

Gender Gaps and Gender Stereotypes in Policy Priorities

Rainbow Murray
School of Politics and International Relations
Queen Mary, University of London
rainbowmurray@gmail.com

Paper prepared for the European Conference on Politics and Gender, Uppsala, June 2015.

Draft: work in progress. If you wish to cite, please contact the author for an updated version of the paper.

Acknowledgements: Christina Govier provided invaluable research assistance with collecting and coding the data. Phil Edmunds helped to source software to facilitate the data collection. Réjane Sénac-Slawinski helped set up all the interviews and undertook them with me. Manda Green provided valuable feedback on parliamentary questions and was generous in sharing her unpublished data. Giacomo Benedetto, Karen Bird, Mona Lena Krook, Dorothy McBride, Jennifer Piscopo, and John Wilkerson provided helpful comments on earlier drafts. I also gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Leverhulme Trust, the Mairie of Paris, and Queen Mary University of London.

Abstract

The literature on gendered representation often questions whether men and women prioritise different policy areas. Men and women are stereotypically associated with, respectively, “masculine” and “feminine” policy domains (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993). Furthermore, women are often expected to pay greater attention to “women’s issues”. This has sometimes been used to justify women’s greater presence in politics, although it risks essentialising women and relegating them to certain policy domains. Female politicians may be expected by their constituents, their parties and their male peers to focus on “feminine” policy areas, even if their own priorities lie elsewhere. Identifying gender gaps within policy focus is therefore challenged by the need to distinguish genuine differences between the sexes from differences that are constructed by gendered expectations and stereotypes.

This paper sheds light on these puzzles by examining the policy focus of male and female parliamentarians under two distinct scenarios: firstly, low-profile work that reflects the free choice of individual politicians, and secondly, high-profile work that reflects the preferences of party managers. Using France as a case study, I analyse an original dataset of more than 200,000 parliamentary questions spanning two full parliamentary terms (2002-2012) in France. The data include written and oral questions, both of which measure the priorities of individual politicians, and questions to the government, which are televised, high-profile and stage-managed by parties. My findings indicate that women are indeed more likely than men to represent women’s interests, confirming previous studies (eg Campbell et al 2010) that women do need women to represent them. However, on other policy areas, significant gender gaps emerge only in high-profile work, when women are directed to be the voice of stereotypically “feminine” issues.

Gender quotas and questions of gendered parliamentary representation have long been intertwined. Interest in the gendered effects of representation within parliament, and the potential benefits to women and democracy of having more gender-balanced legislatures, helped to fuel campaigns for gender quotas around the world. With more than 100 countries worldwide now having some form of gender quota (Krook 2009), recent studies have begun to evaluate whether an influx of women into parliament has had any noticeable impact on the processes and outcomes of parliamentary representation (Beckwith 2007; Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2010; Koning 2009; Wangnerud 2009). One prominent question within the literature on gendered representation is whether men and women prioritise different policy areas.

Men and women are stereotypically associated with, respectively, “masculine” and “feminine” policy domains (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993). Arguments about women’s different interests to men have been used to justify women’s greater presence in politics, on the grounds that certain issues and interests will not be represented adequately without the presence of women. Consequently, elected women are often expected to pay greater attention to “women’s issues”, and to demonstrate their “added value” through their different focus to men (Sénac 2015). This approach risks essentialising women and relegating them to certain policy domains. Female politicians may be expected by their constituents, their parties and their male peers to focus on “feminine” policy areas, even if their own priorities lie elsewhere.

[More literature review to follow here – work in progress]

There are two difficulties which hinder the evaluation of whether men and women focus on different policy areas. The first is ideology, which itself strongly shapes politicians’ predilections for certain issues over others. For example, right-wing parties might demonstrate greater interest in law and order or immigration, while left-wing parties might be more interested in the welfare state. Right-wing parties are generally more commonly associated with “masculine” policy areas, while left-wing parties are more often associated with “feminine” policy areas. As a significant majority of female legislators around the world hail from left-wing parties, it can be difficult to separate out the effects of gender and ideology in determining policy interests.¹

A second difficulty relates to party discipline, which can make it hard to identify individual preferences. Parties influence many aspects of parliamentary life, and can determine which areas their politicians should focus on and support. If parties – which are often run by men – are influenced by gender stereotypes in their allocation of different types of parliamentary work, gender gaps may occur in parliamentary representation. These gaps could be used to confirm the hypothesis that men and women focus on different policy areas, even though these differences stem from gendered allocation of work rather than innate differences between the interests of men and women. As such, gender gaps may become

¹ Existing studies indicate that gender may trump ideology when it comes to the representation of women. In a study of the US Congress, MacDonald and O’Brien (2010) found that sex was a significant predictor of sponsorship of feminist bills, while partisanship was not. It is possible, then, that party interest in issues of concern to women does not correlate with supporting a feminist position. Campbell et al (2010) also found that women representatives were, overall, more feminist than their male colleagues.

self-perpetuating and may reinforce the notion that men and women are interested in different things, whether or not this is actually true.

This paper uses the French case study to overcome these difficulties. Following the introduction of “parity” legislation in 2000, there have been modest but steady increases to the proportion of women in parliament. 12.3% women were elected to the National Assembly in 2002, and 18.5% in 2007 – a 50% increase. Importantly, both of these election outcomes featured the election of a right-wing party, thus providing a sufficient sample of right-wing women to be able to control for partisan differences when assessing policy preferences. Furthermore, while most parliamentary work in France is organised along party lines², the study of parliamentary questions provides rare insights into the difference between party-controlled activity and the autonomous preferences of individual deputies. There are three different types of parliamentary question, with varying levels of individual autonomy. A gendered analysis of the different types of question allows us to explore whether differences exist between the questions asked by women and men and, if so, whether these differences are the result of gendered preferences or simply gender stereotypes.

The organisation of this paper is as follows. The following section gives greater consideration to the issue of gendered interests and introduces the hypotheses to be tested in the paper. A data section then introduces the different types of parliamentary question in France and demonstrates how they can be used to address the research question. The subsequent analysis of this data controls for party effects, revealing the underlying “true” interests of deputies.

Gendered interests

NB This section is an early draft and is very incomplete. Most of the literature is still missing. It will be completed in the next draft.

Assumptions about gendered interests have frequently presented a challenge for work looking at the substantive representation of women. It is difficult to define “women’s issues” without resorting to stereotypes about which policies might interest women (Celis et al 2008; see also Childs 2008, Childs and Krook 2009). While some issues may be linked directly to women’s biological needs, such as policies regarding pregnancy or breast cancer, most “women’s issues” may relate more to gendered interests, such as childcare and education. Although it is possible that women may take a particular interest in these issues, it is perhaps presumptuous to assume that women will be more interested than men in caring issues. Nor is it reasonable to assume that women would be less interested in areas viewed as traditionally “masculine” but with huge implications for women, such as finance or foreign affairs. This paper seeks to measure whether parties still associate women with certain policy

² Deputies vote with their parties; participation in committees and plenary sessions is divided proportionally amongst party groups, who then determine how to share out their resources amongst their deputies; deputies co-sign private members’ bills from within their party, straying outside the party fold only when the party hierarchy permits them to do so; even the parliamentary agenda is partisan, with certain weeks allocated to the government and its majority, and the remaining weeks divided proportionally between the various parties of the opposition.

areas, and also considers the full policy spectrum in order to see where gender gaps actually occur (if at all), and whether they are shifting.

Alongside determining which issues interest women and men, it is also important to note that there may be differences in perspective within the same policy area. For example, Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) found that women made unique and distinctive contributions to debates, bringing viewpoints and arguments to the table that might otherwise have been absent. Sapiro (1981) argues that the different lived experiences of women might influence their needs and preferences, and these might result in different approaches to the same policy area. For example, studies in the US regarding gun ownership have found that men tend to be more concerned with the right to bear arms and defend themselves, while women express greater fears about safety and the prevalence of guns within the community (Dolan 2005; Jalalzai 2006). The importance of perspectives is acknowledged here even though it is not the focus of this paper. Rather, the emphasis here is determining whether gender stereotypes serve to exaggerate gender differences in the issue focus of male and female parliamentarians.

Although it is acknowledged that women have gendered interests that are distinct from men, it does not necessarily follow that men and women will focus on different policy areas. All policy areas are potentially gendered; “masculine” areas such as foreign policy and defence have enormous implications for women, while “feminine” areas such as welfare and family policy are important for men as well as women. Yet, when women are a small minority, they risk being “ghettoised” within those policy areas traditionally associated with women and previously neglected by parliament. As the numbers of women increase – which has been the case in France since the introduction of the parity law – the expectation that all women should focus on “women’s” issues should reduce, allowing women to expand their interests into other areas and consider the full spectrum of policy areas in a similar way to men. Similarly, the growing presence of women in parliament should expose men to issues they might previously have failed to consider, resulting in greater focus on these areas by men. In addition to the physical reminder, created by women’s bodies within parliament, of the need to consider women when making policies, male deputies might also be influenced and persuaded by the arguments of their female peers (Bratton 2005). Hence, the first hypothesis is that there will not be striking gender gaps in the policy interests of French deputies.

H1: There are no dramatic gender gaps in policy priorities

While men and women might not automatically be drawn to stereotypically masculine or feminine policy areas, there might still be some public expectation that they would do so. This might be a simple result of gender stereotyping; women might be seen as stronger advocates for women’s rights or for children’s education, while men might be seen as more capable in dealing with economic or defence issues. While rejecting the premise of these stereotypes, this paper does not deny their existence and their potential to influence voter expectations. Women might be seen as more authentic spokespersons on certain issues. Furthermore, trait stereotyping about men and women might prompt the public to expect men

to ask aggressive, hard-hitting questions, while women might be expected to speak for others and introduce compassion into the debate.

Even if these stereotypes are not held by all members of the electorate, they may influence political parties in their presentation of the public face of representation. Politics is a show, and presentation matters. On policy areas designed to appeal to the public's sympathy, parties might feel that a woman would be most effective. Many stereotypes operate at a subconscious level; while an individual might reject the notion that some policy areas belong to women and others to men, they might nonetheless respond more positively to hearing a woman articulate certain policy areas and a man articulate others.

Hence, even if significant differences do not exist in men's and women's actual policy priorities, parties might still have an interest in resorting to gender stereotypes when presenting the public face of representation. If this is the case, we would expect to see larger gender gaps emerge when deputies perform for the public, compared to when deputies follow their own interests. Representation may appear to the public to be far more gendered than is actually the case.

H2: In high-profile parliamentary work, gender gaps will be exaggerated to conform to public gendered expectations.

Data and methods

This paper uses parliamentary questions as a means of determining the policy interests of deputies. Parliamentary questions in France can take one of three forms: written questions, oral questions, and questions to the government. The nature of each type of question and their relevance to the study are outlined below.

Written questions

Written questions (WQ) can be on any topic of the deputy's choosing, although they often pertain to local issues or issues of interest to the deputy. There are no limits to the number of WQ that one can ask, and deputies have a free hand in choosing which issues to ask about. As such, they are perhaps the clearest indication of the true interests of deputies. Deputies vary wildly in the number of WQ that they table; in the 2002-7 parliament, one deputy asked no WQ at all, while another asked over 4000 WQ over the five year term. On average, deputies asked 208 written questions during the twelfth parliament (2002-7), and 240 questions in the thirteenth parliament (2007-12). Thus, WQ provide a rich opportunity to study deputies' interests in detail.

Motives for asking written questions are varied. Ministers are obliged to reply, and can be chased for a reply if one is not received within two months, but WQ tend to be of limited effectiveness in holding the government to account. One deputy claimed that he asked large numbers of questions "because I enjoy working, it's interesting, I like finding things out, I learn a lot".³ Another described how WQ are a way of demonstrating to constituents that the deputy has sought to act on behalf of their grievances, and said that it

³ Male deputy, Majority, interviewed by the author on 26 January 2011.

was a way of enhancing relationships with local activist groups. She also spoke with some pleasure of a small success story, where an unwanted local development had been delayed for six months as a result of her question, enabling her to arrive at the local meeting waving the letter from the minister in her hand, crying “voilà!”.⁴ Another likened written questions to a PR exercise, stating that she always sent local organisations the original copy of the response with the signature of the minister.⁵ Although written questions are not an important part of a deputy’s work, it is precisely their perceived lack of importance that enables them to serve as a gauge of deputies’ interests, as parties have no interest in monitoring or influencing the choice of topic. Combined with the large amount of data available, WQ lend themselves very well to quantitative analysis of deputies’ issue preferences.

Oral questions

“Oral questions without debate” (OQ) allow deputies to ask questions directly to ministers in the debating chamber. Their name is misleading, as the deputy is entitled to ask a follow-up question. Deputies choose their own questions and obtain an immediate response in the chamber, although there is a long waiting list and questions have to be submitted in writing a week in advance. The sessions are not televised and are poorly attended, so oral questions are less prestigious than questions to the government (see below), but the longer time allocated for each question⁶ enables a richer exchange between the deputy and the minister. Oral questions tend to concern local issues of national relevance. The average number of oral questions asked in a parliamentary term is only three or four, although their distribution is again rather uneven, with some deputies asking dozens of oral questions while others ask none. As OQ are more rare and useful than WQ, they provide an insight into the questions of particular importance to a deputy.

Questions to the Government

Also known as “topical questions”,⁷ the questions to the government (QG) are by far the most visible aspect of deputies’ work. They are televised and attract audiences of 1-2 million viewers for each of the bi-weekly sessions.⁸ Their high profile and prominence makes them prestigious and coveted, despite their rather limited utility: each question must not exceed two minutes, and the deputy has no right to follow up after the minister has responded. They are frequently referred to by deputies as “theatre” and many deputies stated in interviews that they give an inaccurate, and indeed embarrassing, impression of parliamentary life. Their prominence is such that even those not asking a question will vie for space in the chamber, dressed more brightly than usual in the hope of catching the camera’s eye, so that their constituents might note their presence. The atmosphere is rowdy and gladiatorial, and the whole event is carefully stage managed. It is not unusual for majority deputies to ask obsequious questions designed to allow a minister to show off a new policy. Parties choose

⁴ Female deputy, Opposition, interviewed by the author on 16 February 2011.

⁵ Female deputy, Majority, interviewed by the author on 17 February 2011.

⁶ 7 minutes, reduced to 6 minutes in 2008; this includes the time allocated for the minister’s reply and any further response from the author of the question.

⁷ “Questions d’actualité”

⁸ This is the only aspect of parliamentary life to attract a large television audience.

which questions to be asked – and who shall ask them – in their meetings on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, with QG sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons. If a deputy has put forward a question, they may get to ask it themselves, although they may need to wait some weeks for their “turn”. However, the party may equally decide to ask a set of questions on a particular theme, and nominate certain individuals to ask those questions. Deputies rarely turn down the opportunity, even when offered at short notice. The one-hour session is strictly time-controlled, with fifteen questions in total (two minutes for the deputy to ask, two for the minister to respond), and each party is allocated a share in strict rotation. Deputies typically ask five or six QG over a parliamentary term, with a range from zero to more than twenty. QG are the public face of parliamentary representation, with a much greater role for parties in determining their apportionment and content.

Taken together, these three types of parliamentary question provide an important set of measures of deputies’ policy interests. WQ enable a large-N study of individual issue preference over the full range of policies. This, combined with the total autonomy over choice of questions, makes WQ the most stable measure of deputies’ own preferences. OQ indicate those policies of particular interest to deputies. Meanwhile, QG represent the public face of representation, and illustrate the policy priorities of parties and the individuals chosen to promote these policies. As Green states, “[QG] cannot be used as an indicator of individual policy priorities” (2004: 218). By comparing the QG to the other types of question, it is possible to test the hypothesis that “true” preferences – those displayed in the WQ and OQ – may vary from the gendered distribution of QG, where parties may choose the spokespersons for different topics.

This study uses all available data on these three measures, with data spanning the whole of the 2002-7 and 2007-12 parliaments. The study uses the full population of 577 deputies for each parliament, with the exception of those who did not serve a complete parliamentary term.⁹ In total, 247289 questions are included in the analysis, making this study one of the most comprehensive of its kind.

Parliamentary questions were scraped from the website of the French parliament (www.assemblee-nationale.fr). The questions are tagged according to the minister (or ministry) to whom they are directed, providing an initial cue for sorting the questions by theme. The questions were further sorted into a smaller number of themes to facilitate analysis. The full codeframe is provided in the appendix¹⁰. Small variations in the purview of different ministries occurred within the life of each parliament, without repercussions for the data analysis. Some slightly larger variations occurred between the two parliaments. Ministries for employment and immigration emerged to reflect these new pre-occupations following the economic crisis and the election of Nicolas Sarkozy to the French presidency in 2007. Furthermore, the government portfolio for “parity” was subsumed into a larger

⁹ Deputies serving an incomplete term were excluded to eliminate any bias introduced by a particular focus on the issues of the day. Some deputies were replaced by *suppléants* (the reserve candidate on the ticket) if they had to resign office in order to take up a ministerial post. Where the *suppléant* served the entire parliamentary term, the data is used for them instead of for the deputy who was originally elected. Where the term is split between the original deputy and the *suppléant*, the case is excluded as neither has served a full term.

¹⁰ No it isn’t, but it will be in the next draft. Sorry about that. Ran out of time.

ministry on social security and solidarity. Hence, there is slight variation in the coding categories used for the 2002-7 and 2007-12 parliaments. For some of the analysis, for illustrative purposes, the coding categories are placed within three overarching categories of “masculine”, “feminine” and “neutral” policy areas, based on the stereotypical categorisation of policies identified in the literature (Dolan 2005; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a, 1993b; Jalalzai 2006; Kahn 1996).

One additional modification of the data was required before analysis could proceed. As stated above, the number of questions asked varies wildly from one deputy to the next. The goal of the paper is to determine the relative, rather than absolute, focus on different policy areas. It does not seek to identify how much attention is paid to healthcare rather than, say, agriculture. Rather, it seeks to determine whether women are more or less likely than men to ask questions on healthcare, or agriculture. Using the raw data would have the effect of skewing the results heavily in favour of the minority of deputies who asked very large numbers of questions. A more effective measure is to convert the results into percentages for each deputy, demonstrating which areas each deputy chose to prioritise. In this way, if deputy A asked a total of 100 questions, ten of which were on healthcare, deputy A would have a score of 10% for healthcare. Meanwhile deputy B, who also asked 10 questions on healthcare but out of a total of 1000 questions, would have a result of only 1% for healthcare, to reflect the fact that questions on healthcare formed a lower proportion of the total questions asked by deputy B. The use of percentages thus permits the overall priorities and preferences of each deputy to emerge by focusing on the relative rather than absolute values.

Policy priorities: Analysis

The mean number of questions asked by men and women in each category is illustrated in Table 1. Men and women asked broadly similar numbers of WQ in each parliament. Women asked slightly more OQ than men, and this gap was significant in 2007-12. Women also ask more QG, corroborating Green (2004), who found that women had a disproportionate number of QG. Green argued that parties deliberately gave QG to women in order to feminise their public image.

Table 1: Comparing mean and total number of questions in each category, by sex

	2002-7			2007-12		
	Men (mean)	Women (mean)	Total (N)	Men	Women	Total (N)
WQ	205.54	225.87	113194	247.5	205.42	123959
OQ	3.32	3.56	1824	2.89*	3.95*	1594
QG	5.54	6.26	3062	6.93	7.69	3656

A one-way ANOVA revealed that there was no significant difference between the sexes in either time point, except for OQ 2007-12, where the gender gap was significant at the 0.05 level

To determine whether men and women focus on different policy areas, the mean percentage scores for men and women were compared across the 26 policy categories for the three types of parliamentary questions. The significance of these findings was tested using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test. The results are reported in Table 2.

There are two main areas of interest in analysing gender gaps in policy focus. The first is determining whether gaps are consistent or vary by policy area. The second is determining whether gaps are consistent across the different types of question or whether, as hypothesised, they occur more strongly in public displays of representation. We will address each of these aspects in turns.

Table 2: Questions by sex and policy area

Policy area	Mean % scores 2002-7						Mean % scores 2007-12					
	WQ		OQ		QG		WQ		OQ		QG	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Agriculture	8.33	8.70	6.18	3.78	5.29	2.98	7.04	6.59	4.81	4.43	5.92	3.71
Business	4.66	4.66	5.04	5.08	8.64	3.80	3.05	2.75	4.36	6.75	11.98	11.84
Defence	5.03	4.39	2.63	1.88	2.49	4.15	4.35	4.42	3.07	6.98	1.87	1.57
Economy	15.38	14.28	10.02	8.09	12.50	9.48	14.61	12.95	7.27	6.74	11.97	8.36
Foreign affairs	3.79	4.45	1.70	2.22	9.74	8.29	3.62	3.48	2.40	2.04	9.95	8.34
Sport	0.37	0.22	0.32	0	0.43	0.17	0.76	0.90	0.48	0.24	0.47	0.66
State finance	2.62	1.40	2.11	1.13	3.09	1.09	3.21	3.08	2.18	1.28	6.27	4.98
Masculine total	40.17	38.06	28.01	22.18	42.16	29.95	36.64	34.15	24.58	28.46	48.44	39.48
Culture	2.47	2.20	3.14	2.94	2.21	1.17	2.56	2.55	2.94	1.22	1.96	1.93
Employment	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	13.60	14.49	7.13	7.38	8.42	8.43
Environment	3.91	3.57	4.41	6.52	3.70	2.30	7.51	6.78	16.13	11.96	6.34	5.35
Home office (interior)	6.78	5.85	9.31	7.39	8.42	3.86	6.01	5.23	9.66	5.01	6.66	6.77
Housing	0.92	0.70	0.71	2.06	0.65	1.65	3.02	2.95	2.00	3.19	2.04	2.06
Immigration	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.68	0.78	0.85	0.54	0.53	0.64
Justice	4.33	5.06	5.31	4.05	4.09	4.85	4.58	5.29	3.76	4.15	3.48	3.91
Politics	0.41	0.48	0.03	0	3.70	1.55	0.83	0.82	0.34	0	3.32	1.93
Public sector/civil service	1.99	1.85	0.82	0.44	1.02	0	1.29	1.15	0.30	0	0.71	1.06
Cities and regions	0.34	0.36	3.26	3.37	2.49	1.93	0.65	0.58	3.16	2.81	3.17	1.52
Research	0.39	0.53	0.26	0	1.69	2.31	1.58	2.18	1.12	0.60	2.22	1.42
Transport	6.10	5.66	18.13	17.07	7.54	4.48	2.42	2.11	11.08	11.62	2.33	0.97
Neutral total	27.65	26.25	45.36	43.84	35.50	24.10	44.73	44.91	58.45	48.50	41.18	36.00
Education	5.56	5.87	5.29	4.24	3.66	3.17	5.86	6.63	4.32	7.01	3.79	8.00
Family	0.67	0.88	0.11	0	0.50	2.11	0.52	0.76	0.43	1.02	1.14	3.85
Health	16.11	18.01	12.12	13.88	5.52	10.48	8.31	8.11	9.92	9.11	3.37	5.50
Parity	0.45	0.86	0	0	1.47	5.10	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Social affairs	3.90	4.38	4.79	4.95	7.11	20.61	2.08	2.70	0.06	0.30	0.07	0.29
Social security and solidarity	2.37	2.34	2.65	4.67	1.63	1.96	1.74	2.60	1.80	5.37	1.81	6.02
Youth	3.12	3.34	1.67	6.24	2.44	2.52	0.12	0.15	0.43	0.24	0.19	0.87
Feminine total	32.18	35.69	26.63	33.98	22.34	45.95	18.63	20.94	16.97	23.05	10.38	24.52

N (2002-7) = 544. N (2007-12) = 517¹¹. N/a = coding category not applicable for this parliament. For ease of illustration, significant results are highlighted in colour. Red = p<0.01; yellow = p<0.05. "Masculine" policy areas are highlighted in blue; "feminine" policy areas are highlighted in green.

¹¹ The N is lower in the 2007-12 parliament because fewer deputies served a complete term and more were therefore excluded from the analysis. There were several government reshuffles, resulting in a higher

As expected, there are very few gender gaps present in the policy areas coded as “neutral”. There are also relatively few gender gaps in the policy areas coded as “masculine”, and those that are present occur in only one of the six measurements, with no compelling evidence of a broader trend.¹² The gaps that do occur in the masculine policy areas are largely of the expected direction (with these areas forming a higher proportion of women’s questions than men’s), except for defence, which attracted significantly more oral questions from women in 2007-12. Women asked more “masculine” oral questions overall than men in that parliament. Indeed, with the sole exception of the economy, every “masculine” policy area drew more questions from women than men on at least one of the six measurements. The data reveals much more similarity than difference.

Most of the significant differences between men and women are concentrated within the “feminine” policy areas. Of particular note is the “parity” category. This incorporates all issues of gender equality (not just political representation). In the two instances where this variable featured (WQ and QG in 2002-7; no OQ were asked in this domain), there is a highly significant gender gap. In the 2007-12 parliament, this category was incorporated into the broader category of social security and solidarity. Social security attracted no significant gender gaps in 2002-7, but once the category of parity was incorporated in the subsequent parliament, a strong and highly significant gender gap emerges at every measurement, indicating that it is gender equality issues that are driving this gap. This finding indicates that women are acting to represent women; on gender equality issues, they are consistently much more likely to ask questions than men. This corroborates numerous other studies demonstrating that women do act for women (Dodson and Carroll 1991; Schwindt-Bayer 2006; Swers 2002; Taylor-Robinson and Heath 2003; Wangnerud 2000).

Overall, the data demonstrate that gender gaps between men and women are modest on all issues except gender equality, where women are significantly more mobilised than men to act for women. This is an important finding, demonstrating some support for the notion of substantive representation, while also demonstrating that gender differences are otherwise smaller than we might think.

An even more interesting finding emerges when we examine our second hypothesis. We see a very clear difference between the spontaneous preferences of deputies (as measured by WQ and OQ), and the stage-managed presentation of representation (as measured by QG). We see much more significant differences between men and women for QG compared to WQ and OQ. The real difference lies not in the number of policy areas demonstrating significant gender gaps, but in the magnitude of those gaps. For example, on family policy, women do ask more WQ than men, but the differences are relatively modest. In contrast, women ask four times as many QG as men on the same policy area. Similarly, for social affairs the differences are fairly small for WQ but dramatic for QG. If we look at the overall trend of masculine, feminine and neutral policy areas – which, by definition, measure stereotypical assumptions about gendered preferences – we see that these stereotypes really come into play for QG. For “masculine” questions, there is a gender gap in WQ of only a couple of percentage points in both parliaments. In contrast, the gap for QG is nine points in 2007-12

proportion of deputies who divided their term between parliament and government. A number of deputies also vacated their seats in 2011 to take up seats in the Senate.

¹² The “six measurements” refers to three types of question, each measured twice (2002-7 and 2007-12).

and nearly 12 points in 2002-7. This is despite the fact that there are few significant gaps on individual masculine policy areas, indicating that women are not being steered away from masculine policy areas so much as steered towards feminine policy areas (with a corresponding reduction in their focus on other areas). For feminine policies, the differences become even more dramatic. For WQ, there is an overall gender gap here of only 2-3 points. For OQ, the gap is slightly larger at 6-7 points. However, these pale in comparison with QG. In 2002-7, the gap was nearly 24 points. One driver of this was social affairs, where the differences between men and women were only marginal for both WQ and OQ, but there was a highly significant 13 point gap for QG. Similar stories emerged for family and health. In 2007-12, social affairs had largely fallen off the agenda, replaced with greater preoccupation with economic issues following the global economic downturn. Nonetheless, there is still an overall 14 point gap between men and women for QG asked in 2007-12. This indicates that the small gender gaps present in normal parliamentary life are greatly magnified when politics is performed for an audience. The risk is that these gender gaps, which appear to be an artefact of stereotyping by parties rather than authentic gender differences, will then be internalised and seen as normal by voters, thus perpetuating stereotypical associations of some policies with women and others with men.

Table 3 provides a further illustration of the magnitude of gender gaps, by indicating how many questions are asked by a woman for each question asked by a man. A score of 1 indicates that men and women asked the same number of questions. A score below one means that women asked fewer questions; for example, the score of 0.5 for OQ on sport in 2007-12 indicates that women asked half as many questions as men on this area. Conversely, a score above 1 can be seen as a multiple; for example, the score of 4.58 for QG on youths in 2007-12 indicates that women asked 4.58 times as many questions as men on this area. We see that the larger gender gaps (the scores further above or below 1) occur mostly within the questions to the government.

Table 3: Questions asked by women for each question asked by men

Policy area	2002-7			2007-12		
	WQ	OQ	QG	WQ	OQ	QG
Agriculture	1.04	0.61	0.56	0.94	0.92	0.63
Business	1	1.01	0.44	0.9	1.55	0.99
Defence	0.87	0.71	1.66	1.02	2.27	0.84
Economy	0.93	0.81	0.76	0.89	0.93	0.70
Foreign affairs	1.17	1.31	0.85	0.96	0.85	0.84
Sport	0.59	0	0.40	1.18	0.5	1.40
State finance	0.53	0.54	0.35	0.96	0.59	0.79
Culture	0.89	0.94	0.53	1.00	0.41	0.98
Employment	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.07	1.04	1.00
Environment	0.91	1.48	0.62	0.90	0.74	0.84
Home office (interior)	0.86	0.79	0.46	0.87	0.52	1.02
Housing	0.76	2.90	2.54	0.98	1.60	1.01
Immigration	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.15	0.64	1.21
Justice	1.17	0.76	1.19	1.16	1.10	1.12
Politics	1.17	0	0.42	0.99	0	0.58
Public sector/ civil service	0.93	0.54	0	0.89	0	1.49
Cities and regions	1.06	1.03	0.78	0.89	0.89	0.48
Research	1.36	0	1.37	1.38	0.54	0.64
Transport	0.93	0.94	0.59	0.87	1.05	0.42
Education	1.06	0.80	0.87	1.13	1.62	2.11
Family	1.31	0	4.22	1.46	2.37	3.38
Health	1.12	1.15	1.90	0.98	0.92	1.63
Parity	1.91	0	3.47	n/a	n/a	n/a
Social affairs	1.12	1.03	2.90	1.30	5	4.14
Social security and solidarity	0.99	1.76	1.20	1.49	2.98	3.33
Youth	1.07	3.74	1.03	1.25	0.56	4.58

N= 216. Red = $p < 0.01$; yellow = $p < 0.05$. “Masculine” policies are highlighted in blue; “feminine” policies are highlighted in green.

The final major question explored here is the issue of the role of partisanship. The same issues that are associated with women are also frequently issues “owned” by parties of the left, such as welfare, health and education. Although parties of the right had a parliamentary majority for the entire period of 2002-12, they had a much lower proportion of female deputies than left-wing parties. As a consequence, the majority of female deputies belonged to parties of the left, while the majority of male deputies belonged to parties of the right. This might give the impression of a gender gap that is actually the product of a partisan gap. To control for this possibility, regressions were run for the “feminine” policy areas, controlling for both the sex and party of the deputies¹³. The results are presented in Table 4.

¹³ Additional control variables may be added to the next draft.

Table 4: Controlling for party

Policy area	2002-7						2007-12					
	WQ		OQ		QG		WQ		OQ		QG	
	Sex	Party	Sex	Party	Sex	Party	Sex	Party	Sex	Party	Sex	Party
Education	0.127	1.294*	-1.196	1.353	-.299	-1.299	0.097	2.969**	1.756	4.399**	3.680**	2.017
Family	0.199	0.051	-0.133	0.272*	1.65**	-.289	0.228*	0.032	0.587	0.402	3.061**	-1.502
Health	2.046	-1.060	1.740	-0.221	5.038**	-.628	-0.058	-0.744	-1.150	1.186	2.238	-0.326
Parity	0.370**	0.272**	n/a	n/a	3.552**	.484	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Social affairs	0.274	1.388**	0.256	-1.234	12.779**	4.49**	0.628*	-0.050	0.233	0.011	0.236	-0.109
Social security and solidarity	-0.013	-0.070	2.039	-0.296	0.335	-.049	0.734**	0.499*	3.446**	0.420	4.353**	-0.71
Youth	-0.058	2.013**	4.432**	1.549	0.02	0.333	0.013	0.042	-0.272	0.299	0.723**	-0.159

Values are unstandardised coefficients. **p<0.01; * p<0.05. Party is coded (left-wing 1, right-wing 0). Sex is coded (female 1, male 0).

A clear picture emerges in table 4. For written and oral questions, partisan effects are the main determinants of the differences that emerge. This is particularly the case for WQ 2002-7, where party is significant for most policy areas, while sex is significant only for parity. (Parity, along with its subsequent incarnation as social security and solidarity, has a significant and positive association with women at every point of measurement). Sex is a slightly stronger predictor for WQ in 2007-12. However, it is for the QG that sex really comes into its own. Sex becomes a highly significant predictor for most variables, while party effects wash out completely. This indicates that gender stereotyping is not limited to one party but occurs across the political spectrum, and is so strong that it overrides any partisan influence over policy priorities. Women ask more “feminine” questions to the government, not because they are left or right wing, but because they are women.

Conclusion

This paper asked whether men and women focus on different policy areas, and whether differences are exaggerated through the use of gender stereotyping. Data for written and oral questions across two full parliamentary terms indicates that most policy areas are not, in fact, very gendered. There are almost no gender gaps on “gender-neutral” policy areas, and gaps on “masculine” policy areas are small and inconsistent. Even in “feminine” policy areas, consistent gender gaps emerged only on areas pertaining directly to women’s rights. This finding indicates that women substantively represent other women, and are much more mobilised than men in the defence of women’s interests, confirming claims in the literature that women do need female politicians to represent their gendered interests (Campbell et al 2010). However, the lack of sustained gender gaps in other policy areas indicates that the sex of deputies does not significantly alter the agenda except for policies directly concerned with women.

The highly visible questions to the government, on the other hand, contain significant gender gaps across a range of traditionally “feminine” policy areas, indicating that while women might be trying to cover the full range of policies, they are still expected to be the public face of “feminine” policies. The gender gaps are dramatically larger for QG than for WQ or OQ, indicating that small differences between men and women are being greatly exaggerated for public consumption. The gaps cannot be explained by ideological differences between the parties, and appear instead to be the result of stereotypical assumptions about which sex would best represent which issue. These assumptions feed into other aspects of political life, such as committee allocations¹⁴ and ministerial portfolios. As there is no evidence that these extensive gaps are driven by actual differences between men and women, we must conclude that they are driven by social norms and gender stereotypes. These norms have such a strong hold in political life that parties find themselves reproducing these norms even when they seek to avoid doing so. For example, one left-wing deputy claimed that his party tried to ensure that questions relating to women’s rights were not asked exclusively by women, although the party’s working group on this area was composed of 12 women to three men, resulting in an inevitable imbalance.¹⁵ Moreover, the norms are self-

¹⁴ Please contact the author for a copy of a paper on this theme.

¹⁵ Male deputy, Opposition, interviewed by the author on 6 April 2011.

perpetuating, because they reinforce expectations amongst the public that men will focus on some policy areas and women on others. While the data on WQ demonstrates that this is not actually the case, the public will not know this; their impressions are based on what they see, which is the gendered questions to the government. The public may therefore be under the impression that representation is more gendered than is actually the case.

Appendix

The full codeframe will be provided in a later draft of the paper. Please contact the author for more information.

References

- Alexander, Deborah, and Kristi Andersen. 1993. "Gender as a Factor in the Attribution of Leadership Traits." *Political Research Quarterly* 46 (3): 527-545.
- Beckwith, Karen. 2007. "Numbers and Newness: The Descriptive and Substantive Representation of Women." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 40(1): 27-49.
- Bratton, Kathleen. 2005. "Critical Mass Theory Revisited: The Behaviour and Success of Token Women in State Legislatures." *Politics & Gender* 1(1): 97-125.
- Campbell, Rosie, Sarah Childs and Joni Lovenduski. 2010. "Do Women Need Women Representatives?" *British Journal of Political Science* 40: 171-194.
- Carroll, Susan J. 2001. *The Impact of Women in Public Office*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Celis, Karen. 2008. "Studying Women's Substantive Representation in Legislatures: When Representative Acts, Contexts and Women's Interests become Important." *Representation* 44(2): 111-12.
- Celis, Karen, Sarah Childs, Johanna Kantola and Mona Lena Krook. 2008. "Rethinking Women's Substantive Representation." *Representation* 44(2): 99-110.
- Childs, Sarah. 2008. *Women and British Party Politics: Descriptive, Substantive and Symbolic Representation*. London: Routledge.
- Childs, Sarah, and Mona Lena Krook. 2009. "Analysing Women's Substantive Representation: From Critical Mass to Critical Actors." *Government & Opposition* 44(2): 125-45.
- Dahlerup, Drude, and Lenita Freidenvall. 2010. "Judging Gender Quotas: Predictions and Results." *Policy & Politics* 38(3): 407-25.
- Dodson, Debra, and Susan J. Carroll. 1991. *Reshaping the Agenda: Women in State Legislatures*. New Brunswick, NJ: Eagleton Institute of Politics.
- Dolan, Kathleen. 2005. "Do Women Candidates Play to Gender Stereotypes? Do Men Candidates Play to Women? Candidate Sex and Issues Priorities on Campaign Websites." *Political Research Quarterly* 58 no. 1 (2005): 31-44.
- Franceschet, Susan, and Jennifer M. Piscopo. 2008. "Gender Quotas and Women's Substantive Representation: Lessons from Argentina." *Politics & Gender* 4(3): 393-426.

Green, Manda. 2004. "Women and the National Assembly in France: an Analysis of Institutional Change and Substantive Representation." PhD thesis, University of Stirling.

Huddy, Leonie, and Nayda Terkildsen. 1993a. "Gender Stereotypes and the Perception of Male and Female Candidates." *American Journal of Political Science*. 37 (1): 119-147.

Huddy, Leonie, and Nayda Terkildsen. 1993b. "The Consequences of Gender Stereotypes for Women Candidates at Different Levels and Types of Office." *Political Research Quarterly* 46 (3): 503-525.

Jalalzia, Farida. 2006. "Women Candidates and the Media: 1992-2000 Election." *Politics & Policy* 34(3): 606-33.

Kahn, Kim Fridkin. 1996. *The Political Consequences of Being a Woman: How Stereotypes Influence the Conduct and Consequences of Political Campaigns*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Koning, Edward. 2009. "Women for Women's Sake: Assessing symbolic and substantive effects of descriptive representation in the Netherlands." *Acta Politica* 44(2): 171-91.

Krook, Mona Lena. 2009. *Quotas for Women in Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press.

MacDonald, Jason A., and Erin E. O'Brien. 2010. "Quasi-Experimental Design, Constituency, and Advancing Women's Interests: Reexamining the Influence of Gender on Substantive Representation." *Political Research Quarterly* Online First, published 19 March, 2010.

Rétif, Sophie. 2010. "Entrer en Militantisme par les Associations. L'Engagement Associatif dans les Trajectoires Militantes Féminines." *Modern & Contemporary France* 18(4): 415-29.

Sapiro, Virginia. 1981. "When are Interests Interesting? The Problem of Political Representation of Women." *American Political Science Review* 75(3): 701-16.

Schwindt-Bayer, Leslie. 2006. "Still Supermadres? Gender and the Policy Priorities of Latin American Legislators." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(3): 570-85.

Sénac, Réjane. 2015. *L'égalité Sous Conditions: Genre, Parité, Diversité*. Paris: Presses de Sciences Po.

Swers, Michele L. 2002. *The Difference Women Make: The Policy Impact of Women in Congress*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Taylor-Robinson, Michelle M., and Roseanna M. Heath. 2003. "Do Women Legislators Have Different Policy Priorities than Their Male Colleagues? A Critical Case Test." *Women & Politics* 24(4):77–101.

Wangnerud, Lena. 2000. "Representing Women." In *Beyond Westminster and Congress: The Nordic Experience*, ed. Peter Esaiasson and Knut Heidar. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, pp. 132–54.

Wangnerud, Lena. 2009. "Women in parliaments: descriptive and substantive representation." *Annual Review of Political Science* 12: 51-69.