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 a. EXTENDED SYNOPSIS**

**a.1. Challenge and Research Questions**

How do people incorporate increasingly prevalent nonelectoral political acts into their individual-level repertoires of political participation? And how well are these different types of political participators represented in both objective and subjective measures of representation? These questions are of utmost importance in an era marked by concerns about unequal representation (Bartels 2018; Lupu & Warner, in press-a, in press-b; Schakel & Van der Pas, in press) and democratic erosion (Dahlberg et al. 2015; Kriesi 2020; Lührmann & Lindberg 2019; Waldner & Lust 2018; Wuttke et al. in press). Two conflicting trends in political participation worldwide over the past several decades highlight the importance of conducting robust empirical investigations of these questions: a clear decline in electoral-oriented participation, particularly among lower status groups (Blais & Rubenson 2013; Kostelka 2017; Kostelka & Blais 2021; Scarrow et al. 2017); and evidence indicating an increase in nonelectoral political participation, which tends to be concentrated among higher status groups (Dalton 2021, in press; Jenkins & Kwak, in press; Schlozman et al. 2018; Theocharis & van Deth 2018). Research suggests that the apparent increase in the forms and prevalence of nonelectoral political acts (e.g., protest, online activism) is motivated, at least in part, by participants’ interest in influencing representational outcomes. However, there is surprisingly little evidence about how different types of political participation affect objective or subjective measures of representation.

The PRD project’s primary objective is to understand how individuals’ broad repertoires of political participation relate to representational outcomes in an era marked by concern about unequal representation. Two distinct yet potentially conflicting democratic ideals lie at the heart of this investigation. The first is responsiveness to the expressed will of the people, meaning that representational outcomes should reflect the messages communicated by the public. The second central democratic ideal to be considered is equality of representation, even of those who are not politically active. Given the well-established finding that people who are the most politically active also tend to be advantaged socioeconomically (Dalton 2017; Oser et al. 2013; Schlozman et al. 2012; Teorell et al. 2007; Verba et al. 1978), a strong link between nonelectoral participation and representational outcomes could potentially contribute to unequal representation. Although achieving the democratic ideal of responsiveness to the expressed will of the people (e.g., through voting and additional acts of political communication) may enhance the representation of the politically active, there is also a risk that it will exacerbate documented patterns of unequal representation of society at large, potentially eroding the public’s perceptions of democratic legitimacy. These central and potentially contradictory ideals of responsiveness and equality of representation lead to the third motivating question of PRD: How can traditionally lower status groups be mobilized and organized to reduce identified inequalities in contemporary patterns of political participation and representation?

**a.2. Theoretical Framework and Innovations**

To answer these questions, I propose four innovations to political science scholarship’s central conceptual model of the “Chain of Responsiveness,” as articulated by G. Bingham Powell (2004: 92). Powell’s model draws links between four stages of democratic responsiveness: (Stage 1) citizen preferences; (Stage 2) citizen voting behavior; (Stage 3) selecting policymakers; and (Stage 4) public policies and outcomes. In this section, I summarize the fundamental theoretical, methodological, and empirical innovations that PRD introduces in relation to Powell’s classic model to more fully investigate the participation-representation connection in contemporary democracies. The first innovation entails going beyond the conventional focus on voting and considering individuals’ broader participation repertoires to fully investigate the chain of responsiveness in contemporary democracies. The second innovation, informed by research on the increasing centrality of online and digital behavior in social and political processes, incorporates online measures of political behavior and communication into a theoretical framework grounded in mainstream political science scholarship. Third, to comprehensively assess democratic responsiveness, PRD integrates the literature’s standard focus on objective measures of representational outcomes with a focus on measures of subjective responsiveness. A fourthinnovation, informed by the increasingly salient topic of unequal representation, investigates causal mechanisms that may expand individuals’ participation repertoires, particularly of lower status groups.

The introduction of these innovations to the standard conceptual model of the chain of responsiveness creates a theoretical framework that enables PRD to **synthesize two theory-based expectations in the literature** that have not yet been brought into dialogue with each other in research on nonelectoral participation and democratic representation. First, a **communication** hypothesis, prominent in scholarly research in the United States, views participation beyond the electoral arena as a potentially effective channel of political communication that may enhance the representation of those who are politically active in multiple ways (e.g., Griffin & Newman 2005; Schlozman et al. 2018). Second, a contrasting **grievance** argument, prominent in studies of nonelectoral participation by European scholars, is based on the observation that recent increases in nonelectoral participation may be attributable primarily to political frustration and anti-system attitudes that do not translate into enhanced representational outcomes for the politically active (e.g., Bremer et al. 2020; Klandermans 2014). Notably, an assessment of the communication and grievance hypotheses requires assessing both objective measures of representation, as well as individuals’ subjective perceptions of how well they are represented, as evident in attitudes such as their sense of political efficacy (e.g., Campbell et al. 1954; Niemi et al. 1991). The **innovations I propose in PRD’s theoretical framework** create an opportunity to test the theory-based expectations from these two heretofore unconnected strands of scholarship, thereby clarifying the implications of increased nonelectoral participation on contemporary representational processes.

**a.3. Scientific Background and Research Questions**

A core idea in political theory is that democratic governance should be sensitive to the will of the people (Dahl 1961; Mill [1861] 1962; Pitkin 1967). Several decades of empirical research have revealed strong evidence of an **opinion-representation** connection in advanced democracies (Miller & Stokes 1963; Rasmussen et al. 2019; Soroka & Wlezien 2010). Yet the causal mechanisms underlying the link between “opinion” and “policy” remain subject to debate (Shapiro 2011: 999). Building on scholarship on the opinion-representation nexus, research on the **participation-representation** connection has focused primarily on the act of **voting**. Yet the empirical evidence on the relationship between voting and representational outcomes has been mixed (e.g., Ellis et al. 2006; Griffin & Newman 2005). **A conclusive answer to the question of whether voters are better represented than nonvoters** was recently documented in Dassonneville, Feitosa, Hooghe, and Oser’s (2021) cross-national investigation of policy responsiveness. Focusing on social policy, this study of 36 OECD countries between 1980 and 2017 established that governments are responsive to voters but not to all citizens. However, the study’s test of causal mechanisms found that electoral turnout is not a causal factor that induces policy responsiveness, thus concluding that while voters are better represented than nonvoters, researchers have yet to identify the mechanisms by which voters obtain enhanced representation. A prominent theory discussed for decades in the literature, that has yet to be systematically tested empirically, is that people express their political voice through multiple acts of participation in addition to voting (Verba & Nie 1972; Verba et al. 1995). A new line of research has taken advantage of recent advances in data collection and research designs to provide **some evidence in favor of the communication hypothesis,** at least for some types of political acts, certain policy issues, and in specific country contexts (Gillion 2012; Hooghe & Oser 2016; Leighley & Oser 2018; Htun & Weldon 2012; Rasmussen & Reher 2019; Wasow 2020; Wouters & Walgrave 2017). While this body of work provides some evidence supporting the communication hypothesis, a definitive assessment requires a systematic, longitudinal investigation of the connections between political participation, broadly defined, and both objective and subjective representational outcomes.

Taking **socioeconomic status** into account in an assessment of the communication vs. grievance hypotheses has become even more pressing in recent years due to new empirical evidence from two separate strands of emerging research. **First, recent scholarship on unequal representation** has concluded that the opinion-representation advantage of higher status groups first documented in studies on the United States (Bartels 2008; Gilens & Page 2014) is also clearly evident in Europe and other countries worldwide (Lupu & Warner, in press-a, in press-b; Schakel & van der Pas, in press). **Second, new research on online participation and usage of social media** has established that the increased prevalence of online and digital media behavior reinforces existing socioeconomic inequalities in political participation (Oser & Boulianne 2020; Oser et al. 2013; Schlozman et al. 2010). Furthermore, research has shown that social media plays an increasingly vital role in international politics by providing opportunities for online activism and through political content exposure (Lotan et al. 2011; Tufecki 2017).Innovative studies on social media as a causal pathway through which political communication affects individuals’ behaviors and attitudes (e.g., Bail et al. 2018; Bond et al. 2012) also suggest the importance of integrating research on political content exposure on social media and mainstream scholarship on political participation and representation.

Integrating these literatures, the PRD project’s first research question is (**RQ1):** “How do people incorporate increasingly prevalent nonelectoral political acts into their individual-level repertoires of political participation?” Research on individuals’ participation repertoires leads directly to the second research question **(RQ2):** “How well are different types of political participators represented in terms of both objective and subjective representational outcomes?” While the first two research questions focus on phenomena best studied through observational data gathered in the past, the third research question shifts the focus of inquiry to investigate possible future pathways to mitigate existing patterns of unequal participation and, potentially, unequal representation. Thus, the final research question asks **(RQ3):** “How can traditionally lower status groups be mobilized and organized with attention to reducing identified inequalities in patterns of political participation and representation?”

**a4. Methodology and Work Packages**

I translate these research questions into a research design comprising three work packages that include the following types of scholarly **contributions** that are detailed in B2’s Gantt chart: manuscripts for publication in peer-reviewed journals (n=16); findings reports (n=6) that will disseminate open access findings using data visualization of key results along with replication files that use best practices for reproducibility (e.g., Alvarez & Heuberger 2022); and a harmonized dataset that will be maintained throughout the course of the project using best practices of active maintenance (Peer et al. 2021). The creation and analysis of the harmonized dataset in the first two work packages will be informed by my co-authored article on social policy responsiveness to voting (Dassonneville, Feitosa, Hooghe & Oser 2021); by harmonized variables produced by the Survey Data Recycling project (SDR 2021; Wysmułek 2019); and by input from PRD expert network member Prof. Markus Gangl, PI of the ERC Advanced project POLAR whose project is creating a harmonized dataset on economic inequality and polarization. The harmonized dataset and its analysis will provide a fundamental contribution to the literature on PRD’s theoretical focus on political participation and inequality, as the time series data available for the empirical investigation of nonelectoral participation are less consistent in question wording and less comprehensive in country coverage and time range compared to voting data. The broad geographic scope of the analysis will test the generalizability of the findings across diverse contexts.

**WP1**. **Political Acts and Political Participators**

In WP1, we will conduct the most comprehensive cross-national investigation to date of participatory inequalities of electoral and nonelectoral participation. We will conduct this investigation by analyzing political acts in multiple cross-sectional and panel survey datasets **(Objective 1a)** and one originally constructed harmonized dataset **(Objective 1b)**, as well as by analyzing types of political participators through advancing methodological innovations in latent class analysis (LCA) **(Objective 1c)**. The focus on methodological innovations in LCA extends my ongoing collaboration with statistical methodologists Zsuzsa Bakk (Leiden University, Netherlands) and Roberto Di Mari (University of Catania, Italy), who specialize in latent variable and categorical data analysis. Based on my prior research using this approach to identify political participator types in one country context (the United States) analyzing cross-sectional data (i.e., single points in time), I expect that we will identify several main types of participators, including all-around activists, specialists in only certain political acts (e.g., electoral-oriented only; nonelectoral only; vote-only), and a completely inactive group (Oser 2017; Oser, in press-a; Oser et al. 2013; Oser et al. 2014). This work has clarified that methodological innovations are needed to conduct valid LCA models using complex data that my collaborative work with Bakk and Di Mari has already begun to address by providing the statistical underpinnings for conducting LCA in multilevel data structures with covariates using a stepwise approach in a co-authored article in *Structural Equation Modeling* (Bakk, Di Mari, Oser & Kuha, in press).

For PRD, we will advance three primary methodological innovations. **(1) Multilevel LCA**: Develop statistically reliable and computationally efficient estimators to analyze complex datasets in diverse country contexts and over time. **(2) Measurement equivalence in multilevel data for specific items/indicators**: This innovation will allow us to test, for example, whether the item of “protest” functions differently in individuals’ participator types in different country contexts. **(3) Inclusion of covariates in complex multivariate datasets:** develop computational advances in software implementation to enable model convergence. To accompany these methodological innovations, the PRD team will create and disseminate an open-sourced software package (in R) that will allow the implementation of these innovations for the broader community of social science researchers conducting typological analysis. These methodological innovations will equip us to conduct the most comprehensive analysis to date of distinct types of political participators and their correlates over time, providing definitive insight into two aspects of participatory inequalities: first, the changing prevalence of different types of participators; and second, the sociodemographic and attitudinal correlates of the identified participator types (e.g., whether the “inactive,” “nonelectoral specialist,” or “all-around activist” groups have become more/less prevalent over time). In addition to providing new findings on changing patterns in participatory inequality, the results from this analysis will create the empirical infrastructure for survey-based analysis in WP2.

**WP2. Participation-Representation Connection**

The participator types identified in WP1 now allow us to test how well these participator types are represented in objective and subjective representational measures, with attention to testing the **communication versus grievance hypotheses**. Specifically, evidence in favor of the communication hypothesis would indicate that participator types with high scores on nonelectoral participation indicators have a relatively high positive association with objective and subjective representational measures compared to other identified participator types; and this positive association remains stable or increases over time. In contrast, evidence favoring the grievance hypothesis would show that participator types with high scores on nonelectoral participation indicators have a relatively low association with objective and subjective representational measures compared to other identified participator types; and this association remains stable or decreases over time. We investigate representation primarily through the left-right ideology/policy dimension, which is still considered the most salient dimension for individuals across polities (Dassonneville et al. 2021). Informed by recent research on the salience of policy dimensions beyond the left-right axis (e.g., Caughey et al. 2019; Lupu & Warner, in press-a, in press-b), we will analyze additional policy dimensions when data are available.

To conduct this analysis, WP2’s first objective **(Objective 2a)** of survey-based statistical analysis includes three steps. In **Step 1**, we will merge relevant country-level objective responsiveness indicators with survey datasets analyzed in WP1, including country-year data on welfare spending in OECD countries, as well as other national-level policy and ideology indicators when relevant (e.g., the Chapel Hill Expert Survey, and legislator policy position data legislative agenda data). In **Step 2,** we will implement an innovative research design that extends the classic **median voter** theory (Downs 1957) that posits that in a representative democracy, the positions of elected representatives will converge to the “median voter’s” left-right ideological position. We will adapt this traditional focus on the “median voter” to assess how well the left-right ideological positions of various types of **median participators** are represented in social policy, as measured by OECD spending measures (and potentially for additional policy dimensions, depending on data availability). For example, if participator types with broad participation repertoires (e.g., the “all-around activist”) obtain higher levels of representation of their median ideology than the “vote-only” group, this finding would support the communication hypothesis in relation to objective measures of representation. In **Step 3**, we complement this analysis of single country-year datapoints representing the mean ideology of different types of participators to conduct multilevel analyses (made possible through LCA innovations in WP1) of individuals nested in countries. Our synthesis of findings using these approaches will provide a definitive assessment of the communication and grievance hypotheses focused on both objective and subjective representational measures.

The limited data available on online political participation in these established survey programs will be complemented by the qualitative fieldwork conducted in **Objective 2b**. The case selected for qualitative fieldwork is the global Occupy protest cycle that began in 2010, which serves as a particularly useful case study to investigate PRD’s theoretical framework for several reasons. It is the most recent significant wave of globally networked protest (Della Porta & Mattoni 2014); researchers have identified objective outcomes of the protest (Della Porta et al. 2017) but have not yet assessed their perceived impact among protestors; the protests focused on economic claims and on deficiencies in democratic systems (Roos & Oikonomakis 2014); and the action repertoire that emerged from these protests has undergone significant transformations since they began, including the role of electorally oriented and digitally networked political acts in activists’ broader participation repertoires (Della Porta et al. 2017). The PRD team’s qualitative fieldwork will extend fieldwork currently underway in Israel in the context of my Israel Science Foundation grant project; PRD team member Aya Shoshan has extensively researched the Occupy protests and their aftermath in Israel and Spain (Shoshan 2018; Shultziner & Shoshan 2018). In Year 1 of the project, the PRD team will extend the fieldwork to include an interview sample in Spain (n=25) and additional interviews in European and EU partner countries that had a meaningful amount of Occupy movement activity, including Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Turkey, and the UK (an additional n=20). The survey instrument uses a semi-structured protocol to examine Occupy activists’ perceptions of their changing participation repertoires over the past decade, including digital opportunities for political action, and the effectiveness of their political activism repertoires in achieving representation. This qualitative fieldwork with a cohort of activists for whom we have access to data from over a decade ago is an important complement to the survey data analyzed in WP1 and WP2, which has limited data on the role of online and digitally networked political acts in people’s broad participation repertoires. As the movements born in 2010–2011 were among the first global protest cycles to use online social networks to mobilize a globally networked protest and whose movement leaders subsequently developed innovative digital activism tools (Della Porta 2013), this case offers a unique opportunity to study activists’ perceptions of the role of digital tools in their broad participation repertoires with a decade of retrospective insight.

**WP3**. **Mobilizing and Organizing Lower Status Groups**

The final work package, **“Mobilizing and Organizing Lower Status Groups”** **(WP3),** shifts the theoretical focus from WP2’s attention on assessing the relative strength of historical evidence in favor of the communication vs. grievance hypotheses to a future-looking focus on identifying communication mechanisms that serve as pathways for mobilizing and organizing lower status groups. The first objective **(Objective 3a)**builds on recent studies that have identified social media as a pathway for exposure to political content (e.g., Bail et al. 2018; Bond et al. 2012) by identifying differential effects of content exposure on political attitudes and behavior for different types of content and different subgroups of the population. This study extends my ongoing collaboration with Nir Grinberg (Ben-Gurion University, Israel), a computational social scientist, in a project using a unique Twitter panel to identify distinct and prototypical types of political content exposure on Twitter (Oser, Grinberg & Feitosa 2021; Shamir, Grinberg & Oser 2022). An empirical key to our study is the innovation of a newly constructed Twitter panel by Grinberg and colleagues, as documented in Grinberg et al.’s (2019) *Science* article which used a pilot version (comprised of ~16,000 individuals). The currently expanded panel of ~1.8 million registered U.S. voters is representative of the U.S. population (Hughes et al. 2021) and provides an unprecedented view of the heterogeneity of exposure to political content on social media for distinctive sociodemographic groups, which we leverage in the following two methodological steps. In **Step 1** we will develop and validate a state-of-the-art BERT-based machine learning classifier (Devlin et al. 2019) that will identify distinct types of mobilizing political content and provide first-of-its-kind knowledge of the levels of exposure to mobilizing content for different sociodemographic groups, with particular attention to lower status groups. Relevant types of political content we expect to identify include, for example, affective (emotional) mobilizing content which may have a stronger effect on lower status groups (Iyer & Achia 2021), and informational content related to journalistic “horse-race” reporting (Westwood et al. 2020), which is expected to have a stronger effect on higher status groups. In **Step 2**, we will then conduct an experiment to test the causal effect of exposure to different types of mobilizing content during the 2024 U.S. presidential elections, following a design similar to the field experiment used by Bail et al. (2018). The experiment will introduce interventions exposing consenting, randomly assigned participants to mobilization messages on their Twitter accounts and measuring the average treatment effect on key variables of political behavior and attitudes as collected via additional survey waves. In addition to providing new knowledge on the causal impact of mobilizing content on behavior and attitudes, we will produce a findings report to inform public debate on the regulation of modern information systems, including social media.

Moving from the realm of social media to the domain of global civic organizations, in **Objective 3b** we will use field experiments to investigate the effects of the creation of opportunities for meaningful civic action on individuals’ participation repertoires and political attitudes. This study focuses on a currently missing component in scholars’ understandings of what transforms people from being politically apathetic to becoming politically engaged. This study, conducted in the context of my ongoing collaboration with Hahrie Han (Johns Hopkins University), will investigate how different opportunities for concrete individual-level civic action, “micro-practices,” may prompt people to become actively involved in civic and political action to communicate their political voices in the public sphere. The methodological approach in Objective 3b is adapted from Han’s (2016) experimental design in her *American Political Science Review* article on the organizational roots of political activism. Informed by Danielle Allen’s arguments in defense of equality (e.g., Allen 2014; Allen & Somanathan 2020), we hypothesize that, in addition to expanding individuals’ participation repertoires and strengthening their sense of subjective representation, these micro-practices may foster people’s sense of political agency by expanding the sphere of influence in which they experience the autonomy to act, subsequently strengthening support for democracy (Han & Kim, in press). Consistent with PRD’s theoretical framework, our experimental designs will pay particular attention to micro-practices that are effective for mobilizing and organizing lower status groups, with attention to digital and online opportunities for political engagement. We have designed a pilot empirical study to test our theoretical model through a novel survey experiment that assesses whether inviting people to participate in meaningful civic action broadens their participation repertoires and affects several attitudinal measures, including subjective representation, political agency, and support for pro-democratic norms (Feitosa, Han & Oser 2022). This survey experiment is designed to inform a broader research agenda aimed at collaborating with civic organizations to conduct field experiments to assess the effect of a series of concrete civic skills or micro-practices on participants’ subsequent political behavior and attitudes. We have already identified an ideal potential partner organization for launching PRD field experiments in Year 3 of the project, Tectonica Organizing Network, which supports civic and political organizations with some level of digital literacy, such as WeMove, a digital-first, multi-issue organization that runs campaigns across Europe that aim to build solidarity and trust. In the Integrative Workshop with expert network members in Year 3, we will synthesize the survey-based and qualitative fieldwork findings from WP1 and WP2 to finalize a series of experimental field designs to be conducted in digital and online frameworks and field experiments that will take place in at least one European country context that provide an opportunity for investigating the political participation levels of lower status groups.

**a5. Impact Assessment and Feasibility**

The main risk of the project is its complexity, and that the Integrated Work Plan detailed in B2 requires a relatively large and skilled team of researchers. Yet as noted in my scientific narrative, I have laid the foundation to meet this challenge through my involvement in the international academic community, and the main challenge at the current juncture is to obtain sufficient resources to launch the project’s work plan. In an era of growing concerns about the quality of representative democracy and democratic erosion, PRD’s theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions have the potential to generate new insights into the participation-representation connection at a particularly consequential moment for representative democracies.

**Section b: CURRICULUM VITAE**

Oser, Jennifer Nationality: Israeli and the United States

Web site: [https://www.jenniferoser.com](https://www.jenniferoser.com/) ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1531-4606>

**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. 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 Pre-doctoral 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)

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

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

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

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

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

**ORGANIZATION OF SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS** (Selected)

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

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

**INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES** (Selected)

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

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

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

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 IN SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES**

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)

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)

**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 | 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 virtual talks). I have maintained a high level of productivity despite the severe challenge of home-schooling three children throughout most of the pandemic.

**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 (University of California, 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), Yannis Theocharis (Technical University of Munich), Kateřina Vráblíková (University of Bath), Chris Wlezien (University of Texas at Austin), and SDR project PIs: J. Craig Jenkins (Ohio University); Irina Tomescu-Dubrow and K. 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. 1246/20 | 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**

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

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

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.

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

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.

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

**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”]

**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**. (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

**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**

The 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 sociodemographic characteristics (Oser 2017), citizenship norms and partisan identity (Oser, in press-a; 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 work on this topic has contributed new knowledge about the effectiveness of different forms of political participation (Oser, in press-b), 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).

Chart, bar chart

Description automatically generatedTo 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 larger proportion 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, I worked as a full-time community organizer, while also working part-time as a researcher on Prof. Skocpol’s project, 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 differing 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 to examine political participation repertoires, I have also used this analytical approach in co-authored publications on citizenship norms (e.g., Oser & Hooghe 2013) and democratic ideals (e.g., 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 data from the European Social Survey on individual-level participation and the 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). Furthermore, the qualitative fieldwork design in WP2 is informed by a current 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. I have proactively pursued a research dialogue with her motivated by my own prior qualitative research (Oser 2010), and this dialogue has yielded the qualitative fieldwork plan in WP2. For “**Mobilizing and organizing low-status groups”** (WP3), the Twitter panel research in collaboration with Nir Grinberg has already produced preliminary findings that promise unprecedented potential for studying heterogeneous subgroups that are of theoretical importance to PRD and to social scientists in general. Finally, the experimental fieldwork with civic organizations informed by my ongoing collaboration with Hahrie Han pulls together the strands of this research agenda, and is fully aligned with ERC’s high-risk, high-gain approach.

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. 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.