

**Dissertation:** “How Institutions Affect Political Outcomes at the Intersection of Race and Gender”

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**Fields:** Comparative Politics and International Relations

**Abstract:** My research explores the election of women and ethnic minorities around the world. This study focuses on voting patterns of these two social categories, and explores whether institutions that promote the election of ethnic minorities increase or dampen the election of women.

There are three distinct questions in this project that use unique datasets and a variety of research methods. First, I argue that women tend to gain election through large, mainstream parties from a variety of ideological perspectives because women as a social category have a more diverse set of political opinions. Conversely, ethnic minorities tend to be elected to small, ethnic parties because ethnic minorities as a social category, while internally diverse, have more cohesive party preferences. Using Comparative Studies of Electoral Systems data from 17 countries, I explore the spread of women and ethnic minority voters among popular political parties, left-right self-placement, and level of attachment to a political party. I find that women divide relatively evenly between the top two most popular parties among women. Ethnic minorities, in contrast, cluster into one dominant party. This is an important difference when we consider electoral institutions that privilege one aspect of identity over another.

I use this finding to then explore the effect of institutions that privilege ethnicity on the election of women. In my second question, I argue that, contrary to expectations, seats specifically designed to elect ethnic minorities such as majority-minority districts or reserved seats (ethnic seats) do not hamper the election of women but instead produce the benefit of substantially increased election of minority women. Previous cross-national work shows that minority women benefit from gender quotas applied to ethnic seats. Using Minorities at Risk data, I explore the election patterns of minority women. I find that minority women benefit from incumbency and are elected to left-leaning parties at significantly higher rates than majority women. In case studies of minority women in Russia and the U.S., I trace the characteristics of ethnic groups (depth of marginalization and assimilation), candidate, party and electoral district to explore their effects on the election of minority women. The unique contribution of this paper is to consider the distinct characteristics of minority women who get elected.

Third, I argue that there is great variation in the election of women among ethnic parties. In general, ethnic parties do not elect as many women as non-ethnic parties. Yet, ethnic parties based on nonreligious cleavages elect similar proportions of women as non-ethnic parties and ethnic parties elect women at the same rate as non-ethnic parties in SMD systems. Using Minorities at Risk qualitative data, as well as in depth case analysis, I explore the elections of particular minority women in India, Israel, Belgium, Romania and the UK to investigate whether characteristics of the ethnic group, such as depth of marginalization and assimilation, or the minority women help to determine their elections.