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Pamela Paxton

Pamela Paxton is an Associate Professor of Sociology and Political Science and Associate Dean in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. Her current areas of research include women in politics, social networks, and social capital.

Paxton is co-author of [Women, Politics, and Power: A Global Perspective](#) (Sage, 2007). The book provides a detailed introduction to women's political representation across a wide range of countries and regions, addressing both women's parliamentary representation and their ascendance to leadership positions. Using broad statistical overviews and detailed case-studies, it documents historical trends and the current state of women's political strength. It also reviews and evaluates contemporary debates on why and how women's access to political power varies across countries.

One dimension of Paxton's research has been to examine how cultural attitudes about women affect their ability to become political leaders. Her current project sets out to test the flip side of this analysis: Once women are elected to positions of power, does their presence change cultural attitudes?

Paxton plans to test this relationship using new data about attitudes toward women from the World Values Survey. This survey asked respondents in 68 countries about women's place in politics, education, and the labor force in 1995 and again in 2005. Changes in attitudes during this time could show that culture affects women's representation, women's representation affects culture, or each affects the other simultaneously.

In 2009, Paxton organized a workshop at the Mershon Center on [Women in Politics: Global Perspectives](#). Three panels discussed women in democracy, national security, and conflict; women's global organizing; and gaining access, changing institutions. Goals of the workshop were to demonstrate different approaches to the same problem, discuss fruitful ways to explain women's representation in areas where traditional explanations don't work, and talk about practical concerns in researching women in politics globally. The conference was one of the most highly attended ever held at Mershon.

A second area of Paxton's research is social networks, specifically among international non-governmental organizations. Her article "Power and



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Relation in the World Polity: The INGO Network Country Score," published with three co-authors in *Social Forces*, explored new ways of measuring a country's connectedness to the world polity.

Traditionally, scholars measure how much power a country has on the world stage by counting the number of NGOs it participates in. Paxton and her co-authors argue that because not all NGOs are of equal weight, a network model is a better way to measure this. By mapping how countries are networked to each other through NGOs, one can determine which countries act as central sites of diffusion and influence.

Paxton's third area of focus this year was social capital – the idea that individuals can use their connections with one another to produce goods such as public safety, community associations, and efficient democratic processes. Paxton and co-editor James Moody of Duke explore the intersections between capital and social networks in a two-volume special issue of *American Behavioral Scientist* in [July 2009](#) and [August 2009](#).

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