

Can Exposure to Role Models Decrease Women's Political Ambition?

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Abstract

One of the main reasons for the continued underrepresentation of women in politics is the persistent gender gap in the motivation to run for office. Exposure to role models is widely believed to increase women's political ambition. We show that this view is incomplete because it fails to account for mechanisms highlighted in related fields such as economics and psychology. When role models share their experiences candidly, they can decrease political ambition, by reinforcing perceptions of the challenges women encounter in a political career. We conducted a field experiment in which students were invited to participate in workshops led by female politicians. Against expectations, the treatment increased interest in the ongoing national election campaign, but did not have any positive effect on political ambition, and possibly decreased it. This study demonstrates the need for a new line of research into gender role models in politics.

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1 Introduction

We provide a theoretical rationale for why role models can fail to increase, and might even decrease, women's political ambition, and we report consistent evidence from a field experiment demonstrating the need for more research on this under-recognized aspect of political role models.

One of the main reasons why women remain underrepresented in politics is that they are less willing to run for office than men are (Lawless and Fox, 2010). There are many reasons for the 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, Monson and Preece, 2017), and confidence in one's own abilities (Preece, 2016).

In this paper, we focus on role models. It is widely believed that exposure to role models—female politicians 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, Marshall and Mathews-Schultz, 2015), as well as on political ambition more specifically (Ladam, Harden and Windett, 2016; Beaman et al., 2009, 2012). Some studies found null or conditional effects (Broockman, 2014; Gilardi, 2015; Clayton, 2015; Wolbrecht and Campbell, 2017), but few, if any, have considered the possibility that role models might *decrease* ambition. However, research in other fields such as psychology and economics points to reasons why that might be the case. First, women might perceive successful female politicians as exceptional individuals whose accomplishments are unattainable for normal people, which can have a demoralizing effect. Second, close contact with gender role models might provide more realistic insights into the challenges awaiting women pursuing a political career.

Our analysis relies on a field experiment based on a sample of 1,002 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, 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 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 prestigious 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 main, 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 makes women more likely to seek out political information. However, role models do not have a positive effect on the motivation to run for office. Although the effect of the program is imprecisely estimated, if anything, it is consistently negative on all behavioral and attitudinal outcome measures. Contact with role models hence provided information, but did not motivate young women to pursue public office. Rather, it might have even discouraged them, for instance by exposing the challenges of a political career. We provide rich qualitative evidence based on transcripts from the workshops to illustrate such a mechanism.

We do not claim to have provided conclusive evidence that role models can decrease women's political ambition. Instead, our findings demonstrate the need for more research on this hitherto under-recognized aspect of interventions aiming to improve women's political representation.

2 Do role models increase or decrease women's political ambition?

It is widely believed that role models help bring more women into electoral politics. 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, Marshall and Mathews-Schultz (2015) found a positive effect of very prominent female politicians 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, Harden and Windett (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 political role models would increase their political ambition, and interest in running for office.

We are aware of a handful of studies that find no effects, or conditional effects, for role models. Gilardi (2015) showed that role models helped to increase the number of female candidates, but only during the early stages of women's suffrage. Broockman (2014) finds precisely estimated null effects for recent elections in the US. Wolbrecht and Campbell (2017) emphasizes the importance of the novelty of female role models. However, none of these studies argues that exposure to role models might have *negative* effects on political ambition, or highlighted potential mechanism by which negative effects might materialize. A partial exception is Clayton (2015), who finds that, in Lesotho, exposure to female community councillors due gender quotas had a negative effect on women's engagement in local politics, which the author attributes to doubts regarding affirmative action rather than to the effect of gender role models as such.

Although the political science literature has not given much attention to the possibility that role models might decrease women's political ambition, such demotivating effects have been identified in other fields such as psychology and economics. As Asgari, Dasgupta and Stout (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). Similarly, Lerner and Malmendier (2013) found MBA students (randomly) exposed to peers with entrepreneurial experience to be *less* likely to become entrepreneurs themselves. Here, role models function as a sorting mechanism, discouraging entrepreneurship in people who are not likely to be successful.

Therefore, looking beyond the political science literature, we find several reasons why role models,

under some circumstances, might decrease political ambition rather than increase it. If subjects are exposed directly to role models' experience, and therefore see their struggles as well as their outstanding achievements more clearly, they might conclude, possibly not unreasonably, that they may not be up to the task.

3 Research design

3.1 Context

Our field experiment was conducted on students at a leading Swiss university. The university provides a natural environment for the recruitment of future political leaders. In fact many of the politicians who volunteered 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,” 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 A1 in the Appendix, Switzerland is precisely such an on-lier in three studies of women's representation in national parliaments.

With the help of the Career Services and the student union we registered a sample of 1,002 students, 620 female and 382 male, 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, 16 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,

	Male			Female		
	mean	sd	N	mean	sd	N
Political Interest	7.28	2.44	321	6.39	2.57	616
Knowledge male candidates	0.47	0.25	318	0.39	0.24	599
Knowledge female candidates	0.51	0.27	318	0.41	0.25	600
Political ambition	1.71	1.28	326	1.14	1.11	627

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

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.

3.2 Field experiment

To identify the effect of exposure to female role models on political ambition, we randomly assigned invitations 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 subjects to the treatment group, or 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 B1). 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. The event was held two weeks before the Swiss National Assembly elections. Well-known politicians of all major Swiss political parties volunteered to conduct career workshops with female university students. 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.¹ The set-up of the study is displayed in Appendix Figure C1.

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 14% of subjects in the treatment group ($n = 56$) engaged with our invitation by replying whether they would attend, and 8% of students ($n = 30$ out of 363), 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 prominent politicians. Only a small minority of subjects signed up to participate in the workshops and to meet the politicians.

Table 2 shows the effects of the invitation 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 invitation to participate in the event on applying to the

¹We used randomization inference to test whether we can reject the sharp null hypotheses that the pre-treatment covariates collected in survey wave 1, do not jointly predict assignment to treatment or control over and above what we would expect from random sampling variability alone. The p-value of 0.77 indicates that we cannot reject the sharp null hypothesis that all pre-treatment covariates taken together do not predict the assignment of any unit to treatment or control. We also used randomization inference to test whether we can reject the sharp null hypotheses that treatment assignment does not predict survey attrition in wave 2 over and above what one would expect from sampling variation alone. We cannot find any evidence that survey attrition is a function of treatment assignment (randomization-inference-based p-value of 0.75).

	Applied to mentoring program	Political ambition
	ITT	
Control	0.02	0.36
Effect of invitation	-0.01	-0.17
	[-0.03, 0.01]	[-0.38, 0.04]
Covariate-adjusted	-0.01	-0.14*
	[-0.03, 0.01]	[-0.31, 0.00]
Blocks	Yes	Yes
N	620	596

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

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	-0.10	-2.12
	[-0.40, 0.20]	[-5.08, 0.84]
Covariate-adjusted	-0.11	-1.67*
	[-0.41, 0.20]	[-3.66, 0.31]
Blocks	Yes	Yes
N	620	596

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

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.*

mentoring program, and self-reported political ambition. 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.

Although the treatment effects are not statistically significant for the behavioral outcome, the direction of the treatment effect estimate for applications to the mentoring program is negative. A lower proportion of students who was emailed the invitation applied to the mentoring program. Moreover, consistent with our findings based on the behavioral measure, we also find a substantial negative effect on self-reported political ambition, which is statistically significant at the .10 level when we include the covariates (including a pre-treatment measure of the outcome variable) recorded in the baseline survey to reduce the variance in the outcome measure (Broockman, Kalla and Sekhon, 2017).

Table 3 shows that the estimated negative treatment effects for the subgroup that would attend the

event if invited, are substantively large. They 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.² Our best guess is therefore that attendance at the event decreased subjects' political ambition.

Contrary to our expectations based on the political science literature, these results suggest that the effects of the program were not positive. One reason for why the event may have failed to produce positive effects is that role models can provide women with information that they may find off putting, such as highlighting challenges of work-life balance, negative aspects of electoral competition, or political exposure. Qualitative evidence from the workshops supports the idea that role models provided students with a "reality check" likely to be discouraging to many. The politicians gave a candid assessment of the challenges women can expect to face when running for office (see transcripts in Appendix E). 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. The message is "it's possible to do what I do, but few women can." 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. One politician even discussed a book titled "The 'Anything is Possible' Lie: Why Career and Family Cannot be Reconciled."

These results raise the question whether the event failed to excite students. Table 4 displays the results of the invitation on interest in the ongoing election campaign, and on political knowledge. If subjects perceived the workshops as boring or irrelevant, the event should have had a negative effect on interest in following the ongoing election campaign. However, this does not appear to be the case. In fact, subjects in the treatment group report following the campaign much 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. Moreover, we asked the research assistants who documented the workshops to rate their quality. The average rating was 5 out of 6, indicating that the workshops were perceived as successful.

²In Tables D1 and D2 we display the results using a more conservative measure of compliance, namely, whether the subject RSVPed to the invitation.

	Following the news	Following the news online	Political knowledge
	ITT		
Control	2.86	1.30	0.73
Effect of invitation	0.19	0.02	0.06
	[-0.13, 0.50]	[-0.21, 0.25]	[-0.04, 0.15]
Covariate-adjusted	0.30**	0.13	0.03
	[0.01, 0.59]	[-0.08, 0.35]	[-0.06, 0.12]
	CACE - Attendance		
Attendance rate	0.08	0.08	0.08
Effect of attendance	2.36	0.29	0.66
	[-1.57, 6.29]	[-2.48, 3.06]	[-0.43, 1.75]
Covariate-adjusted	3.49**	1.53	0.35
	[0.02, 6.96]	[-0.86, 3.93]	[-0.57, 1.26]
Blocks	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	446	446	437

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

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 Conclusion

Contact with female role models does not necessarily increase political ambition; it can decrease it. The results of the randomized field experiment conducted in collaboration with a civil society organization show that young women who were invited to an event to meet prominent female politicians, were afterwards no more likely to be interested in a political career than women who were not invited to attend. First, only a minority of invitees engaged with the invitation, and a smaller minority attended the event. Second, those that attended the workshops and were directly exposed to role models appear to have been discouraged.

A plausible explanation for why the event failed to motivate women to run for office is that in relating their experiences, female politicians confirmed the structural barriers that prevent women from pursuing a political career. Witnessing female politicians discuss their experiences while juggling a political career and a family life, and hearing first-hand reports of misogyny in politics, might have put young women off. This interpretation is supported by qualitative evidence collected during the workshops and is consistent with insights and findings from psychology and economics, showing that role models can demoralize if their achievements seem unattainable (Lockwood and Kunda, 1997; Asgari, Dasgupta and Stout, 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?

Given that women, on average, perform better in school and at university than men (Vincent-Lancrin, 2008), young women might be tempted to think that structural barriers to their professional success have been removed, and that gender discrimination is mostly confined to previous generations. Moreover, the gender gap in the labor market, for instance in terms of pay or career opportunities, tends to emerge only when women start a family (Juhn and McCue, 2017). Many female students hence might underestimate the degree of gender inequality still present in society. Our workshops might have served as an early encounter with the realities of a professional career.

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 life-balance problems for women, and our qualitative evidence confirms that life-balance issues were one of the main themes discussed in the workshops. Nevertheless, we believe that the main finding may apply more broadly. Political careers are extremely demanding on politicians' private lives. Parliament often sits until late in the evening, and politicians who have seats in national parliaments often need to commute long distances. Commutes are longer in larger countries such as the United States or Germany, compared with Switzerland.

The contribution of this paper does not only lie in its surprising, suggestive, experimental findings, but also in highlighting potential mechanisms, previously neglected in the political science literature, that might explain negative effects of political role models. By showing that other disciplines such as economics, business, and psychology recognize the potential drawbacks as well as benefits of direct exposure to gender role models, we highlight the potential for political role models to backfire. While the results of this study are far from conclusive, they merit a call for further investigation, and a larger number of field experiments that directly expose women to role models. Finally, combining field experiments with panel data collected online offers researchers the possibility of identifying causal effects and tracking the duration of treatment effects over time. If researchers and civil society organizations can develop more effective encouragements, 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 role models encourage or discourage political ambition.

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Appendix

A Switzerland as a “typical” case

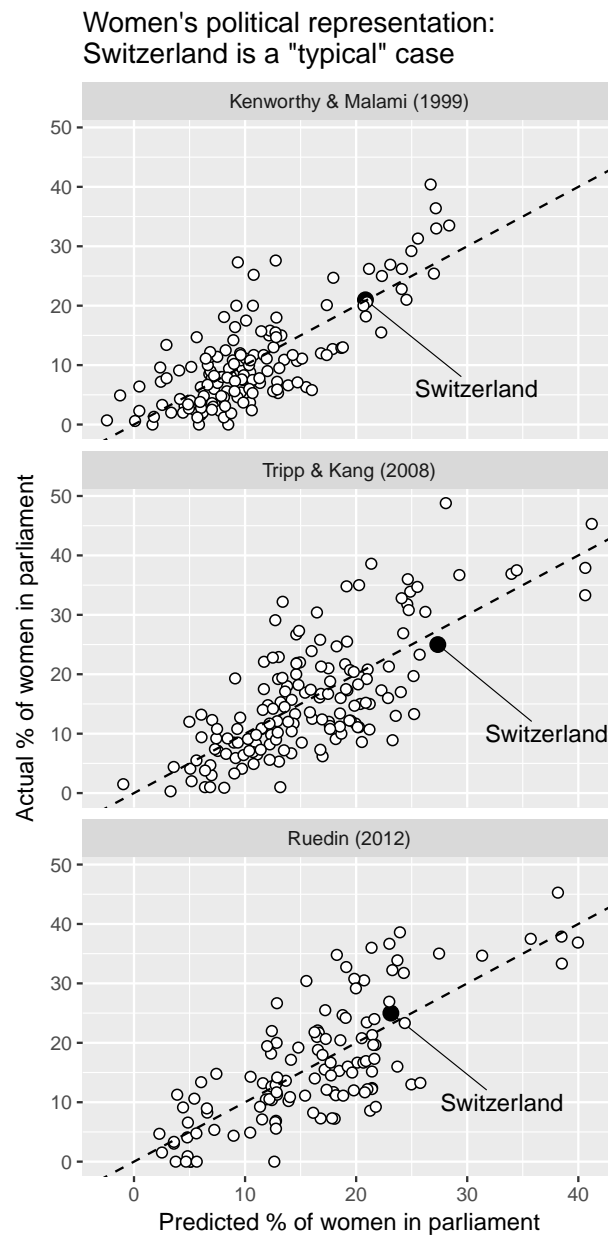


Figure A1: *Switzerland as a “typical” case.* The analyses replicate Kenworthy, Lane and Melissa Malami. 1999. “Gender Inequality in Political Representation: A Worldwide Comparative Analysis.” *Social Forces* 78(1): 235-269; Tripp, Aili Mari and Alice Kang. 2008. “The Global Impact of Quotas: On the 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.

B 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 Berrile (SP), Kantonsrat
- Barbara Steinmann (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 Stofler (AL), Kantonsrätin
- Kathy Riklin (CVP), Nationalrätin
- Maria Rohwedder-Lüscher (Grüne), Kantonsrätin
- Markus Bischoff (AL), Kantonsrat
- Michael Zeuglin (gfp), Kantonsrat
- Nik Gugger (EVP), Kantonsrat
- Regine Sauter (FDP), Kantonsrätin
- Regula Rytz (Grüne), Nationalrätin
- Rosmarie Quadranti (BDP), Nationalrätin
- Thomas Hardegger (SP), Nationalrat
- Tiana Moser (gfp), Nationalrätin



Figure B1: Invitation and flyer e-mailed to the treatment group

C Study set-up

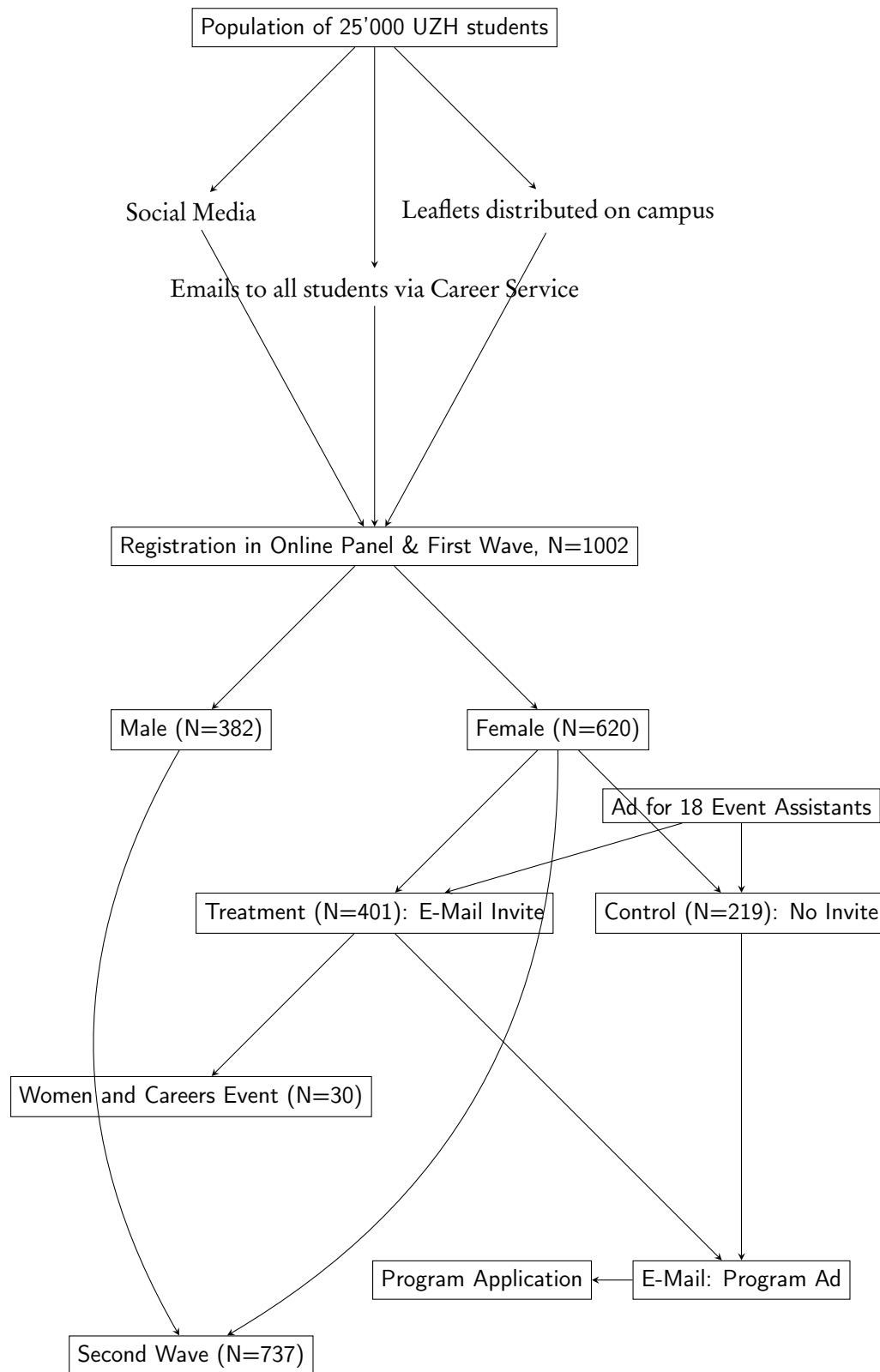


Figure C1: *Study set-up*

D Alternative measure of compliance

	Applied to mentoring program	Political ambition
	CACE (RSVP)	
RSVP rate	0.14	0.16
Effect of RSVP	-0.05	-1.07
	[-0.21, 0.11]	[-2.51, 0.38]
Covariate-adjusted	-0.06	-0.88*
	[-0.22, 0.11]	[-1.88, 0.12]
Blocks	Yes	Yes
N	620	596

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table D1: *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	1.19	0.14	0.35
	[-0.78, 3.16]	[-1.25, 1.54]	[-0.12, 0.82]
Covariate-adjusted	1.83**	0.80	0.19
	[0.13, 3.55]	[-0.42, 2.03]	[-0.30, 0.67]
Blocks	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	446	446	437

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table D2: *“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.*

E Workshop transcripts

E.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...

E.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 has been greeted by the press secretary of Mr. Ogi who was our boss at that time, the Federal Council thus: “Well now, this s 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 bonehard to combine work and family. We have a senior doctor with us, I also have a chief 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 led 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 competencies that can again play a role in the job afterwards. But if you want to get back into your trained area of origin, 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 competence decreases 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 a crib 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...

E.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 5 workshop leaders who has no academic education. Well, Mrs. Gisler 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 marriage, who are 34 and 31 now. The oldest is going to become a father in December. So, I'm going to be almost 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 Andrea Gisler said, a cantonal councilor since... Now in my 9th year and I'm in a job for 70%. I'm leading the office of the Association of Zurich School Presidia. 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 into the whole subject purely by a request: "Can you please?" And probably, the reason I said yes was that the wrong moment got me. When Mrs. Canepa has been talking, or Mrs. Canepa, 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 crocheting 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 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 to the bank, 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 the gastronomy."