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Title: Organized out of Politics? Parliamentary Scrutiny of the Substantive Representation of Women in UK Governments' Legislative Programmes 1945-2012

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**Abstract:** The present analysis heeds recent calls for a refocusing and reconceptualising of the substantive representation of women (SRW). It examines the parliamentary scrutiny of Westminster governments' legislative programmes. The findings show that whilst the proportion of SRW legislative proposals remains small (<1%), there has been a substantial increase in the amount of attention/visibility given to the SRW. Interventions are made by male and female parliamentarians (numerically more men; proportionately more women). Whilst the number of actors making such interventions has increased over time, the more striking finding is the increase in the substance and detail of interventions. This suggests: (a). the extent, quality and focus of SRW interventions is shaped by the interplay of 'critical actors' and overall presence of women parliamentarians; and (b). 'critical actors' need to be seen more in terms of the key role of particular individuals rather than all who act to bring about women-friendly policy change.

Suggested Reviewers:



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Professor Afroditi Pina, PhD  
Associate Editor  
Women's Studies International Forum,  
University of Kent, Canterbury.

January 15, 2015.

Dear Professor Afroditi Pina,

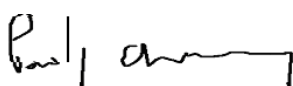
Further to your e-mail of 5<sup>th</sup> January, I am pleased to submit a revised version of my paper 'Organized out of Politics? Parliamentary Scrutiny of the Substantive Representation of Women in UK Governments' Legislative Programmes 1945-2012' for consideration for publication in *Women's Studies International Forum*.

I am very grateful to you and the third reviewer for the helpful and constructive comments. I have carefully and systematically addressed all of the reviewer's comments in the newly uploaded version of the paper. I have also uploaded a note ('Author's Response to Reviewers' Comments') – explaining how I have addressed each of the points.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,

With best wishes,



Paul Chaney  
[Chaneyp@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:Chaneyp@cardiff.ac.uk)

### Author Response to Referee's Comments

I am very grateful to the third referee for her/ his helpful and constructive comments. The paper is much improved as a result of responding to her comments. I've listed below the ways in which I've addressed each point. Apologies if it looks a little long-winded - I wanted to explain how I've carefully and systematically addressed every point. As noted, the paper is improved as a result and I have added an acknowledgement at the end of the paper. Once again - thank-you. (Note to editor: the following are the only changes to the paper - it is otherwise as previously submitted/ refereed)

### Reviewer #3:

[These are the reviewer's comments - author response follows in Courier font below]. 'On the whole, the piece is well organised and evidenced. It makes a good contribution to the field of SRW and I think the piece will be well cited. The author draws primarily from SRW frameworks developed by Celis/Childs/Krook but takes the work forward a) through empirical operationalisation; and b) by using complementary concepts drawn from policy studies. The key findings are that whilst the proportion of SRW legislative proposals remains small (less than 1%), there has been a substantial increase in the amount of attention/visibility given in FDDs to the SRW. Interventions are made by both male and female parliamentarians (numerically more men; proportionately more women). These interventions are overwhelmingly feminist in orientation. Whilst the number of actors making interventions has increased somewhat over time, the more striking finding is the increase in the substance and detail of interventions (as measured by quasi sentences). The author argues this relates in part to the increase of women parliamentarians from the 1990s onwards but overall seems to be arguing that critical mass is less significant than 'critical actors'. I think this would benefit from further development (I would read from the findings that there is at least an indirect effect of presence on the quality and focus of interventions re SRW?)'.

In general, the paper suffers from a lack of clarity about what is meant by 'critical actors' and why this concept is useful to the author. I have two concerns. (A) general: The author adopts the usage advocated by Celis, Childs and Krook - but the concept of 'critical actors' without further analytical development risks being merely descriptive (or even tautologous: actors are critical actors if their acts are critical?). This is a weakness of the work to date on critical actors (although some - eg Mackay, Chaney - attempt some differentiation of the ways in which actors can be critical) (B) specific: when the author does seek to clarify the definition, s/he uses Childs and Krook (2009) definition of individuals 'who act individually or collectively to bring about women-friendly policy change'. I am not convinced that this definition works as a blanket label for all parliamentarians who intervene (in a positive way) in debates about SRW. Chaney's work on Welsh and Scottish devolution makes the important point about individual champions (a small group of individuals who make disproportionate interventions over time). To undertake this analysis would potentially strengthen the argument about the key role of particular individuals (rather than every individual who intervenes). I can see the attraction of using terms prominent in current debates - but this might be the opportunity for the author to critique rather than adopt this underdeveloped concept.

## Author Response

This is really helpful. I've rewritten the Abstract to reflect the foregoing points. It gives much greater clarity to the paper's focus - and, crucially, underlines the contribution it makes to the field.

[Revised Abstract] 'The present analysis heeds recent calls for a refocusing and reconceptualising of the substantive representation of women (SRW). It examines the parliamentary scrutiny of Westminster governments' legislative programmes. The findings show that whilst the proportion of SRW legislative proposals remains small (<1%), there has been a substantial increase in the amount of attention/visibility given to the SRW. Interventions are made by male and female parliamentarians (numerically more men; proportionately more women). Whilst the number of actors making such interventions has increased over time, the more striking finding is the increase in the substance and detail of interventions. This suggests: (a). the extent, quality and focus of SRW interventions is shaped by the interplay of 'critical actors' and overall presence of women parliamentarians; and (b). 'critical actors' need to be seen more in terms of the key role of particular individuals rather than all who act to bring about women-friendly policy change.'

In addition, I've added to the text in the analysis of the paper to lift out/ underline points (a) and (b) alluded to in the abstract - which come directly from/ respond directly to - the reviewer's comments. Examples of the added text include the following:

[In the Introduction (p.2)] 'Earlier empirical studies of women's representation have tended to concentrate upon the relationship between the presence of women parliamentarians and substantive representation - specifically, whether and how having women present as elected representatives translates into the SRW (see for example, Reingold, 1992; Childs and Withey, 2004; Chaney, 2006). A core debate in this work has been concerned with the relative importance to the SRW of 'critical mass' (broadly, the overall number of women parliamentarians present in a given legislative setting) and 'critical actors'. The latter have been defined as those 'who act individually or collectively to bring about women-friendly policy change' (Childs and Krook, 2009, p. 127). As the following discussion reveals, the present analysis makes two original, empirically-based contributions to theorising in this area. It suggests that the extent, quality and focus of SRW is not a 'zero' sum game in terms of critical mass versus critical actors. Rather, the present argument is that interventions are shaped by the interplay of 'critical actors'

and overall the presence of women parliamentarians. Moreover, it underlines that 'critical actors' need to be seen more in terms of the key role played by particular individuals rather than all those acting to bring about women-friendly policy change'.

Also on p.8 I have altered Research Aim #5. To address the reviewer's point ("the use of 'critical actors' should be clarified (and, ideally, problematised)"), as follows:

'Accordingly, the following analysis presents empirical data to consider how, in the context of plenary scrutiny of legislative programmes, the patterns and processes associated with the SRW change with increasing levels of women's descriptive representation (Research Question 4) and it offers greater empirically-based clarity over what is meant by the term 'critical actor' and the role they play in advancing the SRW in parliamentary scrutiny (Research Question 5)'.

[I then (pp. 21-22) illustrate and emphasize that greater clarity is needed in the term of 'critical actors' with the following text/ extracts from the research data]: 'Thus, the cause of the growth in attention to the SRW in post-war debates is partly due to rising descriptive representation, the increasing presence of female critical actors, and also the changing nature of debating interventions. Crucially, there is considerable variation in the extent of debating interventions amongst critical actors (as measured by number of quasi-sentences). For example, whilst some critical actors made succinct interventions (e.g. 'I am in favour of women coming into the elected Chamber. We could improve our legislative processes by carrying out some very necessary reforms of the House of Commons itself' (Jennie Lee MP, Hansard HC Debates, 5 November, 1957, vol 577, col 55). Others made extended interventions. For example, Audrey Wise MP (Labour) described her approach in the following terms:

In 1988, I made an alternative Queen's Speech for women. Last year, I updated it and had to report a worsening of the situation of many women. Today, I listened eagerly for measures specifically angled towards women. After all, here are a Government on the verge of an election and women form the majority of the electorate. This is a Prime Minister who, just this week, spoke of his commitment to the advancement of women, yet not only has he still no women in his Cabinet, but there is not a single mention of women in the Queen's Speech, nor any measures directed specifically at helping them...' (Hansard HC Debates, 22 November 1988, vol 142, col 102)'.

Furthermore, I've revised the conclusion of the paper to address the reviewer's points - and notably, underline the way the paper's empirical analysis moves beyond earlier, general definitions of 'critical actors' to emphasize that the term more usefully applies to key individuals. Examples of the revised text include the following:

[Here this this the main, final concluding section of the paper that fore-fronts the revised focus/ key contribution of the study (p.26)] 'In particular, post-war legislative agendas have become subject to more detailed scrutiny. Data analysis of this qualitative shift makes two original contributions to theorising the SRW. It suggests that the extent, quality and focus of SRW is not a 'zero' sum game in terms of critical mass versus critical actors. Rather, interventions are shaped by the interplay of 'critical actors' and the overall presence of women parliamentarians. Moreover, it underlines the need to (re-)define 'critical actors' in terms of the key role of particular individuals rather than use the oft-cited, broad-based notion of all those acting to bring about women-friendly policy change'.

The observations about periodisation (pp17-18) are intriguing - and the visual representation of 'punctuated' narrative of SRW over time is useful. The author sets out the contextual factors (including inter party dynamics, extra-parliamentary activism, and global norms such as CEDAW). I think this could be further developed - in the text and in figure 2 - at a minimum noting levels of women's parliamentary representation and party in government. The significant rise of Cons engagement in the 2000s deserves more commentary ( and Childs work is particularly apposite here).

### Author Response

Again, this is really helpful. I have amended/added to the text to address the reviewer's comments (on page 24):

In the present case it suggests a synergistic dimension to the SRW in deliberative scrutiny. Thus, in most instances initial interventions on the SRW are made by critical actors from the Labour Party; in turn these may trigger subsequent interventions from the Right. Two related aspects stand out from the 'punctuated narrative'. First, the peaks and troughs - or cascading - do not significantly diminish during the 1990s and 2000s despite increasing levels of women's descriptive representation - both a Westminster and in government. However, they do become less pronounced 2009-2012. This coincides with the Conservative Party's attempts to reposition itself as more socially-progressive and equalities-oriented

than in the past (see for example, Childs and Webb, 2012). In turn, this points to the influence on SRW of a change in party leadership and associated attempts at re-branding.

Added citation:

Childs, Sarah and Webb, Paul (2012) Sex, Gender and the Conservative Party: From Iron Lady to Kitten Heels, Palgrave Macmillan.

The discussion of tropes is interesting but needs further development, particularly to explain/evidence the contention of a step change from the 1990s onwards in the framing of SRW.

Author Response:

Again, very helpful. I've added to the text to address this comment.

The step change from the 1990s onwards in the framing of SRW is reflected in the tropes. Just over three quarters (78.6 per cent) of the quasi-sentences making up the 'equal treatment' and 'anti-discrimination' tropes were made during or before the 1970s. In contrast, the majority of instances of discourse around 'rights' and 'diversity as a resource' were made during or after the 1990s. These shifts reflect changing conceptual thinking in relation to equalities, and a move away from basic Aristotelian notions of equality founded on equal treatment to more sophisticated thinking associated with substantive representation, mainstreaming and rights (Bagilhole, 2009). It also reflects changing social attitudes and cultural norms with a shift in emphasis from making the case for gender equality to discussing the means by which it should be achieved.

Added citation:

Bagilhole, B. (2009) Understanding Equal Opportunities and Diversity. Bristol: Policy Press.



Once again, I am very grateful to the third referee for her/ his helpful and constructive comments.

Submitted to: *Women's Studies International Forum*

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Title: **Organized out of Politics? Parliamentary Scrutiny of the Substantive Representation of Women in UK Governments' Legislative Programmes 1945-2012**

Key Words: **substantive representation, women, parliament, debate, legislative programme, critical actor**

**No. Tables: 3**

**No. Figure 2.**

**‘Organized out of Politics’? Parliamentary Scrutiny of the Substantive  
Representation of Women in UK Governments’ Legislative Programmes  
1945-2012**

**Abstract:**

The present analysis heeds recent calls for a refocusing and reconceptualising of the substantive representation of women (SRW). It examines the parliamentary scrutiny of Westminster governments’ legislative programmes. The findings show that whilst the proportion of SRW legislative proposals remains small (<1%), there has been a substantial increase in the amount of attention/visibility given to the SRW. Interventions are made by male and female parliamentarians (numerically more men; proportionately more women). Whilst the number of actors making such interventions has increased over time, the more striking finding is the increase in the substance and detail of interventions. This suggests: (a). the extent, quality and focus of SRW interventions is shaped by the interplay of ‘critical actors’ and overall presence of women parliamentarians; and (b). ‘critical actors’ need to be seen more in terms of the key role of particular individuals rather than all who act to bring about women-friendly policy change.

**Key Words:** substantive representation of women, parliament, scrutiny, legislative programme, critical actor

## Introduction

The substantive representation of women (SRW) has traditionally described the situation whereby politics enables women's needs and concerns to be reflected in public policy-making and law. As Hanna Pitkin (1972, p. 209) states, it can be conceived of as 'acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them'. Earlier empirical studies of women's representation have tended to concentrate upon the relationship between the presence of women parliamentarians and substantive representation – specifically, whether and how having women present as elected representatives translates into the SRW (see for example, Reingold, 1992; Childs and Withey, 2004; Chaney, 2006). A core debate in this work has been concerned with the relative importance to the SRW of 'critical mass' (broadly, the overall number of women parliamentarians present in a given legislative setting) and 'critical actors'. The latter have been defined as those 'who act individually or collectively to bring about women-friendly policy change' (Childs and Krook, 2009, p. 127). As the following discussion reveals, the present analysis makes two original, empirically-based contributions to theorising in this area. It suggests that the extent, quality and focus of SRW is not a 'zero' sum game in terms of critical mass versus critical actors. Rather, the present argument is that interventions are shaped by the *interplay* of 'critical actors' and overall the presence of women parliamentarians. Moreover, it underlines that 'critical actors' need to be seen more in terms of the key role played by particular individuals rather than all those acting to bring about women-friendly policy change.

The foregoing is consistent with calls for a refocusing of analysis of the SRW whereby, as Celis et al (2014, p. 152) cogently observe, it can thus be characterised 'an

active, multifaceted, and contingent process, driven by a broad swathe of actors with various views on group issues and interests' (see also Childs, Webb, and Marthaler, 2010; Montanaro 2012; Celis and Childs 2013; Chaney, 2014). A key aspect of this is anticipatory and is concerned with deliberation and criticality whereby political representation is conceived of as 'an ongoing process of making and receiving, accepting and rejecting claims—in, between, and outside electoral cycles' (Saward, 2010, p.36; Chaney, 2014). The present focus on the scrutiny of government legislative programmes is consonant with this 'turn' in conceptual thinking. It also links to work on agenda-setting (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993), symbolic politics (Brysk, 1995; Sarcinelli, 2008) and the formative phase of policy-making (Cf. Albæk, 1995). This is because government legislative programmes provide details of future Bills and policy (or, as Saward styles it, 'the making of claims') and, prior to implementation, these are shaped by parliamentary deliberation (- or the 'accepting or rejecting of claims' - to borrow again from Saward).<sup>1</sup>

Policy theory outlines how legislative programme debates and associated parliamentary deliberation have a key agenda-setting function (Schattschneider, 1960; Kingdon, 1984; Cobb and Elder, 1971; Cobb and Ross, 1997; Wood and Vedlitz, 2007). As Vliegenthart et al (2011, p. 369) explain, 'the basic premise of th[e...] agenda-setting approach is that political decision making requires political attention – taking the form of resources, time, personnel, etc. – and that *shifts in attention are a precondition for policy change*' (emphasis added). The present study is consistent with this view. It posits that a move away from androcentric policy-making towards more gender-equal practices is a desired form of policy change. Yet the advancement of the SRW depends upon governments paying sufficient attention to it in their legislative programmes. In liberal democratic systems it also requires opposition and back benchers to devote

sufficient attention to the SRW in parliamentary scrutiny as they press their policy claims on government. Both are prerequisites for policy change because legislative programmes are part of a process whereby, as Schattschneider's classic study notes, (1960, p. 57), 'some issues are organized into politics whilst others are organized out'.

As a burgeoning literature attests (for example, Banyard, 2011; Paxton and Hughes, 2013), women are foremost amongst groups traditionally 'organized out' of politics. Accordingly, this study heeds Celis et al's call (2014, p. 152) for 'a systematic, case-driven empirical approach to defining and exploring women's issues and interests and the sources and potential impact of claims making, where "representation" is recognized as an active and creative process with multiple intersecting dimensions'. This paper's findings are presented in two parts. The first centres on the attention afforded to the SRW in successive governments' post-war legislative programmes. The second analyses attention to the SRW in the plenary scrutiny of the programmes in parliamentary 'First Day' debates.

At Westminster governments' legislative programmes are outlined in a speech to the UK parliament. This is delivered by the head of state (and officially known as 'the Address' – but more commonly referred to as the Queen's or King's Speech). It is foremost amongst parliamentary agenda-setting mechanisms. Delivered at the outset of each parliament, and in the face of a plethora of competing policy claims on government, it sets out proposed measures to tackle the issues that the executive has deemed most deserving of attention. They are thus a powerful indicator of the priority the executive attaches to the SRW. Accordingly, the following analysis will examine how and to what extent governments' post-war legislative programmes are concerned with the SRW (Research Question 1.)

The SRW is integral to the pursuit of participative democracy and ensuring a voice for all citizens (Pateman, 1970). As such it is also at the core of measures to secure gender equality. As Kardam (2008, p. 88) notes, this contested concept can be defined as 'basic principles for... the prohibition of discrimination against women and the active promotion of equality between the sexes. [...whereby] the latter explicitly recognizes unequal power relations between women and men'. *Inter alia*, this requires equal resource allocation, rights and participation in representational structures and processes, including the conduct of public business and policy-making. Thus, governing parties' treatment of the SRW in their legislative programmes has a legal compliance dimension for it is an indicator of the future public policy compatibility with requirements under gender equality legislation. In the UK examples include the sex equality duties in the Equality Act (2010, Section 66) that require government to promote gender equality in the exercise of public functions (including policy making), and the Equal Treatment of Men and Women Directives of the European Parliament and Council (EC Directives 2004/113/EC and 2006/54).<sup>2</sup>

The SRW is also about symbolic politics and the promotion of cultural change (Brysk, 1995). As Sarcinelli (2008, p. 389) explains, 'substantive policy can be communicated, implemented, or averted by symbolic politics... [this] means the strategic use of signs to meet society's requirements of political orientation'. Applied to the SRW this perspective suggests that, in addition to policy outcomes and legal compliance issues, key importance attaches to the extent and manner to which the SRW features in parliamentary agenda-setting and deliberation - for it reflects the contemporary political values and the priorities of law makers. In other words, its

'visibility' is a statement by parliamentarians as to what issues are deserving of attention.

In order to engage with conceptual thinking on the SRW attention in the second part of the findings section (see below) considers parliamentary scrutiny of the governments' legislative agendas in the first day of - what in Westminster parlance is referred to as - the 'Debate on the Address' 1945-2012' (following the convention in Hansard - this is henceforth abbreviated to 'First Day' Debates, or FDDs).<sup>3</sup> These are dedicated plenary sessions that follow the Head of State's annual address to parliament setting out the government's legislative programme (Cf. McKay, 2003, p. 291). The first (- rather than subsequent days) of the Debate on the Address - is purposively selected here because of its general nature. It is concerned with critiquing the legislative programme as a whole. Thus, in these singular plenary sessions attention is paid to the Speech's entire content and orientation *in toto* - thereby setting out the merits and limitations of the measures proposed by government, crucially, revealing what parliamentarians feel are key omissions. For this reason FDDs provide comparability between parliaments as they are a standardised procedural mechanism of fixed duration and scope.<sup>4</sup>

This paper's use of deliberativeness to explore the SRW is apposite because attention to the language of parliamentary debates allows an appreciation of how policymakers formulate and construct problems and provide insights into agenda-setting power (Fischer and Forester, 1993, pp. 5-7). Whilst it is important to acknowledge that at times debate can be highly stage-managed, an advantage of discourse analysis over other indices of substantive representation (such as published legislative outputs and the signing of parliamentary motions) is that it is often fluid and



spontaneous (as in the case of FDDs when parliamentarians do not have prior knowledge of the Address outlining the government's legislative programme for the new parliament). This makes it suited to capturing the complex and contingent nature of substantive representation; not least because its immediacy lends greater transparency to how and whether participants are informed about, and disposed to advance, the SRW. As Mansbridge (1999, p. 636) explains: 'because the content and range of any deliberation is often unpredictable, a variety of representatives is usually needed to represent the heterogeneous, varied inflections and internal oppositions that together constitute the complex and internally contested perspectives, opinions, and interest characteristic of any group'. An additional key justification for the current focus is that parliamentary debate reveals the construction of meaning in a public forum. Thus a further aim of the following analysis is to explore how policy framing and issue-salience (or the level of attention) to the SRW develops in the parliamentary scrutiny of FDDs over successive post-war parliaments (Research Question 2.).

A further pivotal issue in the literature on women's political representation is who acts to advance the SRW? This is a vexed topic for different social groups have simultaneous multiple identities and different experiences and political priorities. Thus, Gutman and Thompson (1996, p. 55) maintain that the main barrier to achieving democracy is the 'self-interest' of the participants. Here problems arise when participants represent the interests of fundamentally different groups within the polity. Gargarella (1998, p. 179) explains this in terms that speak directly to the potential dangers and difficulties attached to women's representation in male-dominated legislatures. He refers to the scenario whereby elected representatives 'fail to put

themselves in the position of those that they are supposed to represent, and will not be sufficiently motivated to advance others' causes and cannot be trusted to do so'.

From a normative perspective proponents assert that in order to secure the SRW proportional descriptive representation is needed (Mansbridge, 1999). In other words the situation whereby women elected representatives constitute 50 per cent of the total and have an equal role in decision-making; a situation often styled 'the politics of presence' (Phillips, 1995). The following analysis engages with the foregoing debates by asking what are the gender dynamics and party politics of the SRW in post-war FDDs (Research Question 3.).

Allied to this, a core strand of scholarly debate on the SRW has focused on the relative importance of 'critical mass' versus 'critical actors' (Dovi, 2002; Bratton, 2005; Dahlerup, 2006). The former stems from work by Rosabeth Kanter (1977) who asserted that in male dominated institutions women may try to 'blend unnoticeably into the predominant male culture' (1977, p.973). Whereas, when women constitute a greater proportion of those present (a 'critical mass') they may begin to assert women's rights, call for gender equality and challenge the organization's male-oriented and norms culture. Applied to legislative settings this conceptualisation underlines the importance of women's descriptive representation. However, the SRW is not solely concerned with the number of women parliamentarians, rather it is also shaped by the presence of 'critical actors'. These are individuals who have a disproportionate influence in advancing women's representation compared to other parliamentarians (Dahlerup, 2006). Accordingly, the following analysis presents empirical data to consider how, in the context of plenary scrutiny of legislative programmes, the patterns and processes associated with the SRW change with increasing levels of women's descriptive

representation (Research Question 4) and it offers greater empirically-based clarity over what is meant by the term 'critical actor' and the role they play in advancing the SRW in parliamentary scrutiny (Research Question 5).

In summary, in the remainder of this paper attention first centres on the representation of women in post-war governments' legislative programmes. This is followed by analysis of the SRW in the parliamentary scrutiny of the legislative programmes ('First Day' debates). As noted, in conceptual terms the current approach is consonant with recent calls for refocusing and reconceptualising the SRW (Weldon, 2002; Celis, Childs, Kantola, and Krook, 2008) for it explores it in the context of plenary scrutiny of legislative programmes - a multi-faceted deliberative process related to agenda-setting and criticality, shaped by the interplay of key political actors, party politics and gender dynamics.

## **Methodology**

This study is based on content and critical discourse analysis and heeds earlier calls for the use of mixed methods in policy research (Jütersonke and Stucki, 2007). By recording the number of incidences of key words, ideas or meanings in a text, content analysis (Neuendorf, 2002) is a quantitative technique that allows an understanding of the salience of (or attention to) a policy issue (Topf, 1994). Allied to this, critical discourse analysis is a qualitative method that is part of an 'interpretative approach that places an emphasis on the language... in order that ideas move to the centre of policy evaluation' (Fischer 2003, p. 223). In the following discussion this is achieved by frame analysis (Rein and Schön, 1994). This allows exploration of 'collections of idea-elements tied

together by a unifying concept that serve to punctuate, elaborate, and motivate action on a given topic' (Creed et al 2002, p. 37). Thus, as Nelson and Oxleya (1997, p. 75) observe, frames are integral to deliberative scrutiny for they 'influence opinions by stressing specific values, facts and other considerations'.

The advantages of this study's mixed approach are threefold: 1. triangulation (this may achieve greater reliability of research findings, see Greene et al, 1989); 2. the use of multiple complementary techniques may extend and enhance the quality of data gathered; and 3. it avoids sole reliance on quantification which often fails to provide full insight into socio-political processes (Caracelli and Greene, 1993). The qualitative and quantitative methodological techniques were applied as follows. Electronic versions of the King's/ Queen's Speech and associated parliamentary 'First Day' debates were downloaded from the official website<sup>5</sup> and analysed using appropriate software.<sup>6</sup>

For the content analysis a series of key terms was used to identify parliamentary discourse related to the SRW (namely, signifiers: 'female', 'widow', 'woman/en', 'girl', 'gender' 'wives', 'lesbians', and feminine forms of nouns (some archaic) related to employment such as actress, school mistress, waitress, seamstress, manageress, usherette and so on). However, sole reliance on this method will fail to identify all instances of the SRW. For example, some topics concerned with the SRW (e.g. childcare, equal pay, maternity leave, or domestic violence/ abuse, or abortion) will not necessarily be recorded. To complement this, and to ensure comprehensive analysis, all incidences were logged of interventions on these matters not previously identified by the key terms. All were then entered into a database and descriptive statistics were used to analyse and describe the discourse.

It is acknowledged that a potential criticism of the present methodology is that, on one level at least, most generic policy proposals and associated debating interventions can be classified as being concerned with the SRW in that they affect women as well as men. For example, reference to transport policy or the economy. This is the case; but the present study follows existing work on the SRW (e.g. Childs and Withey, 2006) in that it is concerned with exploring *the way that parliamentarians act* specifically to advance the SRW by making mention of women's representation in overt or tacit acknowledgement of prevailing societal gender inequality. In other words, we are concerned with parliamentarians being proactive to advance the interests of women. This is because the present study examines *process of representation* in relation to two types of parliamentary mechanism (legislative programme speeches and FDDs). The problem of implicit or inherent representative benefits for different social groups in generic policy measures (wherein they are not specifically named or referred to) is one that confronts, but does not preclude, all studies comprising the extensive literature concerned with the political representation of specific constituencies; whether defined by 'race' (Saggar, 1991), (dis)ability (Percy, 1989), sexual orientation (Lax and Phillips, 2009) and/or class (Nelson, 1982). Thus the present approach is consistent with criteria advanced by Celis et al (2014, p. 159):

Interventions can be recognized as representative claims about women when the questions addressed are (1) directly constructed as being of importance to women, (2) presented as only affecting women, (3) discussed in terms of gender difference, (4) spoken of in terms of gendered effects, and/or (5) framed in terms of equality between women and men. These five criteria centre the investigation

on “women” as a category, eliminating more generic references that do not involve representative claims about women *per se*.

In the present study all database text extracts were subsequently divided into ‘quasi-sentences’ (defined as ‘an argument which is the verbal expression of one political idea or issue,’ Volkens 2001, p. 96). This approach controlled for long sentences containing multiple ideas. In turn, each quasi-sentence was subsequently classified using an inductive coding schema (Joffe and Yardley, 2003) consisting of key SRW policy frames. The latter were derived from the UN Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action – selected as an internationally-recognised ‘agenda for women’s empowerment’ (UN 1995, 7) in order to ensure key aspects of the SRW were covered. In addition, all references were coded using Reingold’s notion of ‘direction’; namely, whether the debating interventions were deemed to be feminist, anti-feminist or neutral (Cf. Reingold, 2000, pp. 166–77).

The timeframe of the current study (1945-12) was selected in order to allow comparison with existing studies of other aspects of the SRW over the post-war period and to present a longitudinal view over several parliaments so as to give insight into how the SRW develops over time, most notably in relation to increasing numbers of women Members of Parliament (MPs).

### **SRW in Post-War Legislative Programmes**

Earlier work has underlined the greater propensity of the political Left to advance the SRW (Childs and Withey, 2004; Chaney, 2012). The present findings affirm this and

reveal that the Labour Party accounted for over two-thirds (69.2 per cent) of post-war SRW legislative proposals in King's/ Queen's Speeches. This explains the significant increase in attention to the SRW 1997-2010, years when Labour was in government. Moreover, it provides some evidence of a reprioritisation of the SRW (in the three decades from 1945-1976 thirteen legislative proposals were made on the SRW. An equal number was advanced in the period since 1997; twice the earlier rate). Notwithstanding this, the present analysis also provides further evidence of the androcentric, male dominated nature of UK politics (Childs, 2010). Over the past seven decades there have been just twenty-six legislative proposals concerned with the SRW set out in 22 King/ Queen's Speeches. This amounts to less than one per cent of all post-war legislative programme proposals and reflects the fact that only a third of King/ Queen's Speeches contained one (or exceptionally two) legislative proposals on the SRW. It also reveals that attention to the SRW is broadly consistent with the level of consideration given to the substantive representation of other marginalised social groups. For example, disabled people have been the subject of 31 proposals (made in 19 Speeches); older people 28 proposals (in 27 Speeches); and lesbian, gay and bisexual people just one proposal in a single Speech.

The foregoing conclusion that these data provide evidence of the androcentric, male-dominated nature of UK politics does prompt the question: what number of references to the SRW in government legislative programmes would confirm the contrary case? (i.e. that successive governments' agenda were not male-oriented and discriminatory?) In response, it is argued that in a truly equitable scenario gendered analysis would be a feature of all public interventions, at least implicitly. For, as a large body of historical analysis and social science reveals, deep set patterns and processes of

gender-based inequality and discrimination pervade British society over the period studied (Cf. Lewis, 1992; Thane, 2010). For this reason one would reasonably expect a level of political attention commensurate with the task of remedial action and a redefinition of gender relations on the basis of equality. By any measure, the fact that SRW references constitute less than one per cent of proposals in post-war legislative programmes, shows how the SRW has effectively been marginalised in the work of successive post-war UK governments.

[Temporary Note – Table 1 – about here]

When the coverage of SRW proposals is analysed the majority are concerned with developing protection under anti-discrimination/ equalities legislation (42.3 per cent) (Table 1.). This is followed by proposals to promote women's economic independence/ social security (30.8 per cent) and those to advance equality in labour market (including equal pay) (19.2 per cent). The agenda-setting function of the Speech reflects the issue strengths of political parties. The Labour Party's normative vision of equalities is often predicated on state intervention. This is evident in the analysis, for its proposals have generally been concerned with so-called "blueprint" issues (Mazur, 2002) that concentrate on the overarching principle of gender equality to be pursued via legislative reforms aimed at transforming social practices and gender relations (see also, Atkins, 1986). Examples include the 1974 pledge that 'legislation will be brought before you with the aim of ending sex discrimination' (Hansard, HC Debates, 29 October 1974, vol 354, col 3)<sup>7</sup> and the 2009 commitment to 'take forward legislation to promote equality,



narrow the gap between rich and poor and tackle discrimination [... and] address the differences in pay between men and women' (Hansard, HC Debates, 18 November 2009, Vol 436, Col 1.). The latter resulted in the Equality Act (2010) which, notwithstanding a number of limitations, has been described as 'the core of the new approach to transformative equality' (Hepple 2010, p.21).

In the case of the Conservative Party, reflecting its general *laissez faire* position on equality of opportunity, the legislative proposals made during its time in office are of a less ambitious nature. They have mainly been concerned with amending social welfare provision. Examples include: 'a Bill will be introduced to remove unnecessary obstacles to employment, particularly in relation to women and young people, and to alter training arrangements' (Hansard, HC Debates, 22 November 1988, vol 142, Col 3) and, 'legislation will be introduced to equalise the state pension age between men and women and to improve security, equality and choice in non-state pensions' (Hansard, HC Debates, 16 November 1994, vol 149, Col 2). Given the longstanding marginalization of the SRW in post-war legislature programmes it is germane to ask, how parliament has responded. Accordingly, attention now turns to the patterns and processes of deliberative scrutiny in First Day Debates.

### **SRW in 'First Day' Debates**

The data reveal that there has been a significant increase in the attention paid to the SRW in First Day Debate scrutiny (Research Question 1.). For example, when the first and last twenty-five years of the post-war period are compared the number of SRW interventions almost doubles (Figure 1). Thus, under a third (30.7 per cent) of post-war

FDD interventions on the SRW were made prior to 1970; 40 per cent over the next thirty years; and almost a third (29.3 per cent) over the decade to 2012. There are three principal explanations for this increase. The first is cultural. The dearth of SRW interventions prior to 1970 in part reflects the gender norms and sex discrimination prevalent at the time (Brook, 2001). The second is the impact of feminist activism and gender equality legislation (Cochrane, 2012); and the third is the result of increased numbers of women in political parties and legislatures changing institutional norms and priorities (Mateo-Diaz, 2005).

[Temporary Note – Figure 1 about here]

In critiquing successive governments' programmes MPs' interventions in FDDs centred on the longstanding marginalisation of women in the conduct of public business. Thus, 'equal representation' is the frame that accounted for approximately a fifth of all-party SRW interventions (19.5 per cent; e.g. 'Secondly, I welcome the Equality Bill, for which we have been waiting for a long time. It is definitely the handiwork of the Leader of the House, the Minister for Women and Equality. The Bill will not introduce affirmative action, but it will deal with the remaining equality issues that we need to deal with [in...] our public bodies', Keith Vaz MP, Hansard, 3 December 2008, Column 60). On-going patterns of sex discrimination and inequality in the labour market (compare Gottfried, 2012) was the second-ranked frame, it also accounted for almost a fifth of interventions (18.1 per cent; e.g. 'I also believe strongly that the Government need to use much more of the language of equality and social inclusion. The notions of equality and social

inclusion are not merely nice things that we do for other people, but are about the welfare and competitiveness of our country as a whole. If we have a country that does not include everybody because of a lack of social inclusion or equality, we will exclude people from the labour market, and we will exclude people who could make a significant contribution to our society', Barbara Roche MP, Hansard HC Debate, 26 November 2003, c48). 'Miscellaneous' interventions aside (17 per cent), it was followed by 'promoting women's economic independence/ social security' (14.4 per cent; e.g. '[the] point which I would like to see included in the Queen's Speech, is legislation to remove discrimination against women in the sphere of taxation and social security. Here there should be no argument. It is nonsense that the wages of a man and a woman should be aggregated for the purposes of taxation', Edward Leadbitter MP, Hansard HC Debate, 30 October 1968). The latter reflects policymakers' faltering attempts to adapt the welfare state to gender changing relations in the UK. As Pascall (2012) concludes, it is an agenda that has signally failed to fully address women's developing welfare needs.

[Temporary Note – Table 1 – about here]

Over the decades studied here there are significant shifts in the framing of debate (Table 1). In part, these reflect the adaptation of government programmes to external shocks and events (Kingdon, 1984; Duncan, 2008). Thus, SRW references 1945-60 were largely a miscellany, often concerned with the aftermath of the Second World War (e.g. 'Some old women (*sic*) are starving themselves so that their husbands may have a greater share of the rations', Tom Brown MP, Labour, Hansard HC Deb 03 November

1953, vol 520, col 136). The development of the welfare state sees measures to promote women's economic independence/ social security commanding most attention in the 1960s (Lewis, 2012); whilst the 1970s and 1980s witnessed a significant rise in interventions on equality in the labour market (rising from 25.6 to 41.6 per cent of all interventions 1960-1979). In part, this is a function of economic restructuring and the impact of EEC Directives on gender equality in employment (Holloway, 2005). An overarching characteristic of these earlier interventions is a frequent concern to make the case for the SRW; in other words challenging the prevailing norms with 'critical actor' parliamentarians explaining to their peers why the SRW is necessary and/or desirable. A significant rise in efforts to address women's marginalisation in public decision-making is evident after 1990. This is the result of earlier second wave feminist activism and increasing awareness of gender equality following developments such as EC equality Directives and the UK's accession (circa 1986) to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination to Women (CEDAW).<sup>8</sup> As Baldez (2011, p, 419) notes the latter 'provides a way to think about women's interests that is broad, inclusive, and sufficiently flexible to reflect changes over time'. Thus, by 1990 this frame accounted for approximately a third of all debating interventions (29.1 and 33.8 per cent in the 1990s and 2000s, respectively). Notably, there is a qualitative change in the post-1990 interventions. The general emphasis switches from underlining why the SRW is necessary to how it might be implemented.

As in the case of King/ Queen's Speeches (see above), the political Left's traditional lead on equalities reform (Dickens, 2007) is affirmed by the present FDD data. Labour account for over two-thirds of interventions to advance the SRW in First Day Debates (69 per cent). This is followed by the Conservatives (21 per cent), and the

Liberals/ Liberal Democrats (10 per cent). For Labour the mean number of SRW quasi-sentences per decade increases from 5.4 in the 1940s to 21 in the 2010s. For the Conservatives there is also an increase; from 0.4 in the 1940s to 2.0 in the 2000s. Notably, reflecting the Right-of-centre Conservative Party's attempts to reposition itself as more progressive/ centrist than in the past (Kerr et al, 2011) it is during the current parliament that there has been a manifold increase in the attention it has afforded to the SRW (it has risen from a mean of 2 SRW interventions per FDD in the 2000s, to 13 in this decade). In contrast to the two main parties, the Liberals/ Liberal Democratic Party, has played a limited role in FDD interventions. The Party's 1940s' mean is just 0.1 quasi-sentence per FDD. This increases to 2.1 in the current decade.

Qualitative analysis reveals the aspects of the SRW that parties have been most concerned with in their plenary scrutiny of legislative programmes. In this regard there are contrasts in the framing practices of Labour and the Conservatives. For the former 'equality in labour market/ equal pay' was the frame given greatest attention (20 per cent). Examples include: 'we support the principle of equal pay for men and women for work of equal value. How about that? Is that going to be implemented?' (Geoffrey Bing MP, Hansard HC Debates 9 June, 1955, vol 542, Col 166) and; 'the exclusion of any mention of equal pay for women will not pass unnoticed' (Shirley Summerskill MP, HC Deb, 21 April 1966, vol 727, Col 49). This was followed by 'equal representation (including participation in decision making)' (19.5 per cent). For example: 'What about including ladies as well as men?'... If we increase the status of the House of Lords and introduce into it men and women who, in their own persons, have more distinction, then we are adding power to the House of Lords' (Jennie Lee MP, Hansard HC Debates, 5 November, 1957, vol 577, col 55) and; 'I think that there is real problem with our

representativeness. Thanks to Labour's policy of all-women shortlists, we have many more women in the House' (Ian McShane MP, Hansard HC Debates, 18 November, 2009, Col 69). The next most employed frame was 'promoting women's economic independence/ social security' (16.3 per cent). Here particular attention was paid to the need to 'overhaul and to modernise the pension system, and especially to ensure a fairer deal for women' (Rosemary McKenna MP, Hansard HC Debates, 15 November, 2006: Column 13). For the Conservatives, the lead frame was 'promoting women's economic independence/ social security' (22.4 per cent) followed by 'equal representation' (16.7 per cent).

Three measures emerge from the data that underline the disproportionate role of male critical actors in advancing the SRW post-war FDDs. First, male MPs account for 67.3 of all MPs speaking on the SRW in the First Day debates over the period 1945-2012. Second, when the debating interventions (specifically, the number of SRW quasi-sentences) on the SRW are disaggregated by sex, male MPs account for 72.9 per cent. Third, the proportion of each party's SRW quasi-sentences made by women is: Labour 39.3 per cent, Conservatives 22.4 per cent, and Liberals/ Liberal Democrats 10.4 per cent. However, it is important to note that whilst the absolute numbers show men intervening more, when weighed against the percentages of women and men in parliament, proportionately women are much more likely to advance the SRW.

Westminster has a poor record on the descriptive representation of women. To date a total of just 364 women have *ever* been elected to the House of Commons; just 7.4 per cent of the historical total of all MPs (ERS 2013, unpaginated). Over the period studied the number of women MPs increased from 24 in 1945 (3.8 per cent of all MPs) to 143 in 2010 (22 per cent). Allied to this, as noted, a key and enduring issue in the

research literature on the SRW is the relationship between women's descriptive and substantive representation. Existing studies describe it as probabilistic rather than deterministic (Chaney, 2006, 2008). A key issue is the role that numerical strength plays in enabling parliamentarians to act for women (Research Question 4.). In the present case the increasing level of women's descriptive representation at Westminster correlates with the promotion of the SRW in First Day Debates (coefficient 0.5961); in other words as the number of women MPs increases, so does the number of SRW FDD interventions. However, as the following reveals, the increased attention to the SRW does not solely stem from the existence of a critical mass but also the interventions of critical actors.

The latter can be defined as 'legislators who initiate policy proposals on their own and/or embolden others to take steps to promote policies for women, regardless of the numbers of female representatives' (Childs and Krook, 2009, p. 138). According to such a definition MPs intervening to promote the SRW in First Day Debates can be classed as critical actors. A key question that follows on from this is what do the present data tell us about the relationship between critical actors and the level of attention paid to the SRW in First Day debates? (Research Question 5.). They show that, over the period studied, the mean number of critical actors of both sexes participating in FDDs has not increased to the same extent as the number of SRW quasi-sentences (the mean for the 1950s and 1960s is 4 MPs participating in FDDs, compared to 4.8 for the 2000s).

The explanation for the increased attention to the SRW is, in part, an increase in the number of female critical actors over time (the mean for the 1950s and 1960s is just 0.71 participating per FDD, compared to 2.4 for the 2000s). Yet it is also the result of a qualitative shift in the nature of debating interventions. These have become more

detailed and extensive over time. Thus the mean number of quasi-sentences per debating intervention in the 1950s and 1960s is just 1.8 per FDD, compared to 3.9 for the 2000s. Thus, the cause of the growth in attention to the SRW in post-war debates is partly due to rising descriptive representation, the increasing presence of female critical actors, and also the changing nature of debating interventions. Crucially, there is considerable variation in the extent of debating interventions amongst critical actors (as measured by number of quasi-sentences). For example, whilst some critical actors made succinct interventions (e.g. 'I am in favour of women coming into the elected Chamber. We could improve our legislative processes by carrying out some very necessary reforms of the House of Commons itself' (Jennie Lee MP, Hansard HC Debates, 5 November, 1957, vol 577, col 55). Others made extended interventions. For example, Audrey Wise MP (Labour) described her approach in the following terms:

In 1988, I made an alternative Queen's Speech for women. Last year, I updated it and had to report a worsening of the situation of many women. Today, I listened eagerly for measures specifically angled towards women. After all, here are a Government on the verge of an election and women form the majority of the electorate. This is a Prime Minister who, just this week, spoke of his commitment to the advancement of women, yet not only has he still no women in his Cabinet, but there is not a single mention of women in the Queen's Speech, nor any measures directed specifically at helping them...' (Hansard HC Debates, 22 November 1988, vol 142, col 102).

These findings are significant in a number of ways. They confirm that critical mass is not essential for the SRW (in the present case, the data for the years to 1983 show how the



SRW occurred despite women elected representatives constituting less than five per cent of all MPs). They also show that the advancement of the SRW in First Day Debates takes place as the result of interventions by both male and female critical actors. In addition, increased attention to the SRW has been supported by the presence of more female critical actors and a change in the nature of debating interventions. This adds to earlier work (Chaney, 2006, 2012) highlighting the role of key individuals amongst those that have broadly been dubbed ‘critical actors’ on account of acting to bring about women-friendly policy change. The present data analysis shows that within this grouping key individuals have greater impact owing to the qualitative nature of their actions. Specifically, their debating interventions are characterised by greater substance and detail.

[Temporary Note – Table 2 – about here]

The growth in attention to the SRW has also involved shifts in framing over the post-war period (Table 2). The key changes are increases in the attention paid to anti-discrimination/ equality measures (+18 percentage points); representation (+11.8 percentage points); and childcare (+8.6 percentage points). In contrast, consideration of a range of frames declined. These include equality in the labour market; economic independence/ social security; and civil and political rights. The significant decline in ‘miscellaneous’ interventions (-34.4 percentage points) again underlines the way that the scrutiny associated with the SRW is becoming more focused on representation and rights.

[Temporary Note –Figure 2 about here]

Further insight into the substantive representation of women is provided by the inter-party dynamics of plenary scrutiny (Figure 2). When SRW interventions are charted over time there is a correlation between the main parties (coefficient 0.615); in other words the trend of SRW interventions (i.e. the number made in each FDD plotted over time) by one party is broadly matched by its rivals.<sup>9</sup> In this way the longitudinal profile of post-war SRW interventions describes a ‘punctuated narrative’ where there are episodes of heightened cross-party attention interspersed with periods of reduced focus. This reveals a modified form of what Jones and Baumgartner (2005) describe as ‘cascading’ - to be a feature of the SRW in First Day Debates. This is, ‘one of the explanatory mechanisms of the punctuated character of many policy agendas, [...that] can partly account for... irregular but significant upsurges in attention’ (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005, p. 143). In the present case it suggests a synergistic dimension to the SRW in deliberative scrutiny. Thus, in most instances initial interventions on the SRW are made by critical actors from the Labour Party; in turn these may trigger subsequent interventions from the Right. Two related aspects stand out from the ‘punctuated narrative’. First, the peaks and troughs – or cascading - do not significantly diminish during the 1990s and 2000s despite increasing levels of women’s descriptive representation – both at Westminster and in government. However, they do become less pronounced 2009-2012. This coincides with the Conservative Party’s attempts to reposition itself as more socially-progressive and equalities-oriented than in the past

(see for example, Childs and Webb, 2012). In turn, this points to the influence on SRW of a change in party leadership and associated attempts at re-branding.

It should be noted that when coded for direction the vast majority of FDD interventions were feminist in orientation. Four per cent were neutral (procedural references) and under one per cent were anti-feminist. All of the latter came from the political Right. For example, 'Will my right hon. Friend consider holding a debate next week on equal opportunities, in the light of a flagrant example of sex discrimination in my constituency: the national imposition of a women-only shortlist on my constituency Labour Party? (Jacques Arnold MP, Conservative, Hansard HC Debates, 16 Nov 1995, Col 119). The limited number of anti-feminist interventions reveals that First Day Debates are not an institutional mechanism favoured by those opposed to gender-equal politics and promoting the SRW. More significantly, this may be indicative of a shift in political working - whereby overt statements opposing gender equality may no longer be culturally acceptable. In consequence emphasis may have shifted to covert and/or less obvious strategies of resistance.

Final insight into the SRW in First Day Debates is provided by qualitative analysis of tropes (Table 3). These are reoccurring terms and meanings in the political discourse, defined by Fischer and Forrester (1993, p. 117) as 'figures of speech and argument that give persuasive power to larger narratives [including policy frames] of which they are part'. The leading one was disappointment (e.g. 'many sections of our community will be grievously disappointed by the omissions from the Gracious Speech', Will Owen MP, Hansard HC Debates, 27 October 1959, vol 612, Col 178; and 'I am as disappointed with the Prime Minister's speech as I am with the speech of Her Majesty the Queen, for which the Prime Minister is responsible... it has undertaken not to fight

against unequal pay', Horace King MP, Labour, Hansard HC Debates, 31 October 1961, vol 648, col 144). Unfulfilled commitments and broken promises was a further reoccurring trope. Examples include: 'earlier this week the Prime Minister revealed his deeply held conviction that it is necessary to further the equality of women in our society. If that was a firm pledge, why are there no legislative proposals in the Queen's Speech to further women's equality, such as a proposal to introduce universal child care?' (Dawn Primarolo MP, Labour, Hansard HC Debates, 31 October 1991, vol 198, col 109). Highlighting negative consequences of androcentric practices was a further trope (e.g. 'nothing in the Gracious Speech or in the Prime Minister's explanation of it will be of any benefit to women. Much of the Gracious Speech is positively and chillingly damaging to women' Audrey Wise MP, Labour, Hansard HC Debates, 22 November 1988, vol 142, col 102). The step change from the 1990s onwards in the framing of SRW is reflected in the tropes. Just over three quarters (78.6 per cent) of the quasi-sentences making up the 'equal treatment' and 'anti-discrimination' tropes were made during or before the 1970s. In contrast, the majority of instances of discourse around 'rights' and 'diversity as a resource' were made during or after the 1990s. These shifts reflect changing conceptual thinking in relation to equalities, and a move away from basic Aristotelian notions of equality founded on equal treatment to more sophisticated thinking associated with substantive representation, mainstreaming and rights (Bagilhole, 2009). It also reflects changing social attitudes and cultural norms with a shift in emphasis from making the case for gender equality to discussing the means by which it should be achieved.

## **Discussion**

The foregoing analysis shows institutional sexism (Cf. Reitman, 1975; Anthony, 1980)<sup>10</sup> to be a feature of successive UK governments' legislative programmes in the immediate post-war period, for the substantive representation of women is either given scant attention or ignored. Here it is important to note that the dearth of references to women's representation *per se* does not support the conclusion that the executive agenda-setting practices at Westminster amount to institutional sexism. If they were applied to a gender equal society free from issues of inequality and discrimination their absence would not be problematic; generic policy statements would cover citizens regardless of their sex. As a large body of historical analysis and social science research attests, the key point is that deep-set patterns and processes of gender-based inequality and discrimination pervaded British society over the period studied (Cf. Lewis, 1992). Accordingly, one would expect significant attention to the SRW in governments' legislative programmes, yet prior to 1990 it is largely absent.

The present data show that it is only over the past two decades that there has been some evidence of change. Even so, the gains remain modest. Notably, the findings show how the SRW is advanced by critical actors of both sexes. The data also reveal that the greater level of attention to the SRW in parliamentary scrutiny seen over recent years is associated with an increase in women's descriptive representation, the number of female critical actors as well as qualitative changes in the nature of debating interventions. In particular, post-war legislative agendas have become subject to more detailed scrutiny. Data analysis of this qualitative shift makes two original contributions to theorising the SRW. It suggests that the extent, quality and focus of SRW is not a 'zero' sum game in terms of critical mass versus critical actors. Rather, interventions are shaped by the interplay of 'critical actors' and the overall presence of women

parliamentarians. Moreover, it underlines the need to (re-)define 'critical actors' in terms of the key role of *particular individuals* rather than use the oft-cited, broad-based notion of all those acting to bring about women-friendly policy change.

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<sup>1</sup> It is acknowledged that this does not always proceed in a linear fashion but may be subject to feedback, and iterations as policies are modified in the course of implementation.

<sup>2</sup> Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32004L0113> and <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32006L0054> [accessed 02.01.2014]

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<sup>3</sup> From 1952 onwards, the Hansard records of the Debate on the Address denote the opening day as the 'First Day' debate. See for example:

[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1952/nov/04/debate-on-the-address#S5CV0507P0\\_19521104\\_HOC\\_46](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1952/nov/04/debate-on-the-address#S5CV0507P0_19521104_HOC_46) (1952) and <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm120509/debtext/120509-0001.htm#12050914000003> (2012) [accessed 02.01.2014]

<sup>4</sup> Subsequent days of the Debate on the Address were intentionally excluded from the present analysis because, in contrast to the First Day debates, they afford Members of Parliament the opportunity to scrutinize individual topics in detail. Thus, they are highly variable in nature and this precludes effective year-on-year comparison.

<sup>5</sup> <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/> [accessed 02.01.2014]

<sup>6</sup> Nvivo 9

<sup>7</sup> this led to the Sex Discrimination Act, 1975.

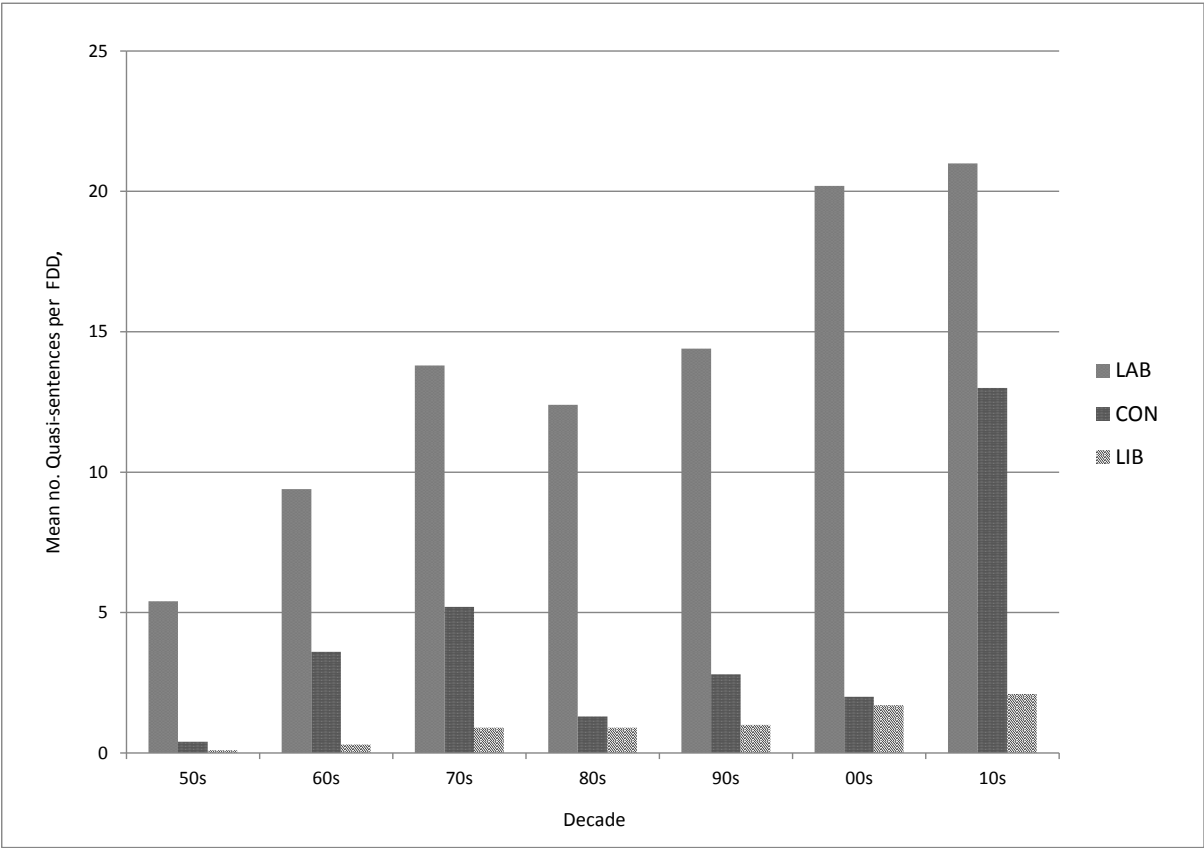
<sup>8</sup> The UK acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination to Women on 7 April 1986. Article 7 states: 'States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right ... (b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government...'.

<sup>9</sup> The equation for the correlation coefficient is:

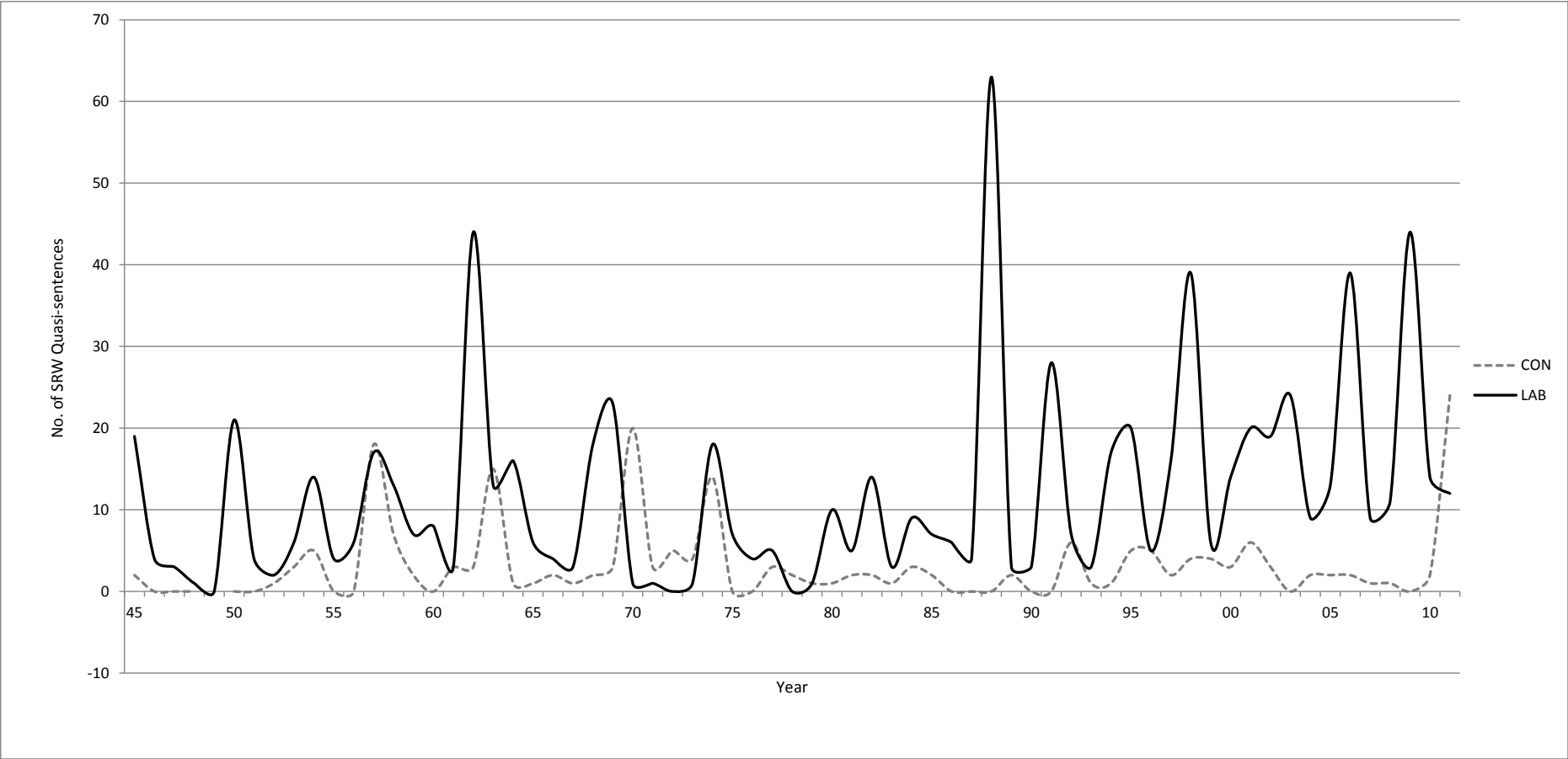
$$Correl(X, Y) = \frac{\sum (x - \bar{x})(y - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum (x - \bar{x})^2 \sum (y - \bar{y})^2}}$$

Where x and y are the sample means average (data series 1) and average (data series 2). (A perfection correlation produces an efficient of +1.00; a perfect negative correlation produces a coefficient of -1.00).

<sup>10</sup> 'The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their [sex]', which 'can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes, and behaviour, which amount to discrimination' – see Home Office (1999).



**Figure 1., Mean no. of Quasi-sentences per First Day Debate, by Decade and Party.**



**Figure 2. Cascading: The Punctuated Narrative of the SRW in Westminster First Day Debates 1945- 2012.**

Frame	Percentage of all Post-war SRW Proposals	Examples
Promote women's economic independence/ social security	30.8	'... early legislation to authorise increases in retirement pensions and the other benefits provided for... war widows' (1954); 'legislation will be introduced to equalise the state pension age between men and women and to improve security, equality and choice in non-state pensions (1994).
Equality in labour market/ equal pay	19.2	'Bills will be brought before you to promote improved industrial relations and to provide for equal pay for men and women' (1969). 'My Government will bring forward a Bill to promote equality, fight discrimination and introduce transparency in the workplace to help address the difference in pay between men and women' (2008).
Anti-discrimination/ equality	42.3	'Legislation will be brought before you with the aim of ending sex discrimination' (1974); 'Legislation will be introduced to combat discrimination in the provision of goods and services on the grounds of ... sex' (2004).
Equal representation inc. participation in decision making	7.7	'You will also be invited to approve a measure to permit the creation of life Peerages for men and women, carrying the right to sit and vote in the House of Lords' (1957); 'my Government will prepare legislation to allow political parties to make positive moves to increase the representation of women in public life' (2001).

**Table 1. The Substantive Representation of Women in King/ Queen's Speeches 1945-12.**

	<b>1945- 1960</b>	<b>1960s</b>	<b>1970s</b>	<b>1980s</b>	<b>1990s</b>	<b>2000s</b>
Equality in labour market/ equal pay	14.5	10.1	25.6	41.6	20.9	11.7
Anti-discrimination/ equality	0.0	2.4	20.0	10.9	13.4	18.0
Equal representation inc. participation in decision making	22.0	6.5	16.7	4.4	29.1	33.8
Promote women's economic independence/ social security	11.9	53.3	27.8	5.8	4.7	7.7
Civil and political rights	8.2	8.3	0.0	5.1	1.2	0.5
Childcare	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.9	8.1	8.6
Misc	43.4	16.6	10.0	15.3	18.6	9.0

**Table 2. Shifting Emphasis on Principal Policy Frames in All-Party SRW Debating Interventions in FDDs 1945-2010.**



Trope	Example
Justice	'Some day, please God, equal pay will extend to all kinds of labour, and I am certain that any setback would rouse the women of Britain and men, like myself, who believe in justice between the sexes, to a campaign which could destroy any Government which tampered with the principle of the rate for the job' (Horace King MP, Labour, HC Deb 28 October 1958 vol 594 col 142).
Freedom	'Because we believe in a free society, the Gracious Speech foretells Measures which will encourage more men and women to take an active part in public life... alas, true that there are some in another place who maintain that women are unsuited to politics' (Priscilla Buchan MP, Conservative, HC Deb 05 November 1957 vol 577 Col 18).
Equal treatment	'Why should women pay different social security contributions from men and have less benefit? There are different classifications of widowhood, and anomalies exist... I hope in taxation and social security some sense can be injected into the legislation' (Ted Leadbitter MP, Labour, Hansard HC Deb, 30 October 1968 vol 772 col 153).
Diversity as a resource	'We ought to have the best possible House of Lords, and, in my opinion, we cannot have that without the inclusion of women as Members. I am thankful and proud that it is a Tory Government which is now proposing to remove this political barrier' (David Llewellyn MP, Conservative, Hansard HC Deb 05 November 1957 vol 577 col 141); 'the present intake of Parliament, including some exceptional women, gives us a wonderful opportunity to strengthen the role of Parliament and overhaul its workings' (Giles Radice MP, Labour, Hansard HC Deb 14 May 1997 vol 294 cc45-151 45).
Rights	'Two more important issues are women's rights and prison rules' (Andrew F. Bennett MP, Labour, HC Deb 04 November 1981 vol 12 col 103).
Tackling discrimination	'the problem desperately needs to be sorted out; there is no doubt that it is an example of discrimination against women' (Gordon McMaster MP, Labour, HC Deb 16 November 1994 vol 250 col 137); 'Related to equal pay is my seventh point which I would like to see included in the Queen's Speech, and that is legislation to remove discrimination against women in the sphere of taxation and social security.' (Ted Leadbitter MP, Labour, Hansard HC Deb 30 October 1968 vol 772 col 53).

**Table 3. Principal Tropes Crosscutting SRW Debating Interventions in FDDs 1945-2012.**

**‘Organized out of Politics’? Parliamentary Scrutiny of the Substantive Representation of Women in UK Governments’ Legislative Programmes 1945-2012**

- Substantive representation of women (SRW) in parliamentary scrutiny of legislative programmes
- Substantial post-1990 increase in the amount of attention to the SRW
- Increase in the substance and detail of scrutiny
- SRW shaped by the interplay of 'critical actors' and descriptive representation
- Theorising ‘critical actors’ needs to be cognizant of actions of key individuals