

**Künast:** Wir haben einen aktiven Gleichstellungsauftrag, aber die Frage der Parteienfinanzierung müsste man sich genauer ansehen. Wenn es ums Geld geht, würde ich aber weniger auf negative Streichungen bei der Parteienfinanzierung zielen, sondern positiv Geld dafür fordern, um zu fördern, damit Frauen strukturell nicht diskriminiert sind. Ich will das nicht nur auf politische Teilhabe, sondern überhaupt auf wirtschaftliche Teilhabe und berufliche Entwicklung und Chancen beziehen. Überall, wo Frauen daran gehindert werden, sich weiterzuentwickeln, teilzuhaben und sich zu engagieren. Beispielsweise auch, wenn jemand ein Studium über den Arbeitgeber finanziert und sich dabei verpflichtet, noch ein paar Jahre zu bleiben. Wenn das zeitlicher Mehraufwand ist, sind die Frauen die ersten, die bei Familie scheitern. Gefragt werden muss: Was hindert Frauen eigentlich daran, ehrenamtliche Bürgermeisterin auf dem Dorf werden zu wollen? Oder Bundestagsabgeordnete? Die Dinge muss man sich angucken, und sie kosten alle Geld. Kitaplätze, Ganztagschule muss da sein und funktionieren. Man fragt sich: Warum haben wir hier nicht schon längst die Hütte angezündet?

**Magwas:** Das stimmt. Wir dürfen jetzt nicht anfangen, den Rechtsanspruch für einen Hortplatz im Grundschulalter immer weiter nach hinten zu schieben. Und wir sollten „Führen in Teilzeit“ gesetzgeberisch noch stärker untermauern. Und wie

bereits gesagt sind hybride Sitzungen ein sehr wichtiger Punkt. Das betrifft übrigens nicht nur Frauen, sondern beispielsweise auch junge Menschen in ländlichen Räumen, die zum Studieren anderswo hinmüssen.

**Herzog:** Es gäbe noch sehr viel zu fragen. Aber entscheidend, im Sinne eines Schlussworts: Haben wir das Wichtigste angesprochen?

**Künast:** Ich wünsche mir eigentlich, dass Frauen nochmal alle miteinander tief Luft holen, sich verbinden und überlegen: Was sind die zwei großen Dinge, die wir heute brauchen? Das kann handfest sein wie Ganztagschule mit wirklich gutem Schulesen und guten Kantinen, ein zentraler Punkt für viele Frauen, und dann bitte in voller Konsequenz: Personal da rein, Geld da rein! Der zweite Teil sollte die Wahlrechtskommission sein. Eigentlich brauchen wir dazu eine Begleitkommission, die von Anfang an dabei ist, regelmäßig tagt und signalisiert: „Wir lassen euch nicht aus den Augen!“.

**Magwas:** Wir brauchen darüber hinaus ein grundsätzliches kulturelles Umdenken dahingehend, dass Care-Arbeit im Regelfall zur Hälfte auch von Männern gemacht wird.

**Künast:** Das ist ein guter Punkt. Die Emanzipation der Männer. Die brauchen wir auch.

DOI: 10.5771/1866-377X-2025-3-150

## Gendered Political Socialization

### – Interview with Dr. Mathilde M. van Ditmars

Dr. **Mathilde M. van Ditmars** is a political sociologist, working as assistant professor at the Department of Social and Political Sciences of the University of Milan (La Statale). Interview by **Eva Herzog**, LL.M. (Yale).



▲ Mathilde M. van Ditmars, Foto: Roberto Conciatori

#### Could you explain the concept of „gendered political socialization“?

Gendered political socialization refers to the process through which individuals internalize norms and expectations about politics in ways that are shaped by gender. It results from the intersection of political socialization, how individuals learn about politics and form political preferences, and gender role socialization: how individuals learn the cultural norms associated with being male or female.

Through gendered political socialization, children, adolescents, and young adults may come to see politics as a male domain, due to both explicit and implicit cues from their environment. These include the underrepresentation of women in politics, stereotypical portrayals of political leadership, and differential treatment by parents, teachers, peers, and the media. Consequently, girls are often less encouraged or supported to develop political interest, ambition, or a sense of political efficacy compared to boys. Over time, this is

considered to contribute to persistent gender gaps in political interest, knowledge, and representation.

#### What methods are used to learn more about differences between gender roles and their influences on political participation?

Most research in this field relies on quantitative methods such as large-scale surveys, which allow scholars to analyze patterns across populations and over time. These can be cross-sectional or longitudinal, and often include data on political attitudes, behaviours, family background, and social context. Some studies use experimental or quasi-experimental designs, including twin studies or survey experiments, trying to isolate causal mechanisms. Increasingly, scholars call for qualitative methods, such as interviews, classroom observations, or focus groups, to better understand how young people experience political socialization in real-time and how gender shapes these experiences. Recent developments include incorporating genetic data or twin designs to examine how environmental and genetic influences interact in shaping political traits. In recent years, more innovative approaches have emerged. A notable example is the *Draw A Political*

*Leader Task*,<sup>1</sup> where children are asked to draw what a political leader looks like. The widespread tendency to depict male figures (by both boys and girls) reveals implicit gendered associations with politics from a young age. Such methods complement traditional surveys by uncovering internalized stereotypes and offering a window into early gendered political socialization.

### What are your findings from the German twin study?

In our 2024 study published in *Politics and the Life Science*,<sup>2</sup> using the German TwinLife<sup>3</sup> dataset, a family-based study of four age cohorts of twins, including 4,000 twin families, we found that the heritability of political interest – how much variation in political interest is attributable to genetic factors – differs by gender and age. We studied twins aged 11 to 25 years across

**Gendered political socialization is considered to contribute to persistent gender gaps in political interest, participation, and representation.**

gender and age groups. Among boys, political interest seems to be largely shaped by genetic differences, while for girls, shared environmental factors (including joint socialization experiences) play a larger role, especially during adolescence. We interpret this as support for our hypothesis that girls grow up in less politically stimulating environments compared to boys, which in turn suppresses the expression of their genetic predispositions toward political interest. In adulthood, the shared environment plays less of a role for women, and their heritability estimates increase to levels similar to those of men, likely because they have more autonomy to select environments that align with their predispositions.

### What are limitations of these findings?

There are several limitations to our study. First, we rely on cross-sectional data from different age cohorts rather than longitudinal data tracking individuals over time. Second, we do not have direct measures of the political socialization environment (e.g., political discussions at home or classroom practices), so we must infer its effects indirectly. Third, we rely on a single-item measure of political interest, which introduces potential measurement error and could be particularly consequential if boys and girls respond to this question differently. Finally, while twin studies are valuable for distinguishing genetic and environmental influences, they rest on assumptions, such as the equal environments assumption, that are debated in the literature. Nevertheless, the observed patterns are consistent with established theories on gendered political socialization and gene-environment interactions.

### What are future questions about gendered political socialization you consider important?

Future research should explore how different forms of political socialization affect boys and girls differently, and which interventions might reduce gender gaps. It is particularly important to identify the agents (teachers, parents, media, peer groups) and settings (at home, in schools, at extracurricular activities, online) that matter most at different stages of youth development. Another open question is whether today's greater societal awareness of gender inequality is leading to more gender-equal political socialization experiences for younger generations, or rather leads to a backlash among boys.

### More broadly: What can be deduced from the research about gendered political socialization for the politics of education? Do we know anything about successful institutional policies that changed gendered political socialization? Or, the other way round: are there other forms of politics that would be more fitting to girls' needs (for instance: more deliberative settings)?

I haven't specifically studied this question, so my answer is relying more on the implications of the research that I have performed and read. Research seems to indicate that education can play a central role in reinforcing or disrupting gendered political socialization, but we need more evidence on this. The idea is that schools can either perpetuate traditional gender norms or act as corrective environments that empower girls politically. We lack systematic evidence about specific institutional policies that successfully reduce gendered political socialization, but there are promising directions. Civic education programs that feature female political role models or create inclusive, participatory classroom environments may be particularly effective. Evidence also suggests that girls are more likely to engage with politics in settings that are less conflictual and more deliberative in nature, while boys respond more positively to adversarial and competitive political environments. This implies that if political education is delivered in more inclusive and consensus-oriented formats, it may better engage girls and support more equal political development across genders.

- 1 Bos, Angela L. / Greenlee, Jill S. / Holman, Mirya R. / Oxley, Zoe M. / Lay, J. Celeste: This One's for the Boys: How Gendered Political Socialization Limits Girls' Political Ambition and Interest. *American Political Science Review*. 2022; 116(2): 484-501. doi:10.1017/S0003055421001027.
- 2 van Ditmars, Mathilde M. / Ksiazkiewicz, Aleksander: The gender gap in political interest: Heritability, gendered political socialization, and the enriched environment hypothesis. *Politics and the Life Sciences*. 2024; 43(2): 152-166. doi:10.1017/pls.2023.16
- 3 <https://www.twin-life.de/>