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ABSTRACT:

This article is the first to show that gender shapes the degree to which legislators use formal mechanisms to oversee government activities. Extensive scholarly work has analysed the use of oversight instruments, especially regarding who monitors whom. Whether, how, and why the conformity of men and women with institutional roles differs, has not yet received scholarly attention. We hypothesise that women become more active than men in overseeing the executive when in opposition while reducing their monitoring activities even more strongly than men when in government because of different social roles ascribed to men and women as well as differences in risk aversity between sexes. We analyse panel data for three oversight tools from the German Bundestag between 1949 and 2013 to test this proposition. Our findings imply that characteristics of political actors influence even a strongly institutionalised process as oversight and further clarify the gender bias in political representation.

SUMMARY:

Abstract	1
Introduction	1
How institutional roles in the legislative oversight process are gendered	3
Hypothesis 1: Women increase (decrease) their oversight activity more strongly than men when they move from government to opposition (opposition to government).	6
Research design	6
Operationalisation of the dependent variables	6
Operationalisation of the independent variables	7

Table 1. Frequency of change in government and opposition status by sex of MPs in the german Bundestag between 1949 and 2013	8
Figure 1. Distribution of change in questions, minor requests and proposals from t-1 to t0.	8
Control variables	8
Sex and legislative oversight: empirical evidence from Germany	9
Figure 2. Distribution of change in the number of questions (t-1 to t0) by sex and change in governing status.	10
Figure 3. Distribution of change in the number of minor requests submitted (t-1 to t0) by sex and change in governing status.	101
Figure 4. Distribution of change in the number of proposals (t-1 to t0) by sex and change in governing status.	11
Table 2. Linear regression of change in the number of questions, minor requests and proposals submitted by MPs on their sex and change in their government and opposition status	12
Figure 5. Linear prediction of change in the number of questions, minor requests and proposals submitted by MPs with 95%-confidence intervals (based on Models 1 to 3 in Table 2).	12
Conclusion	14
References	15