctor who has a family. Well... She performs a great deal. Politics somehow... (mumble unintelligible)

OTHER WOMAN: What’s also a concern for me, just to add: Keep one leg in it. That’s extremely important. And I say this as a divorce lawyer. It’s just ... So I really had one example which I can remember. Both of them were psychologists who graduated at the same time, approximately in their early thirties, both had done something else before. He then got into professional life; she just did the Lizenziat when the 1st child was born, then the 2nd and then the 3rd. Afterwards she lead a playgroup. And then, 15 years later, they got divorced. Well first there was the separation, after that she’s about 45 / 50 years old. And it’s just not the case that men admit: “You’ve done a great job at home for 15 years now; I pay you very good maintenance contributions.” That’s not how it is. I think that’s so unworthy and bad for this woman, somewhat around 50 years old. She doesn’t find a job because she’s overqualified for the office. What should this woman do? But the judge felt like: “You’re well educated; you’re still young, you can earn 4’500 Swiss francs.” I have to say: “Yes, but where?” There are so many very difficult situations / stories which could be prevented if the woman had always had one leg in it, a little bit. It’s a different thing to increase than to have to get back in.

Yes, that’s definitely true. Of course, she could also make a name for herself with voluntary commitments and maintain skills that can again play a role in the job afterwards. But if you want to get back into the field you’ve been trained in, then you must have kept your legs in it. Last but not least... Well, I do not know how you’re doing, but one has to admit self-critically, that there are also women who become a bit lethargic in this case. Of course being with a family and kids also has its benefits and freely arranging the day off... And sometimes, when the children go to school it’s no longer a 100% job and you can also fill your day with other things. In this case it’s comfortable. And then, somewhere there the readiness to meet the demands of a professional life again, it decreases. Thus, the skills decrease rapidly, too. Sometimes I have to say: “Dear woman, that’s maybe how it worked 20 years ago, today it’s not like that anymore”.

OTHER WOMAN: If you did the Lizenziat or a Master 10 to 15 years ago and you’ve not been working since then, it’s just not worth anything anymore. It’s just like that, it’s not worth anything... And you have to be aware of this. And I’m not quite as optimistic as you are. Looking at the younger ones now - it partly scares me, how younger well-educated women in their early 30 think: “Now, I just stay at home and look after the children. Everything is great and so on...” I just think: “Ooi ooi!”

We have a divorce rate of 50% nowadays, thus it’s every second. I mean, you don’t have

to expect the worst... But, count on the worst and make the best out of it. I mean, we have these days... We really fought for day structures and whatever. The possibilities exist; you can choose a model - well, if you have a partner or are in a relationship - which is also compatible for the children. They are not harmed if they're in daycare for a couple of days at a time, or in a student club. That works, it runs. As I said, you have to stretch to the ceiling concerning your energy, that's the way it is. But just ... It has ... The time horizon, after the children have moved out - or are fledging - to retirement is still quite long then and is getting longer (both women together). And in that sense...

H.3 Politician #3

So, I think... I said it earlier. Workshop... I have not prepared myself in the sense of having a presentation. I really try to give an overview of my person and I'm very, very excited to discuss with you afterwards and - above all - to answer your questions. I think I'm starting by giving you a short idea of my person. As you have seen, I am the only one of the workshop leaders who has no academic education. Well, Mrs. [name redacted] has... (mumbling incomprehensible) I really thought: "Well am I in the wrong place?" Of course, I'm saying this because that's the topic... You do not have to have a certain kind of education, you just have to take opportunities to be active somewhere. But if you... There are many, many ways. I turned 50 this year. I'm going to give you a short idea of myself, of where I stand now. I am 50, I have two children of my own, the youngest is 18, the daughter is 21. I have two children with my husband and my husband has brought two sons into our marriage, who are 34 and 31 now. The oldest is going to become a father in December. So, I'm going to be almost a co-grandma. I find it exciting to soon become a grandmother with my 50 years. And this is my family environment so far... Yes, it actually started with two children who were brought by my husband and then, we had two more of our own, which was at a time when I was in a full-time job. I think, the family environment is important, but it is always also a reason to be motivated to get involved otherwise. I am, as [name redacted] said, a cantonal councilor since... Now in my 9th year and I'm in a job for 70%. I'm leading the office of [name redacted]. This is an association in which all school presidents of the canton of Zurich are members as well as their school authorities. And I, well... My hobby is ice hockey. I do not play but I am the president of a hockey club. This is very exciting and is the topic that my husband too... He himself was relatively active in hockey for a long time and the youngest son still plays and the second oldest used to play it. I came to the whole thing purely by being asked: "Can you please?" And probably, the reason I said yes was that the wrong moment got me. When Mrs. [name redacted] has been talking, or Mrs. [name redacted], or however you call her - the whirlwind - I was like... When she said that you should get into the whole sport thing and grab the chance... Throughout her presentation I have been thinking all the time just for me: Where did it start for me, where did I come from? (mumbling something to students, unintelligible) Exactly... That was the moment when I had to tell myself: "I have the chance with this hockey club!" It's such a men's world, absolutely. I remember when I was at the regional session for the first time - it's only been a good year, now, I'm in the 2nd presidential year - with all the 1st league clubs - that's the highest level we have - there were... The glances I got were very special. Some asked why the secretary was sent. That's just the way it is ... That's what's still going on, even though we're talking about equality between men and women. There are simply certain images. And I say ... During my presentations... I had a mandate within Swissmail for a relatively long time, 14

years, where I taught in sales and telephone training. Gaining customers was the topic. And I always told my people in the class that there was no difference between customers. It's always about the needs. But in case of behavior, there is one. There are male and female customers. It's important though, that you have men and women, we don't have to do everything the same. It has often been like this, in case of expectations. That's why I think it's exciting to have insight in the men's world as a woman, to see which kind of reactions come up. At the moment, that's my everyday life, well yes... And the Cantonal Council, of course. My main topic is education. Education is something which fascinates me on all levels. Of course, also in the Cantonal Council - I'm in the Commission for Education and Culture - thus on all levels, not just the elementary school. Let's go on to the point when I... Well, how was my job situation when I started? I'm really going back this way... I graduated from diploma middle school after secondary school because I didn't know what to do. At some point, I wanted to go into the health sector. My father was... He was deeply involved in an American bank. He always had the feeling: "You have to go into banking, too." And I had the feeling: "No, I definitely do not!" Then, I went to the diploma middle school. When I finished I still did not really know what I wanted, I thought: "I go into gastronomy."

References (Appendix)

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