AN INTERDISCIPLINARY AND INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE: AN INTERVIEW WITH LIZA MÜGGE

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Sanne van Oosten (SvO): How has your career developed since the end of your PhD?

Liza Mügge (LM): My background is atypical because I am trained as an anthropologist and received a PhD in migration and ethnic studies. The red thread in my work is that I always studied politics but from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Just before I completed my PhD dissertation, I received a job offer at the University of Leiden to become an assistant professor in cultural anthropology.

During the three years at that department, I learned two important lessons. The first lesson was the essence of being well informed about the informal and formal rules in the institution and department. I was the only young woman in the department with a child. I asked the head of my department whether I could work full time but with flexible work hours. He replied: "You have a child and you have to take good care of it. It is best if you work part-time, that is what my daughters do." Later, I realized that some of my male colleagues who also had children did have full-time employment but worked from home some days of the week. As I had to get my publications out fresh out of my PhD, I also worked full time but received a part-time salary. If I had known this before, I would have never accepted this. I think we see a similar pattern with the gender pay gap. Knowing how much you earn compared to your male colleagues is an important piece of information that you may use to address inequality.

The second lesson I learned was the importance of mentors. I took part in a training for newly hired female assistant professors facilitated by a well-known social psychologist, Professor Naomi Ellemers. She encouraged us to proactively ask for advice and support from more advanced academics. It was an eye-opener to me that there are many people (often women) who are willing to offer support, even if they don't know you. I believe advice seeking to gain different perspectives on a problem remains crucial at all career levels.

SvO: To what extent did your transfer from anthropology to political science entail a shift in working culture and/or environment?

LM: Anthropology has a very different way of doing research. Many anthropologists do fieldwork for longer periods of time; they usually write books; they write more single-authored articles. They are not publication machines. This is very different from political science. In political science, quantity matters and books don't count as much.

Anthropologists are generally closer to their research than political scientists. What I like about the anthropological way of doing research is that you really delve into a topic. I still do that. When I start a new research topic, I try to get as much information as possible from novels, art exhibitions, podcasts, and movies. Closeness to research participants is also clearly reflected in anthropological methods. My work is influenced by ethnographic tools that I integrate in mixed-method research designs.

SvO: Has the field changed since you finished your PhD? How?

LM: When I was about to finish my PhD thesis, a male professor at a conference gave me the following advice to build a competitive CV. Investment in international research collaborations was key. But, he emphasized, I should select my research partners carefully: "Make sure you get along well. You know how I select my collaborators? I should be able to talk to them about soccer and bitches." This "well-meant advice" is telling for the male domination and privilege at the time. And it is damaging too. It made me doubt whether I would ever be able to be involved in an international research project as a young woman with no interest in soccer. Today, among others, thanks to #MeToo, there is much more attention to sexism in academia, which hopefully prevents such comments. And, if not, there are more places to find support.

I only started working on political representation in legislative studies in 2013 when I received a grant to study the political representation of citizens with a migration background. So, I cannot say much about how the field of legislative studies has changed. I overall do see more women in political science, but we are far from equal. Women are especially underrepresented among the ranks of full professor.

Yet, in research on politics and gender, women are overrepresented. They are doing exceptionally well across the subfields of political science, including legislative studies. The challenge we face is that work on gender is not always considered political science. In Europe, we founded the *European Journal for Politics and Gender* to address this (Ahrens et al. 2018). At the same time, politics and gender scholars gain increasing visibility in generalist political science journals. That said, there is still a gender gap in the top journals and in citation patterns. There is still a lot of work to be done.

SvO: Have you also experienced sexual harassment while working in academia?

LM: During my PhD project, I experienced quite a bit of sexual harassment from high-profile politicians that I interviewed. I started writing about these experiences much later because many of my female students asked questions about harassment in the field (Mügge 2012; 2013a; 2013b). At the time, there was not really space to talk about it. It was not a topic of discussion as it is now in society and in academic circles. I am glad that has changed.

SvO: What about within academia? What were your experiences trying to become part of a field dominated by male scholars? Was it easy? Difficult? Why?

LM: I came into legislative studies through the field of politics and gender. The politics and gender field is a very constructive crowd of people, very critical, brilliant women often with a good sense of humor. Coming from the—at that time—male-dominated subfield of migration studies, it was a joy to work with this community.

Generally, gender equality now has gained momentum. This year, the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) accepted a plan to enhance gender equality (ECPR 2018). They aim for equal composition in all of its suborganizations, layers of the organization, among prize laureates and journal editors, and so on. Only 23% of the full professors in Europe in the social sciences are women, so we still have a very long way to go.

SvO: In your view, what are the disadvantages women face for being part of a field that is predominantly male?

LM: The professor and lawyer Joan Williams and her daughter Rachel Dempsey wrote an amazing book about this: *What Works for Women at Work* (Williams and Dempsey 2014). They interviewed 127 successful working women and signaled four main patterns that affect women at work.

The first pattern is called "Prove It Again." This refers to the way women often have to prove themselves, time and again. "The Tight Rope" refers to the delicate, often impossible, balance women need to find between being feminine (and not being taken seriously) and masculine (and not being likable). The third pattern is called "The Maternal Wall," which refers to the negative competence and commitment assumptions on becoming a mother. Even women without children are influenced by the Maternal Wall: they are expected to be available more than they should because of not having children. The fourth pattern is a combination of all of the above: "Tug of War" refers to the way gender bias against women creates conflicts among women. For instance, an older woman applies harsher standards to a younger woman because that is what it takes to succeed as a woman. I think these four patterns are very important because we see them everywhere, definitely also in academia.

SvO: What can we do about it?

LM: We need male allies. Research shows that quality of work increases in more diverse organizations, so this is in everyone's interest. We need to invest in structures and institutions to try to change the culture. We need men on board to make that change (Mügge, Evans and Engeli 2015). Additionally, academia should become more diverse in terms of race, religion, and ethnicity. In the United States, APSA has a strong community of African American scholars; they are very visible. This is a challenge that European political science should take on (Mügge et al. 2018). ■

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ONE WOMAN'S CAREER PATH—WITH ADVICE FOR YOUNG WOMEN SCHOLARS

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Some context for this article is necessary. I started my career being extremely naïve about gender discrimination in the world at large. My family never gave me any indication that I should have limited expectations for what I might accomplish because I am a woman. Parental expectations for me were high—and higher than they were for my brothers, at least from my perspective. After graduation from high school in 1968 (a date necessary for further context), I attended Newcomb College of Tulane University and graduated in 1972. Newcomb was a women's college at that time and all of my classes (with only a few exceptions) in my first two years were populated only by female students. Gender bias in the classroom did not exist.

My cohort in graduate school at Rice University included only five people, of whom I was the only woman. There were no women on the faculty in the political science department at that time, but it was a small department and I did not give it much thought. Although I was a quiet student, it was not because I felt intimidated by men in my seminars. (I confess to being intimidated by students in the class ahead of me, who all seemed to know so much more than the members of the entering class.) Once I was far enough along in the program to have a dissertation committee (all male), I received support and encouragement for my work. Does this mean that the department was free of sexism? No. Certainly there were people (students and some faculty) who would tell an off-color joke, make the occasional comment that would be interpreted today as creating a hostile environment, or even occasionally say something outrageous directly to me. None of it was any worse than I had heard growing up with three brothers—this was simply the way the world was in those days, so I never took particular offense. If my fellow students were willing to tell that off-color joke in my presence, it simply was a sign that I was "one of the guys." If a meeting with my committee reduced me to tears (it did once), it was not because they were harder on me than they were on the male students—it was because I was the one who cried. There were times I thought I would fail in those days, but it never occurred to me that I would fail because I was a woman.

After taking my first job in the summer of 1976 (a non-tenure-track position at the University of Houston), I began to recognize the professional difficulties that women faced because of their gender. There were tenure-track women on the faculty who seemed to be judged harshly because they were women. There were women on the faculty who found the environment intimidating because of the behavior of men. There were the conversations all about sports that seemed to leave women out. I received little, if any, mentoring from senior faculty, even while male colleagues also in non-tenure-track positions did receive such support. (I continued to receive mentoring from several dissertation committee members, who were in close geographic proximity.) Add to that the male students who approached their female professors inappropriately. Yes, there was gender bias in the academic world and I was just realizing it.

The atmosphere was far more supportive when I moved to a tenure-track position at Texas A&M in 1987, where I was encouraged, given resources, and chosen for administrative leadership positions, including two terms as department head and appointment