ERC Starting Grant 2022

Research proposal [Part B1]

**P**articipation and **R**epresentation in the **D**igital Age:

Participation Repertoires in an Era of Unequal Representation

PRD

**Cover Page:**

* Principal Investigator (PI): **Jennifer Oser**
* PI’s host institution for the project: **Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (Israel)**
* Proposal duration: **60 months**

This project addresses the question of how people incorporate increasingly prevalent nonelectoral political acts into individual-level repertoires of participation; and how well represented these different types of political participators are. At a time of growing concern about unequal representation in democracies, two conflicting global trends over the last several decades highlight the importance of these questions: a clear decline in voter turnout, especially among lower status groups; and evidence of increased nonelectoral participation, found more among higher status groups. To assess how these trends in political participation may affect patterns of representation, PRD’s theoretical framework integrates new approaches for investigating the links between individuals’ participation repertoires (e.g., voting, protest, online activism) and objective and subjective representational outcomes.

PRD’s work packages employ a multi-method approach: **“Political acts and political participators” (WP1)** analyzes separate surveys and a harmonized dataset, and includes methodological innovations using new techniques for identifying participation repertoires. **“Participation-representation connection”** **(WP2)** investigates the connections between the political acts and political participators analyzed in WP1 and representational outcomes, and integrates these findings with qualitative fieldwork with activists focused on unequal representation. Finally, “**Mobilizing and organizing low-status groups” (WP3)** conducts novel experimental studies using Twitter panel data and field experiments to identify interventions with the potential to produce more equal representational outcomes in the future. By combining an original theoretical framework and methodological innovations, PRD will conduct a uniquely comprehensive empirical investigation of participation repertoires, with attention to mechanisms that can reduce inequalities of participation and representation.

**Section b: CURRICULUM VITAE**

Oser, Jennifer <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1531-4606> Nationality: Israeli (also U.S. citizen)

Web site: [https://www.jenniferoser.com](https://www.jenniferoser.com/) Date of birth: May 15, 1975

**EDUCATION**

2007–2012 PhD, Public Policy and Government, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

Supervisors: Prof. Itzhak Galnoor and Prof. Michael Shalev

2004–2007 MA, Public Policy and Government, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

1993–1999 BA, Social Studies, Harvard University, United States

**CURRENT POSITION**

2021–present Associate Professor, Politics and Government, Ben-Gurion University (BGU), Israel

**PREVIOUS POSITIONS**

2017–2021 Senior Lecturer with tenure, Politics and Government, BGU

2016–2017 Senior Lecturer, Politics and Government, BGU

2014–2016 Lecturer, Politics and Government, BGU

1997–2002 Researcher (Lead Research Assistant and Project Coordinator) for Prof. Theda Skocpol’s Civic Engagement Project, Government Department, Harvard University, United States

**VISITING RESEARCHER POSITIONS AND AFFILIATIONS**

2014–2017 Leuven Fellow and Affiliated Senior Researcher, Centre for Political Science Research at the University of Leuven, Belgium. From 2014–2017, research included projects supported by ERC Advanced Grant of Principal Investigator Prof. Marc Hooghe

2010–2014 Visiting Researcher, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, United States. Sponsor: Annenberg’s Dean, Prof. Michael Delli Carpini

2010–2012 Predoctoral Visiting Researcher, Multidisciplinary Program on Inequality and Social Policy, Harvard University, United States. Sponsor: Prof. Theda Skocpol

**FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS** (Selected)

2020 Fellowship at the University of Bremen in Germany’s Centre for Media, Communication, and Information Research for a one-month stay (postponed due to COVID-19)

2011–2012 Postdoctoral Research Fellowship, Hebrew University’s Social Science Faculty, the School for Public Policy and Government, and the Political Science Department

2010–2011 Hebrew University’s Dean’s Fellowship for outstanding social science doctoral students

2010 Dan David Foundation: Dan David Prize Scholarship, a prize for ten outstanding doctoral and postdoctoral students throughout the world in annually chosen fields

**SUPERVISION OF GRADUATE STUDENTS AND POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS**

2018–present Supervisor of 1 Postdoc, 1 PhD student, and 5 Master Students at BGU. In addition, two postdoctoral fellows at other institutions (McGill University in Canada, and the University of Bergen in Norway) are collaborating researchers on my Israel Science Foundation grant.

**TEACHING ACTIVITIES AND AWARDS** (Selected)

2015–2021 Research Workshop, Honors Students (undergraduate), BGU, Israel

2017–2021 Research Seminar, Citizens, and the State (undergraduate and graduate), BGU, Israel

2020–2021 BGU’s High Quality Teaching Recognition Criterion for 2020–2021 (online instruction)

2012–2013 Policy Brief Module (graduate) University of Pennsylvania, United States

2000–2002 Teaching Fellow; People, Power and Change (graduate) Harvard University, United States

**ORGANISATION OF SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS** (Selected)

2015–present Annual Conference Executive Committee Member, Israel Political Science Association

2015 Methodology workshop codirector with Dr. Gal Ariely, “Cross-National Data and Survey Analysis,” Rabin Graduate Conference at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Israel

**INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES** (Selected)

2015–2021 Department representative for national and international political science events, including as member of the Board of Directors of the Israel Political Science Association

2015–2021 Department coordinator of grant application training and consulting

2015–2021 Academic coordinator of BA honors students’ support, Politics and Government, BGU

2017–2021 Academic coordinator, MA Politics and Government internal recruitment, BGU

**REVIEWING ACTIVITIES AND COMMISSIONS OF TRUST** (Selected)

2021–2022 Member of the Walter Lippmann Best Article of the Year Award committee for the Political Communication section of the American Political Science Association

2016–present Grant agency reviewer for multiple agencies, including Swiss National Science Foundation; U.S. National Science Foundation; Israel Science Foundation Individual Research Grants (committee member); Israel Science Foundation Centers for Excellence (committee member)

2013–present Journal reviewer: [Publons](https://publons.com/author/1206898/jennifer-oser#profile) top reviewer, including all top–ranked political science journals (e.g., European Journal of Political Research, American Political Science Review)

2018–2019 Best Conference Paper Award Committee, Information Technology and Politics Section of the American Political Science Association Conference. 2018 chair; 2019 member

**MEMBERSHIPS OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES**

2018–2019 Member of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities Young Scholars Forum, a prestigious multi–disciplinary forum (selected topic of the year: climate change)

2014–present Scholars Strategy Network Member, a network of leading researchers on policy problems led by Harvard Prof. Theda Skocpol. In 2014–2016, Member of Civic Engagement Working Group leadership team led by Prof. Hahrie Han and Prof. David Karpf

2010–present Member of eight major scientific societies, including the European Political Science Association and the American Political Science Association (see online CV for full list)

**MAJOR COLLABORATIONS** (completed projects)

Prof. Marc Hooghe, Topic: “Citizens and the State,” Centre for Political Research, University of Leuven, Belgium. (ERC Advanced grantee, 2012–2017)

Prof. Jan Leighley, Topic: “Political Participation and Representation,” Department of Government, American University, United States. (Served as editor of the *American Journal of Political Science* and *Journal of Politics;* currently Program Director at the U.S. National Science Foundation)

**CAREER BREAKS**

Three breaks for childbirth: 2/2005–8/2005; 12/2007–6/2008; and 3/2012–9/2012

**COVID-19 IMPACT ON SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTIVITY**

The relevant impact categories include increased care responsibilities; facilities access; and online teaching.

I had planned a series of high-impact international talks in 2020 for the purpose of informing my ERC StG application (many of which became zoom talks). I have maintained a high level of productivity despite the severe challenge of home-schooling 3 children throughout most of the past two years.

**PRD’s INTERNATIONAL EXPERT NETWORK**

*Colleagues who have communicated to the PI their commitment to serve in an advisory role to PRD include:*

Stephen Ansolabahere (Harvard University), André Blais (University of Montreal), Russell Dalton (UC Irvine), Ruth Dassonneville (University of Montreal), Michael Delli Carpini (University of Pennsylvania), Joshua Dubrow (Polish Academy of Sciences), Aina Gallego (University of Barcelona), Markus Gangl (Goethe University Frankfurt am Main), Rachel Gibson (University of Manchester), Marco Giugni (University of Geneva), Maria Grasso (Queen Mary University of London), Hahrie Han (Johns Hopkins University), Marc Hooghe (University of Leuven) Swen Hutter (Freie Universität Berlin), Shiro Kuriwaki (Yale University), David Lazer (Northeastern University), Jan Leighley (American University), Noam Lupu (Vanderbilt University), Sofie Marien (Leuven University), Daniel Oberski (Utrecht University), Mikael Persson (University of Gothenburg), G. Bingham Powell (University of Rochester), Anne Rasmussen (University of Copenhangen), Brian Schaffner (Tufts University), Frederick Solt (University of Iowa), Chris Wlezien (University of Texas at Austin), and the PIs of the SDR harmonization project: J. Craig Jenkins (Ohio University), Irina Tomescu-Dubrow, and Kazimierz Slomczynski (Polish Academy of Sciences).

**APPENDIX: All ongoing and submitted grants and funding of the PI (Funding ID)**

**Current grants**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Project Title* | *Funding source* | *Amount*  *(Euros)* | *Period* | *Role of the PI* | *Relation to current*  *ERC proposal* |
| ‘Yes I can…’? Political efficacy in the digital era | Israel Science Foundation, Research Grant no. | 182,142 | 2020–2024 | PI: Oser | No overlap. Informs ERC proposal’s research design through research on political efficacy. |
| How exposure to political content on social media affects political attitudes and behaviors | Ben-Gurion University’s Data Science Research Center | 8,343 | 2021–2022 | Co-PI with Dr. Nir Grinberg (Grinberg & Oser) | No overlap. Supports an MA researcher to develop data infrastructure to inform current ERC proposal. |

**Submitted grant applications currently under review**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Project Title* | *Funding source* | *Amount*  *(Euros)* | *Period* | *Role of the PI* | *Relation to current*  *ERC proposal* |
| Supersharers of Fake News on Social Media: Representation, Coordination, and Influence | Israel Science Foundation | *Not relevant for Oser; see “Role of the PI”* | 2021–2024 | PI: Nir Grinberg. Oser’s role along with Prof. David Lazer is to provide external unfunded support as collaborator | No overlap. The grant project advances data infrastructure relevant to the current ERC proposal. |

**Applications in preparation for future submission**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Project title* | *Funding source* | *Amount*  *(Euros)* | *Period* | *Role of the PI* | *Relation to current*  *ERC proposal* |
| How opportunities for civic action may foster pro-democratic norms | U.S.-Israel Binational Science Foundation | Maximum request:  220,000 for four years | Plan to submit in October 2022 | Co-PI, together with Co-PI Hahrie Han of Johns Hopkins University. | No operational overlap. The grant project will fund lab and field experiments not funded by PRD. |

**Past grants**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Project title* | *Funding source* | *Amount*  *(Euros)* | *Period* | *Role of the PI* | *Relation to current*  *ERC proposal* |
| Citizenship norms, digital media use and political participation | Israel Science Foundation | 128,672 | 2016–2020 | PI: Oser | No overlap |
| Democratic ideals and political behavior | Gandyr Foundation | 5,575 | 2015–2016 | PI: Oser | No overlap |

**Section c. EARLY ACHIEVEMENTS TRACK RECORD -** see [www.jenniferoser.com](http://www.jenniferoser.com)for further details

***Peer-reviewed academic publications (out of 23 total); all articles are ESI Q1***

Dassonneville, R., Feitosa, F., Hooghe, M., & **Oser, J**. (2021). Policy responsiveness to all citizens or only to voters? *European Journal of Political Research, 60*(3), 583–602.

Leighley, J. E., & **Oser, J.** (2018). Representation in an era of political and economic inequality. How and when citizen engagement matters. *Perspectives on Politics, 16*(2), 328–344.

**Oser, J.** (In press). The effectiveness of different forms of political participation. In M. Giugni & M. Grasso (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Participation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Oser, J.** (In press). Protest as one political act in individuals' participation repertoires. *American Behavioral Scientist*.

**Oser, J.**, & Boulianne, S. (2020). Reinforcement effects between digital media use and political participation: *Public Opinion Quarterly, 84*(S1), 355–365.

***Invited presentations to internationally established conferences and seminars***

**Oser, J**. (2020). Political participation and political efficacy in the digital era. Invited seminar talk at the *University of Montreal Political Science Seminar*. Montreal, Canada (virtual), April 21.

**Oser, J.** (2020). Digital media use and political participation: A research agenda. Invited seminar talk at the *European University Institute's Political Behavior Colloquium*. Florence, Italy (virtual), May 19.

**Oser, J.** (2021). Latent class analysis and political participant types. Invited seminar talk at the *Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES) seminar series*. Mannheim, Germany (virtual), April 12.

**Oser, J**. (2021) Protest as one political act in individuals’ participation repertoires. *11th Annual Meeting of the European Political Science Association* (virtual), June 24.

**Oser, J.**, Feitosa, F. & Dassonneville, R. (2021). Who feels they can have an impact on political processes? *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (APSA).* Seattle, United States (virtual), October 1. [In panel co-organized with Fernando Feitosa and Ruth Dassonneville on “Responsiveness and political efficacy in advanced democracies”].

***Prizes, awards, and academy memberships – see online CV for further description and prize criteria***

2018 Selected member of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities Young Scholars Forum

2017 Toronto Prize, Outstanding Academic Originality and Achievement, BGU, Israel

2012 Israel Political Science Association Prize for Outstanding PhD Dissertation

2012 Polonsky Dissertation Prize, Originality and Creativity in the Humanities, Hebrew University

2010 Dan David Prize Scholarship, for ten outstanding international PhD and postdoctoral students

***Narrative of early achievements track record – including capacity gained to implement ERC project***

Chart, bar chart

Description automatically generatedThe theoretical framework of the PRD project builds on my research agenda’s focus on two central questions in political science. The first question is: **Why do people participate in politics?** I have examined multiple aspects of this question, including *socio-demographic characteristics* (Oser 2017), *citizenship norms and partisan identity* (Oser 2021; Oser & Hooghe 2013), *democratic ideals* (Oser & Hooghe 2018a, 2018b), and *online and digital media* (Oser & Boulianne 2020; Oser et al. 2013; Oser et al. 2014). The second fundamental question driving my research agenda is: **How does political participation relate to representational outcomes?** My collaborative work on this topic has contributed new knowledge on the relationship between *voting and social policy outcomes* cross-nationally (Hooghe, Dassonneville & Oser 2019; Dassonneville, Feitosa, Hooghe & Oser 2021), *trade union membership and social expenditures* for OECD countries (Hooghe & Oser 2016), and *activism and representation for different types of policy issues* in the United States (Leighley & Oser 2018).

To date, the **publication record produced by this research agenda** includes two edited volumes, seven refereed book chapters, and 23 peer-reviewed articles. While my research agenda is centered in the field of political science, these publications appear in venues representing a range of disciplines, including communications, public policy, sociology, and history. The modal article impact factor ranking is in the first quartile (Q1 Essential Science Indicator), and modal article author position is first or sole author. Since earning tenure in 2017, my SSCI h-index has increased from six to 11, and I have produced a smaller annual number of higher-impact publications, with six of the 12 Q1 ranked articles published since 2018. The Google Scholar data’s more inclusive approach is useful for documenting citation trends over time, which shows a strong positive trajectory consistent with the increased proportion of high-impact articles in my profile in recent years.

My **interest in this research agenda** is longstanding, informed by my work as a researcher for Prof. Theda Skocpol’s “Civic Engagement Project” as an undergraduate student at Harvard. After earning my BA in 1999, I worked as a full-time community organizer, while also working part-time as a researcher on Prof. Skocpol’s project through 2002, rising to the role of Project Coordinator for an interdisciplinary team of Harvard graduate students. After moving to Israel in 2002 and continuing my work as a community organizer, I made a surprising observation: in contrast to my perception at the time that Americans believed they could affect political outcomes, it seemed that Israelis did not, or at least not in the same way. Inspired to better understand these different perspectives, I returned to academia to research this question from a cross-national perspective in my MA and PhD research. The research supported the hypotheses derived from my real-world political experience and fieldwork, and in subsequent research I initiated collaborative studies to extend this research to investigate online and offline political participation (Oser, Hooghe & Marien 2013; Oser, Leighley & Winneg 2014), both of which were featured in the *Washington Post.* **The arc of this line of research demonstrates my scientific capacity as an independent researcher and a scientific bridge-builder**. I consistently apply a variety of sophisticated methodological tools as needed to address important theoretical questions, while also investing in the public dissemination of my scholarly findings.

The main research projects I have pursued since beginning my tenure track position have all contributed to my development of the **theoretical framework of the PRD project**. For **“Political acts and political participators” (WP1)**, in addition to the series of publications noted in B2 for which I used latent class analysis (LCA) to examine political participation repertoires, I have also used this analytical approach to study citizenship norms (Oser & Hooghe 2013; Hooghe, Oser & Marien 2016; Hooghe & Oser 2015) and democratic ideals (Hooghe, Marien & Oser 2017; Hooghe & Oser 2016; Hooghe & Oser 2018; Oser & Hooghe 2018a, 2018). This line of work also clarified for me the need for the methodological innovations proposed in WP1. For **“Participation-Representation Connection” (WP2)**, in addition to my published survey-based research on this topic noted above, a current work-in-progress that merges of data from the European Social Survey on individual-level participation and Chapel Hill Expert Survey for government positions informed PRD’s theoretical framework by drawing attention to the lack of synthesis between the communication and grievance hypotheses in the literature (Oser, Dassonneville & Hooghe 2021). Further, the qualitative fieldwork in WP2 will be informed by the expertise of a talented member of my research team, Aya Shoshan, who was one of the first PhD students I met when I began my tenure track position at BGU. As her qualitative research reminded me of the insights that can be gained from this approach used in my own MA research (Oser 2010), I have proactively pursued a research dialogue with her throughout her PhD research and am energized by the opportunity to collaborate with her through an ERC-funded project to support the next stages of her academic career. For “**Mobilizing and organizing low-status groups”** (WP3), the Twitter panel launches this research agenda into the “Big Data” future, and Nir Grinberg and I have already developed a series of next-step project ideas to advance the research design proposed in WP3. And finally, the collaboration with Hahrie Han in WP3 pulls together the strands of this research agenda while returning me to the fundamentals of my own community and political organizing roots. The field experiment work we plan to conduct is fully aligned with ERC’s high-risk high-gain approach, with potential for meaningful real-world impact.

During this period, I have also invested in creating the infrastructure to lead a vibrant research team, and since I began my ISF grant project on political efficacy in the digital era in October 2020, I have **expanded my research team** to currently include five MA students, one PhD student, and one postdoctoral researcher. In addition, two talented postdoctoral candidates who ultimately obtained more generous funding in other positions after applying to join my team requested to continue collaborating with me on my research. These collaborations have already led to two article manuscripts under review and three additional manuscripts in progress toward submission, with all submissions targeted toward high-impact journal venues. I have also worked during this period to support BGU’s efforts to expand options for internationalizing opportunities for PhD and postdoctoral researchers, and the university currently has agreements with dozens of highly ranked universities abroad that will facilitate my recruitment of the highest caliber international researchers.

With the institutional support of my department and university, the **scientific capacity** I have gained during the early stages of my career places me in an ideal position to leverage the resources of an ERC Starting grant to lead a dynamic research team. I have developed original instructional material for five new courses, including a course for outstanding undergraduates in which I have served as the primary adviser for students in their preparation for and transition to graduate-level research. I have also worked closely with senior colleagues to advance grant application training for faculty and graduate students. My scientific and professional development contributions to the BGU and Israeli political science communities led to my selection by the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities as a member of the prestigious Young Scholars Forum in 2018–2019 and to my rapid promotions. This track record demonstrates that I submit this ERC Starting grant at an ideal juncture in my academic development. I am well-positioned to lead an ambitious multi-year project to advance ground-breaking research on political participation and representational outcomes—arguably one of the most important contemporary topics in social science research.