

## HABILITATION THESIS REVIEWER'S REPORT

**Masaryk University**

**Faculty**

**Applicant**

**Habilitation thesis**

**Reviewer**

**Reviewer's home unit,  
institution**

Faculty of Social Studies

PhDr. Lenka Vochocová, Ph.D.

Gender aspects of online political expression and exclusion in the perspective of media studies and intersectionality

Dr. Emily Harmer

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Liverpool

The thesis represents an impressive body of work that explores the gendered dynamics of online political expression across various online spaces. All of the work included in the thesis is published in highly regarded international journals, which already demonstrates the quality and rigour of this work, as well as its contribution to academic debate. The seven empirical studies deploy a variety of different research methods (quantitative content analysis of online comments and survey data, as well as qualitative analysis of online comments and interviews), which showcases both the author's research skills and an important commitment to using the most appropriate method for the particular questions being asked, which I admire.

The thesis effectively narrates the main academic contributions that the work makes. The work makes clear empirical and methodological contributions, for example, highlighting that survey data can be less valuable at capturing gender gaps or differences in participation and that combining such data with other methods is important to nuance this picture. The various research studies also provide an important corrective to some gender stereotyping that happens in other work, for example, showing that women are not immune to engaging in uncivil communication. Moreover, the work also demonstrates that women often employ specific strategies to mitigate attacks on them, which is a relatively underexplored area in much of the academic literature. I was particularly interested in the author's efforts to consider the intersectional dimension of online political talk, which is an important development within the field. Some of the studies also involve international comparisons, which offer a helpful way of articulating the broader significance of the research.

Overall, I am thoroughly impressed with the work presented and believe it makes a strong and wide-reaching contribution to academic enquiry into the relationship between gender and political communication.

**Reviewer's questions for the habilitation thesis defence** (number of questions up to the reviewer)

1. Why do you think it remains so difficult to correct for the gender gap in experiences of online political discussions?
2. I also wonder about the way intersectionality is deployed in some of the studies – what does it mean to the author and what are the main identity categories that are most relevant to the Czech context?
3. I was interested in the idea that female-dominated spaces might be one way to address the gender gap in women's political engagement online, and wondered whether the author thought there were any drawbacks to women having to carve out their own spaces in this way.
4. What role do platforms play in the question of participation in terms of their rules and governance, as well as platform architecture?
5. Several of the studies address communication around issues which have been heavily contested in public discourse (immigration, vaccination, climate activism etc.) which have demonstrably made useful starting points to see how women discuss and respond to them, but I wondered how much the author considers the dynamics at play in these studies result from this set up and whether there are more mundane or everyday topics or issues which would be worth exploring to see if similar results would apply?
6. To what extent does the broader political context shape or inhibit women's participation in political discussion?
7. The published works span a relatively long period of time, so I wondered if anything had changed over time. Has the ability and willingness of women and minoritised individuals to engage online increased or are they even more likely to be excluded now?

## Conclusion

The habilitation thesis entitled “Gender aspects of online political expression and exclusion in the perspective of media studies and intersectionality” by PhDr. Lenka Vochocová, Ph.D. **fulfils** requirements expected of a habilitation thesis in the field of Media Studies and Journalism.

Date: 27 August 2025

Signatur

