

DIMINISHED GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE SWEDISH PARLIAMENT

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Abstract: As the number of women elected to the Swedish Parliament, the Riksdag, has grown, the differences between male and female representatives have declined with respect to the content of their political work. For example, social policy was once a typically feminine policy area, while employment policy was more typically masculine; today these two policy areas are highly prioritized by both women and men. Two theoretical perspectives are used to interpret the results (i) the theory of the politics of presence (Phillips 1995) and (ii) the theory of the politics of awareness (Young 2000). The theory of the politics of presence posits that women politicians are best equipped to represent women's interests, whereas the theory of the politics of awareness posits that politicians need to *consciously* relate to a particular group's social experience in order to represent that group's interests. The findings show that representative's sex/gender had great impact on the work in the Swedish Riksdag in earlier time-periods, but that has changed. Thus, the relevance of different theoretical perspectives is closely interlinked with the time-period studied. Data used is from the Swedish National Election Study Program (SNES) and the period covered is from 1985 to the present.

Key-words: gender differences, Swedish Riksdag, women's interests, politics of presence, politics of awareness

Introduction

As the number of women elected to the Swedish Parliament, the Riksdag, has grown, the differences between male and female representatives have declined with respect to the content of their political work. The study in this paper covers 1985 to the present day. The results show that gender differences in the Riksdag reached an all-time high in the mid 1990s when “feminine” and “masculine” patterns appeared in committee assignments, policy priorities, and attitudes towards concrete policy issues. These patterns have not entirely disappeared, but they are considerably less conspicuous today. For example, social policy was once a typically feminine policy area, while employment policy was more typically masculine; today—referring to the 2006–2010 Riksdag—these two policy areas are highly prioritized by both male and female representatives.¹

The decline in gender differences is apparent in most areas, but it is difficult to pinpoint the exact causes of this development. Diminished gender differences is partly a matter of generational shift: among older representatives, social policy is still a typically feminine policy area, but that is no longer true among younger representatives. The development also contains elements of a more general dissolution of the significance of sex/gender to the political mandate. Nowadays, it is relatively common that male politicians say that representing “women’s interests and concerns” is very important to them, which was not the case only a few years ago. The task to represent women’s interests and concerns is still more highly prioritized by female representatives than their male counterparts, but the trend indicates an increase among men and a decrease among women.

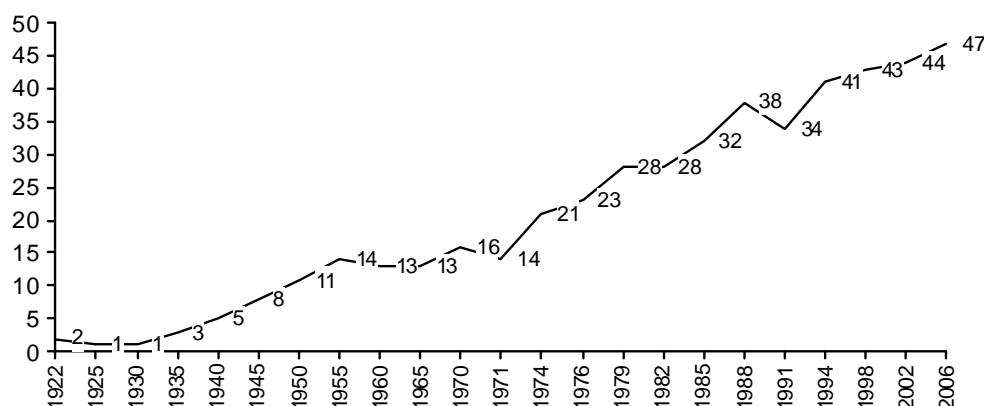
In this paper, I analyse gender differences in four areas: parliamentarians’ perceptions of their representative mandate or, put differently, their task definition; policy priorities; attitudes towards concrete policy issues; and committee assignments. The analysis includes a test of several explanatory factors alongside sex/gender, such as the MPs’ age, parliamentary experience, and party affiliation. Two theoretical perspectives are used to interpret the results (i) the theory of the politics of presence (Phillips 1995) and (ii) the theory of the politics of awareness (Young 2000). The theory of the politics of presence posits that women politicians are best equipped to represent women’s interests, whereas the theory of the politics of awareness posits that politicians need to *consciously* relate to a particular group’s social experience in order to represent that group’s interests. The findings show that in earlier time-periods had the representatives sex/gender great impact on the work in the Riksdag but that has changed. Thus, the relevance of different theoretical perspectives is closely interlinked with the time-period studied.

I will begin by taking a half-step backward to describe the long-term development of the number of women elected to the Riksdag. It took about fifty years before the development took off that led to the current level, 47 percent, which is very high by international comparison.² Thereafter I discuss the two theoretical perspectives brought forward previously: the theory of the politics of presence and the theory of the politics of awareness. The conclusion of that section is that the theory of the politics of presence, which is the most established, needs to be revised. This conclusion is further underpinned in the empirical part of the paper which starts by an examination of gender differences regarding representative mandate, policy priorities and attitudes towards concrete policy issues and then proceeds to an examination of gender differences in committee assignments. When possible, I compare results from the Riksdag with results from surveys among citizens. One thing stands out after these comparisons: equalization between the sexes is proceeding faster in the Riksdag than in Swedish society at large. In the concluding section I point to the urgent need to up-date the debate on “women’s interests.” The study covers more than 20 years and during that time, important changes have been taken place in the everyday lives of women and men.³

The numerical increase of women in the Riksdag

The first five women were elected to the Riksdag in 1921. In 1971 the percentage had reached 14 percent, equal to a rate of increase of 0.3 percentage points per year. Women's involvement in politics became a significant issue for all Swedish political parties in the 1970s. The Liberal Party and the Social Democratic Party began drafting plans toward increasing the number of women elected and, one after another, the other parties followed suit (Freidenvall 2006; Wängnerud 2001). Figure 1 shows the number of women elected to the Riksdag 1922-2006. The increase has been stable, apart from the 1991 election, when there was a downturn from 38 to 34 percent.⁴ Development in the last three decades has been about three times as fast as development during the first fifty years.

Figure 1. Number of women elected to the Swedish Riksdag 1922-2006



Notes: The results show the percentage of women in the Second Chamber (through 1970) and in the unicameral Riksdag. There were 230 MPs in the Second Chamber through the end of 1953, 231 in 1957 and 1958, 232 in 1961, and 233 thereafter. The curve for the unicameral Riksdag (1971 and thereafter) illustrates the situation immediately after the national election; before that, the situation is shown in five-year intervals. There were 350 MPs in the unicameral Riksdag in 1971 and 1974 and there have been 349 since. Source: Riksdag Members rolls.

International research findings point in the direction that conscious acts from party leadership is one of the most significant factors in explaining variation in the number of women elected over time, but also variation between parliaments around the world (Dahlerup 2006a; Kittilson 2006; Studlar & McAllister 2002; Wängnerud 2009). Swedish political parties have long employed recommendations to increase the proportion of women politicians, but statutory quotas were not introduced until the late 1980s, when the number of women in the Riksdag was already high. The Green Party, Left Party, and the Social Democratic Party now have gender quotas written into their party by-laws, while the other parties still rely on softer regulations (Freidenvall 2006; Wängnerud 2001).⁵

Sweden is not the only country with a high proportion of women politicians; the other Nordic countries have distinguished themselves in this area for a long time. And regardless of the significance of party action, Nordic developments should be regarded in light of the proportional electoral systems in these countries, which is more favourable to a high percentage of women than majority electoral systems like the British or American systems (Kittilson 2006; Norris 1996). The Nordic version of the welfare state promotes women's political participation because it provides practical opportunities for women to be politically active, but also because traditionally "female" issues like child care and elder care become public concerns (Hernes 1987; Rosenbluth, Salmond & Thies 2006). Women's organizations within the parties have also, especially in historical terms, been important to the Swedish

development, since they gave women a separate political platform on which to base their activities (Bergqvist 2000).

The theory of the politics of presence

Anne Phillips' book *The Politics of Presence* was published in 1995. The impact on research and public debate was immediate and strong. This theory posits that women politicians are best equipped to represent women's interests. From its basis in sociology, what the theory actually says is that everyday life experiences are significant to the formation of political views and behaviours. And it is because women politicians, to a greater extent than male politicians, share life experiences with women voters that they are presumed to be better representatives of women's interests.

The theory of the politics of presence has gained reasonable support in more recent empirical research (Bratton & Ray 2002; Diaz 2005; Lovenduski & Norris 2003; Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler 2005; Thomas 1994; Wängnerud 2000, 2009a). There are studies which show that the political views and priorities of women representatives are closely aligned with those of women voters. Typical examples are that women award higher priority to gender equality and social/family policy than men do. This does not mean that women, across all party lines, advocate the same types of solutions; the common denominator is that women politicians put particular problem areas on the agenda. Hege Skjeie, who was early to perform empirical analyses of the significance of gender to parliamentary process, uses the term *care and career politics* for the areas on which women politicians put particular emphasis. Skjeie's (1992) studies of the Norwegian Storting show that when the proportion of women MPs rises, questions pertaining to how people can successfully combine work and family become more central.

...and the challenge from the theory of the politics of awareness

The description above, that the theory of the politics of presence says that women politicians are best equipped to represent women's interests, is a simplification. But the basis of the theory is a belief that shared life experiences are a mechanism that will lead to changes of the political agenda and by extension the conditions of people's everyday lives. Phillips describes gender parity among policymakers as essential if women's interests are to be adequately addressed:

There are particular needs, interests, and concerns that arise from women's experience, and these will be inadequately addressed in a politics that is dominated by men. Equal rights to a vote have not proved strong enough to deal with this problem; there must also be equality among those elected to office. (Phillips 1995, 66)

However, Phillips writes nowhere that women politicians must be feminists or otherwise see themselves as the particular representatives of women; the idea is rather that if more people (women) come into the political assemblies who share the life experiences of women voters, it will affect which issues are addressed in policy. Whether or not representatives themselves think about their actions in this way, they act upon social experiences and not only on ideological standpoints.

The most interesting challenge to the theory of the politics of presence is formulated by Iris Marion Young in her book *Inclusion and Democracy* (2000). This alternative approach may be called the theory of the politics of awareness. The central idea in Young's book is that politicians need to consciously relate to a particular group's social experience in order to represent that group's interests. This theory does not rely on women politicians *per se*, but

rather on politicians with a change-oriented agenda. The following quotation shows how Young formulates this alternative point of view. The emphasis in the citation is on giving a voice to and expressing certain life experiences:⁶

First, I feel represented when someone is looking after the interests I take as mine and share with some others. Secondly, it is important to me that the principles, values and priorities that I think should guide political decisions are voiced in discussion. Finally, I feel represented when at least some of those discussing and voting on policies understand and express the kind of social experience I have because of my social group position and the history of social group relations. (Young 2000, 134)

The theory of the politics of presence and the theory of the politics of awareness should not be regarded as competing theories. Instead, what I want to bring to the fore is that the theory of the politics of presence needs to be developed. Empirical research shows that not all women politicians promote gender equality or particularly represent the situations of women citizens. Obviously, some male politicians are also active in these areas. Nor does the theory of the politics of presence provide any useful instruments for understanding the development that is the main thread of this chapter – that gender differences in the content of political work are shrinking in tandem with the rising number of women elected to the Riksdag.

The questions triggered by the preceding discussion are multilayered. The question is not only which politicians are best equipped to represent women's interests; intense discussion is ongoing in international research on the conditions that would enable women politicians to have particular impact on policy output. Joni Lovenduski (2005, 48-52) discusses a culture of masculinity, deeply embedded in political institutions, as an obstacle faced by women politicians. This culture is manifest in things like which employees are hired at the parliament, but also in the "unspoken" rules governing how politics will be run. Other scholars, such as Karen Beckwith (2007), emphasize that there are more women among newly elected representatives and that this ratio affects what kind of impact they can have. As a rule, it takes a certain amount of time for representatives to attain the most influential posts in a parliament. Discussions in feminist-oriented research also deal with the dynamic that may arise when women politicians influence their male colleagues. Skjeie (1992) has described the occurrence of a *spill over effect* in the Norwegian Storting: the high number of women elected has also helped bring greater attention to women's situations among male representatives.⁷

Many researchers have noted that the theory of the politics of presence is difficult to test (Beckwith 2007; Dahlerup 2006a; Dodson 2006; Lovenduski 2005). In order to pinpoint whether changes occur when women representatives become more numerous, one would have to follow the development the entire way from when women are few or entirely absent in the political assemblies, until the point they become numerous. The period on which I focus does not go that far back, as it begins in 1985 when the number of women in the Riksdag was 32 percent, until the present day, when the proportion is 47 percent. During this period parliamentary surveys have been regularly performed by the Swedish National Election Study Program that provide a good picture of the significance of sex/gender to the work of elected representatives.⁸

However, before the empirical analysis begins I will provide a theoretical definition of "women's interests." It is in this area that differences and similarities among women and men politicians will be studied. This format means that I, in parallel with outlining the development over time, will perform an empirical test of the theory of the politics of presence: Is it true that women politicians are better than men at representing women's interests? What factors are significant other than the representatives' sex/gender?

Defining women's interests

When Anne Phillips concretizes what she means by “women’s interests,” she zeroes in on differences between women and men with regard to child care, the division of paid and unpaid labour, access to positions of power, and exposure to sexual violence:

Women have distinct interests in relation to child-bearing (for any foreseeable future, an exclusively female affair); and as society is currently constituted they also have particular interests arising from their exposure to sexual harassment and violence, their unequal position in the division of paid and unpaid labour and their exclusion from most arenas of economic or political power. (Phillips 1995, 67-68)

Phillips emphasizes that women’s interests are connected to how societies are organized, which means that the precise meaning of women’s interests can vary over time and space. I should add that the notion of women’s interests is highly controversial and that critics have noted that there is risk of both elitism – that is, that certain interests will be ascribed to women from a top-down perspective – and essentialism, by which gender is seen as a biological given, rather than a socially changeable category (Dietz 2003). But even though the concept of women’s interests is controversial, it is a shared point of departure in much research on women in parliaments that women have certain interests in common and one solution for avoiding pitfalls like elitism and essentialism is to perform analyses that take into account variations among women and to contrast definitions based on theory against opinions expressed by women themselves.

This study is based on a two-step definition of women’s interests. First, I believe making sex/gender visible as a social category is in women’s best interests. As Swedish society is currently constructed, there are significant differences between the everyday lives of women and men. What I, and others before me, believe is that greater equality cannot be achieved by pretending these differences do not exist (Phillips 2007, 127). Making women’s specific situation visible is a first step towards change.

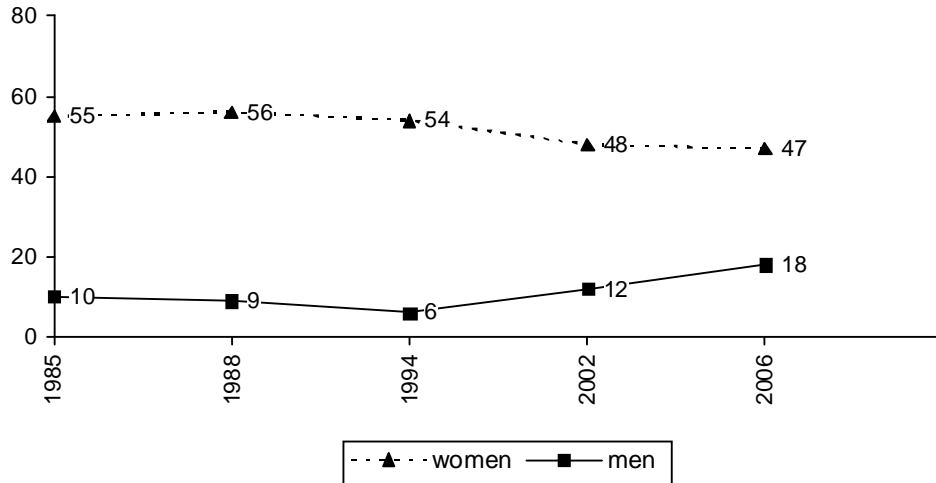
The second step towards change is that issues pertaining specifically to women’s situations are given greater scope on the political agenda. The core of the theory of the politics of presence has to do with change, “it is representation...with a purpose; it aims to subvert or add or transform” (Phillips 1995, 47). For the theory to gain support, the results must not show that women representatives simply take over certain areas from men, that it is a matter of division of labour, pure and simple; instead, it should be possible to interpret the indicators to mean that something becomes different when the number of women elected increases. In international research there is a much used distinction between descriptive and substantive representation relating to whether the number of women elected (descriptive representation) or the effects of women’s presence in parliament (substantive representation) is in focus. The theory of the politics of presence presents reasons to expect a link between descriptive and substantive representation (cf Wängnerud 2009a).

Empirical indicators: representative mandate, priorities and concrete policy issues

We will start the empirical analysis by looking at the development over time of MPs’ views on how important it is to them personally to promote women’s interests and concerns.⁹ The question asked in the parliamentary surveys does not specify which interests and concerns are meant here; it simply asks how important a number of duties are for the MPs personally. The question can be seen as an indicator on the first step in the definition of women’s interests applied in this study i.e., of making sex/gender visible as a social category. The results in Figure 2 show the percentages of male and female representatives who answered that

promoting women's interests and concerns was a "very important task" in the parliamentary surveys of 1985-2006.

Figure 2. *Representative mandate: Percentages of women and men in the Riksdag who answered "very important task" to promote women's interests and concerns*



Notes: The question reads: "How important are the following tasks to you personally as a Member of Parliament?" The MPs were asked to rank about ten representative tasks, such as "promote your party's policies;" "promote your region/constituency's interests/opinions;" "promote women's interests/opinions," etc. The response alternatives are "very important," "fairly important," "fairly unimportant" and "not at all important" task. Number of respondents: All: 1985 (100/217); 1994 (129/190); 2006 (149/170).

The data in Figure 2 clearly show the diminished gender difference: In 1985, 55 percent of women in the Riksdag, but only 10 percent of the men, answered that representing women's interests and concerns was a very important task for them (a difference of 45 percentage points). The corresponding figures in 2006 were 47 percent among women and 18 percent among men (a difference of 29 percentage points). In other words, the smaller difference is the result of changes among both women and men. However, as stipulated in the introduction to this paper, representing women's interests and concerns is still more highly prioritized by female representatives than their male counterparts. Diminished gender differences do not mean total equalization.

Table 1 shows the results distributed by party affiliation, bloc affiliation, age, and parliamentary experience for the years 1985, 1994, and 2006. The break down of the results makes it possible to pinpoint that changes have occurred mainly in two groups – the decline among women has taken place primarily among women MPs who belong to the parties within the centre/right alliance bloc (the Christian Democrats is an exception), while the upturn among men has occurred mainly among men parliamentarians who belong to the left/green bloc (the Green Party is an exception). Notably, the upturn among men has taken place primarily among older MPs. This is perhaps somewhat surprising but in the current Riksdag it is more common among men aged 41, or older, to include women's interests and concerns in their representative mandate than among men aged 40 or younger.

Table 1. Percentages of women and men in various groups in the Riksdag who answered "very important task" to promote women's interests and concerns

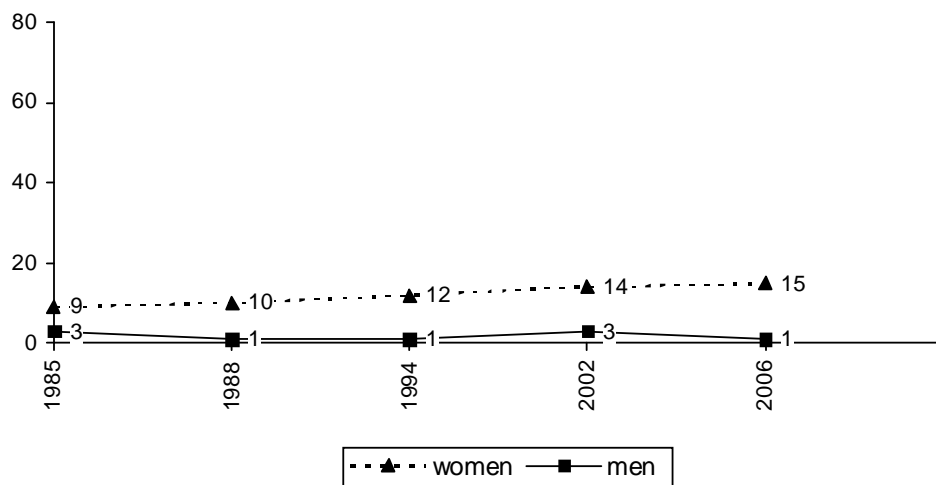
	1985			1994			2006		
	women	men	diff.	women	Men	diff.	women	men	diff.
Total	55	10	+45	54	6	+48	47	18	+29
Party									
Left Party	100	38	+62	80	20	+60	70	83	-13
Social Democratic Party	62	9	+53	56	5	+51	64	23	+41
Centre Party	69	4	+65	78	0	+78	50	12	+38
Liberal Party	28	7	+21	67	20	+47	23	17	+6
Moderate Party	38	8	+30	19	0	+19	19	6	+13
Christian Democratic Party	NA	NA	NA	25	10	+15	36	25	+11
Green Party	NA	NA	NA	50	25	+25	44	22	+22
Bloc									
Left/Green	64	13	+51	58	9	+49	63	28	+35
Centre/Right Alliance	43	7	+36	47	4	+43	28	11	+17
Age									
41+	56	11	+45	54	6	+48	47	20	+27
40 -	47	5	+42	56	9	+47	47	12	+35
Parliamentary experience									
Longer tenure	55	12	+43	43	4	+39	50	21	+29
Shorter tenure	55	8	+47	63	9	+54	43	14	+29

Notes: The question reads: "How important are the following tasks to you personally as a Member of Parliament?" The MPs were asked to rank about ten representative tasks, such as "promote your party's policies;" "promote your region/constituency's interests/opinions;" "promote women's interests/opinions," etc. The response alternatives are "very important," "fairly important," "fairly unimportant" and "not at all important" task Number of respondents: All: 1985 (100/217); 1994 (129/190); 2006 (149/170). Party (women/men): 1985 Left (3/16), Soc Dem (53/97), Cen (13/25), Lib (18/29), Mod (13/49); 1994 Left (10/10), Soc Dem (71/78), Cen (9/17), Lib (9/15), Mod (16/52), Ch Dem (4/10), Green (10/8); 2006 Left (13/6), Soc Dem (59/61), Cen (10/17), Lib (13/12), Mod (34/53), Ch Dem (11/12), Green (9/9). Age (women/men): 41 or older 1985 (85/198), 1994 (104/158), 2006 (113/122); 40 or younger 1985 (15/19), 1994 (25/32), 2006 (36/48). Parliamentary experience (women/men): Longer tenure in the Riksdag, i.e., at least two sessions 1985 (47/129), 1994 (54/100), 2006 (86/99); Shorter tenure in the Riksdag, i.e., freshmen, substitutes, and MPs in office for less than two sessions 1985 (53/88), 1994 (75/90), 2006 (63/71). (NA) = Not included in the survey. Source: Riksdag Surveys, Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg.

The next step in the empirical analysis is to describe developments over time in differences related to policy priorities. The question used in this section is an open-ended question where respondents have been able to use their own words for describing their priorities. The question asked reads: "Which policy area or areas are you most interested in?" Figure 3 shows the proportions of women and men MPs who cited "gender equality" as an area of particular interest. The gender equality category includes answers that, besides "gender equality," mention "the woman question," "gender quotas," "gender discrimination," or similar. This question is not perfect for capturing changes on the political agenda, but it is reasonable to believe that it indicates the kind of issues that representatives raise in their political work.

Most interesting to note is the flat result in Figure 3 which reflects that not much happened in this particular area – gender equality policy – between 1985 and 2006. While the proportion of women who cite gender equality as an area of particular interest increases from 9 to 15 percent, the proportion among men never exceeds 3 percent. The MPs' prioritizations of the gender equality policy area is actually the only indicator in this study that deviates from the general pattern of diminished gender differences over time. However, more detailed analysis (Table A1 in the appendix) shows a few interesting changes taking place. In 1985, newly elected women MPs stand out as being strongly committed to gender equality. By 2006, the situation has changed and commitment to gender equality is especially strong among women with longer parliamentary experience.

Figure 3. Policy priorities: Proportions of women and men in the Riksdag who cite gender equality as a area of particular interest



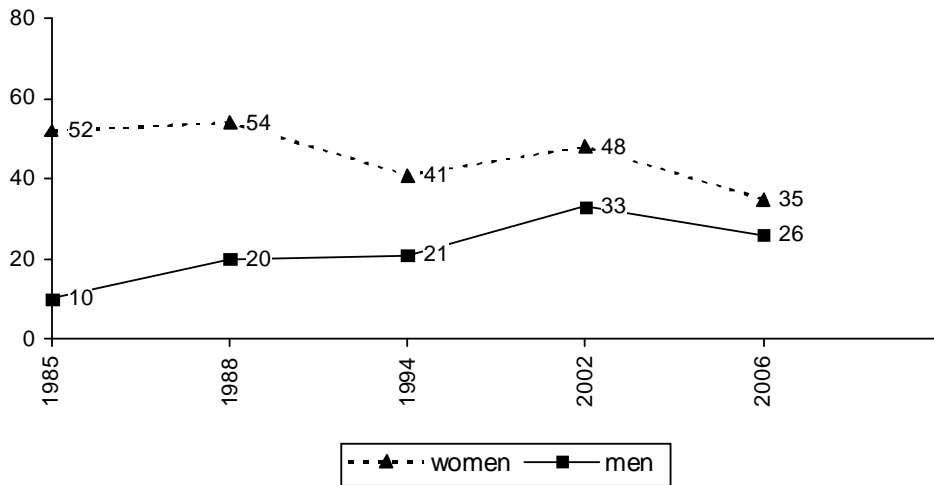
Notes: The question reads: "Which policy area or areas are you most interested in?" The question is open-ended and respondents were permitted to select any area or areas. Included in the gender equality category are the MPs who answered gender equality, the woman question, gender quotas, gender discrimination, or similar. Number of respondents (women/men): 1985 (102/221); 1988 (123/199); 1994 (128/186); 2002 (131/153); 2006 (154/173). Source: Riksdag Surveys, Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg.

Figure 4 shows corresponding results for prioritization of "social welfare" as a policy area. The social welfare category includes answers that address social policy in general and those that more specifically mention various aspects of family policy, senior citizens/elder care, or healthcare issues. The results in Figure 4 show incrementally declining gender differences. In 1985, 52 percent of women MPs cited a social welfare issue as their primary area of interest, while the corresponding figure among men was 10 percent (a difference of 42 percentage points). The corresponding figures for 2006 were 35 percent among women and 26 percent among men (a difference of 9 percentage points). A more detailed analysis (Table A2 in the appendix) shows that social welfare was a true line of demarcation between the sexes in 1985: regardless of party, age, or parliamentary experience, a significantly higher proportion of women than men cited social welfare as one of their primary areas of interest. The pattern is more complex in 2006. One example is that social welfare has lost its special status as a high-priority issue among younger women MPs. Among younger MPs in the current Riksdag, social welfare is actually cited as an area of particular interest by slightly more men than women.

There is reason to deepen the analysis of changes over time with respect to MPs' policy priorities. We already know that social welfare issues are especially significant to women voters when they choose which party to vote for. From that perspective, the reverse among women MPs may be cause for concern. Later in this chapter, I will compare the priorities of men and women voters. However the results in Figure 4 will be accompanied by a broader picture of policy priorities among MPs than that which emerges if focus is limited to the policy areas of social welfare and gender equality.

The analysis in Table 2 covers 1985, 1994, and 2006. For each year, the table shows the ten most frequently cited areas in response to the open-ended question about the MPs' areas of particular interest. The "social welfare" category has been broken down in this analysis; social policy, family policy, senior citizens/elder care, and healthcare are presented, to the extent mentioned, as separate categories.

Figure 4. Policy priorities: Proportions of women and men in the Riksdag who cite social welfare as a area of particular interest



Notes: The question reads: "Which policy area or areas are you most interested in?" The question is open-ended and respondents were permitted to choose any area or areas. Included in the gender equality category are the MPs who mentioned social policy, family policy, senior citizens/elder care, or healthcare as an area of personal interest. Number of respondents (women/men): 1985 (102/221); 1988 (123/199); 1994 (128/186); 2002 (131/153); 2006 (154/173). Source: Riksdag Surveys, Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg.

Two areas, social policy and employment policy (jobs), are shaded in grey in Table 2. The shading accentuates the convergence of women's and men's policy priorities over time. The same result is reported more formally in the coefficient of agreement between women's and men's rankings, also shown on the table, where a higher number signifies greater similarity between the rankings. The types of rankings shown in Table 2 are, of course, affected by current events. Unemployment is higher today than it was in the 1980s, and it is perhaps no surprise that jobs are an issue of prime concern in the Riksdag. However, I will postpone any more far-reaching discussions on effects of diminished gender differences in policy priorities until we have looked at the patterns among women and men voters.

Table 2. Policy priorities: Top ten issues among women and men in the Riksdag

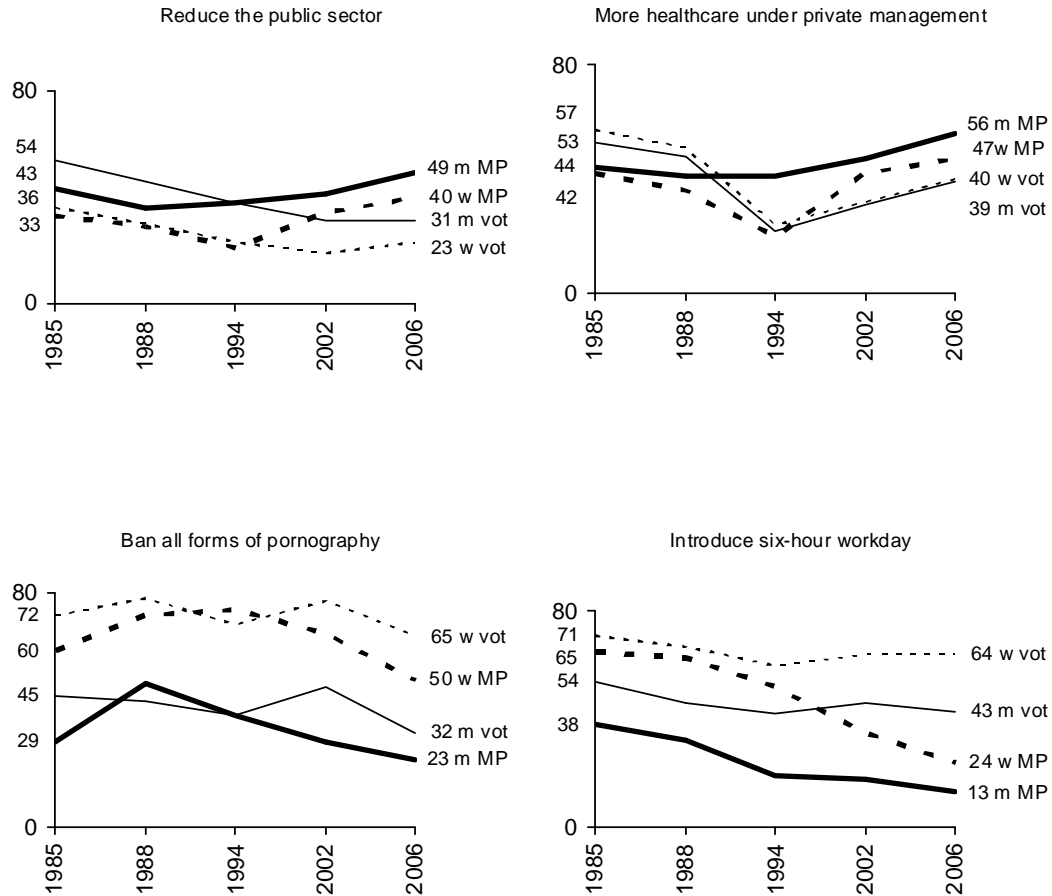
Ranked according to the percentage who mention each issue as an area of particular interest					
1985		1994		2006	
women	men	women	men	women	men
1. social policy	1. economy	1. social policy	1. economy	1. jobs	1. jobs
2. economy	2. jobs	2. education	2. jobs	2. social policy	2. social policy
3. education	3. business policy	3. jobs	3. foreign policy	3. education	3. foreign policy
4. jobs	4. environment	4. economy	4. business policy	4. environment	4. education
5. environment	5. foreign policy	5. environment	5. social policy	5. gender equality	5. economy
6. healthcare	6. taxes	6. foreign policy	6. environment	6. foreign policy	6. environment
7. business policy	7. education	7. culture	7. communications	7. justice/law	7. business policy
8. family policy	8. agriculture	8. business policy	8. education	8. culture	8. culture
9. foreign policy	9. social policy	9. gender equality	9. taxes	9. business policy	9. justice/law
10. peace	10. communications	10. taxes	10. peace	10. healthcare	10. communications
agreement among rankings: 0.42		agreement among rankings: 0.47		agreement among rankings: 0.74	

Notes: The question reads: "Which area or areas in politics are you most interested in?" The question is open-ended and respondents were permitted to choose any area or areas. The table shows the ten most frequently cited areas. A detailed code schema was used to code the answers, which resulted in about 30 general policy areas. Number of respondents (women/men): 1985 (102/221); 1994 (128/186); 2006 (154/173). The coefficient of agreement among the rankings is Spearman's Rho, which varies between 0 and 1, where 1 signifies total agreement. Source: Riksdag Surveys, Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg.

The next empirical analysis deals with gender differences in relation to a number of concrete policy issues that have featured in Swedish political debate: reducing the public sector,

providing more healthcare under private management, banning all forms of pornography, and introducing a six-hour workday for all workers. Reported here are the proportions of women MPs and men MPs who support each proposal – ranking it as “good” or “very good”. The results of corresponding surveys among women and men in the electorate are included as well.¹⁰ Percentage figures for the results of the first (1985) and latest (2006) surveys are included in the chart.

Figure 5. Attitudes: Proportions of women and men MPs and women and men voters who support specific proposals



Notes: The question reads: “The following list covers a number of proposals that have featured in the political debate. What is your opinion of each of them?” For each proposal, the alternatives were “very good proposal,” “good proposal,” “neither good nor bad proposal,” “bad proposal,” and “very bad proposal.” The table shows the percentages in favour (very good and good proposal, combined). The exact wording of each proposal: “reduce the public sector;” “provide more healthcare under private management;” “ban all forms of pornography;” and “introduce a six-hour workday for all workers.” Number of respondents in the Riksdag surveys (women/men): 1985 (100/230); 1988 (126/203); 1994 (132/183); 2002 (145/175); 2006 (153/170). Election studies are based on a sample of approximately 2-3,000 respondents. Source: Riksdag Surveys and Election Studies, Department of Political Science, Gothenburg University.

The issues included in the analysis above are those that relate to the conflict between private/public or otherwise distinguish themselves by their particular impact on the situations of women citizens. The issues included are also those which in the early surveys were distinguished by the widest gender gap. The results in Figure 5 show that a gender gap

remains, but that the distance between the attitudes of women and men MPs is clearly less pronounced today. A more detailed analysis show that the differences between women and men MPs were greatest in the 1994 survey and least in the 2006 survey (Table A3 in the appendix).

A few notes are of special importance in this section. First, party affiliation is obviously an aspect that must be considered when analyzing attitudes towards concrete policy issues. If we start with the six-hour workday, opinions on this issue have always been strongly divided along party lines. The gender differences found among MPs with regard to this issue are largely grounded in differences within the left/green bloc, particularly within the Social Democratic party. That party affiliation is a critical factor among MPs is even more obvious with regard to reducing the public sector and providing more healthcare under private management (Table A4 in the appendix). The situation changes with regard to banning all forms of pornography, which is still a gender-splitting issue across party lines. But if one looks at the parties in the centre/right alliance bloc, there has been a clear decline in the support of this issue among women. There has also been some decline among women in the left/green parties, but a majority of women representatives in these parties still support this proposal

Another important note is that the diminished gender differences are not nearly as distinct among voters as they are among MPs. When asked about banning all forms of pornography, 65 percent of women voters supported the proposal in 2006 and the number is just as high, 64 percent, for those who are in favour of implementing a six-hour workday for all workers. With respect to these two issues, the lines in Figure 5 representing the views of women voters are consistently at a high level. However, as stated elsewhere in this chapter diminished gender differences in the Riksdag do not mean total equalization and women representatives are still closer to the attitudes among women citizens than their male counterparts.

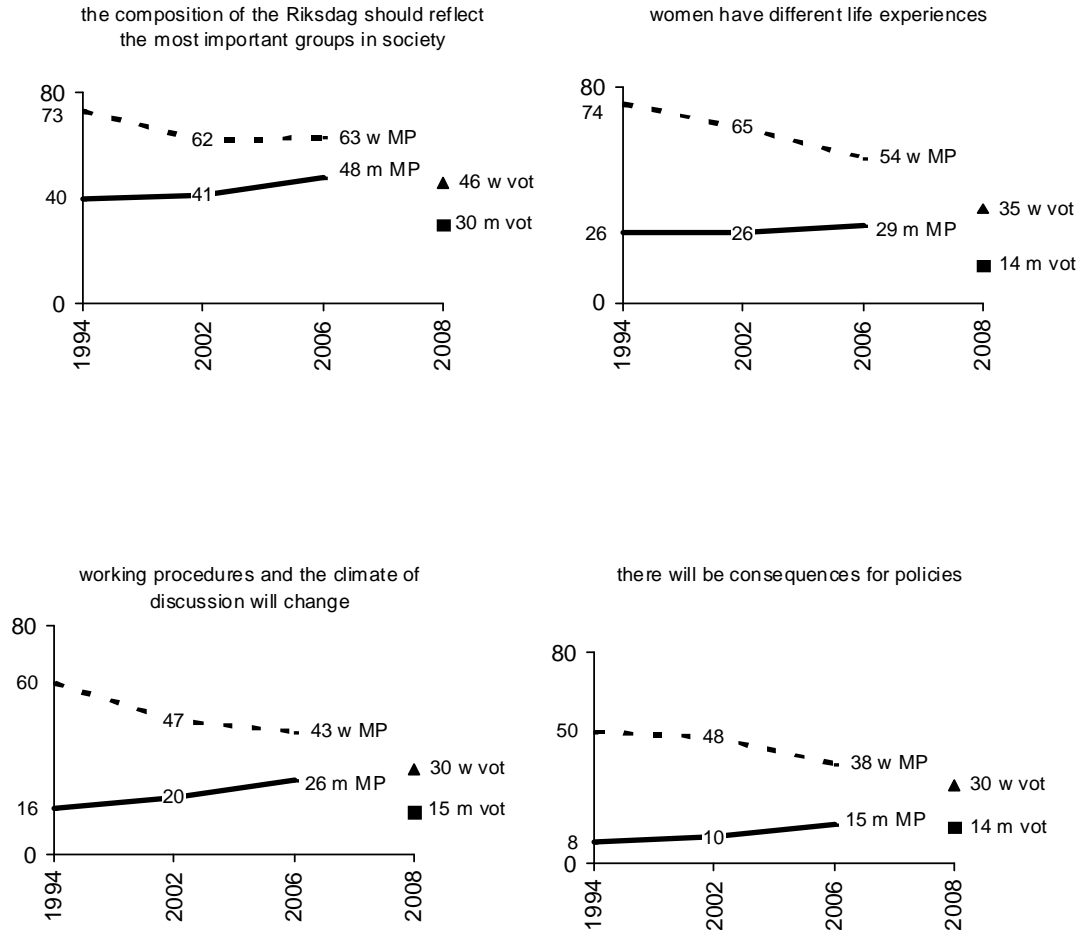
Attitudes towards an equal distribution of women and men in the Riksdag

I will end this section with a presentation of an issue that involves reasons for advocating an equal distribution of women and men in the Riksdag. This question is not about attitudes towards concrete policy issues but rather it indicates rationalities for advocating increased gender equality. The question asked reads: “There are various ways to argue for an equal distribution of women and men in the Riksdag. How important do you consider the following arguments to be?” The arguments are: that the composition of the Riksdag should reflect the most important groups in society; women have different life experiences; working procedures and the climate of discussion will change; and that there will be consequences for policies. For each argument, respondents were asked to state whether the reason was very important, fairly important, fairly unimportant, or not at all important. Figure 6 shows the proportions who answered “very important argument.” The question was included in the Riksdag surveys in 1994, 2002, and 2006, and was asked of voters in a 2008 survey.¹¹ Also this indicator clearly show the diminished gender difference in the Riksdag: For example, in 1994, 74 percent of women in the Riksdag, but only 26 percent of the men, answered that the argument “women have different life experiences” was a very important argument (a difference of 48 percentage points). The corresponding figures in 2006 were 54 percent among women and 29 percent among men (a difference of 25 percentage points). Once again, the smaller difference is the result of changes among both women and men.

The four arguments were selected because they represent, to varying degrees, a justice/fairness perspective or a change perspective, that is, whether one believes gender parity is inherently important, or is important because of certain consequences arising from its implementation. A detailed analyses (not reported in a table) show that this is not a matter of an “either/or” perspective (Wängnerud 2009b). The argument that garners the greatest support

in all groups is that an equal distribution of women and men is a matter of justice/fairness (the composition of the Riksdag should reflect the most important groups in society); beyond that, it is a matter of the extent to which people *also* attach importance to arguments that have more to do with aspects of change (women have other life experiences; working procedures and the climate of discussion will change; there will be consequences for policies).

Figure 6. Proportions of MPs and voters who answered that different arguments for an equal distribution of women and men in the Riksdag were “very important”



Notes: The question reads: "There may be various reasons for advocating parity between men and women in the Riksdag. How important do you consider the following reasons?" The possible answers were "very important," "fairly important," "fairly unimportant," and "not at all important" for each of the four reasons. The charts show the percentages who answered "very important reason" for each. Least number of respondents: 1994 (135/192); 2002 (141/170); 2006 (152/163); SOM-2008 (719/782). Source: Riksdag Surveys, Department of Political Science, and the 2008 National SOM survey, both conducted at Gothenburg University.

Gender differences in the Riksdag have obviously diminished over time. However, the results in Figure 6 also show that it is mainly women representatives who think gender parity in the Riksdag is *very* important. They also show great parallelism between the parliamentary and the citizen arena: on both levels women are the most fervent supporters of gender equality and this result applies for all four arguments.

Committee assignments

Thus far, I have supported the description of diminished gender differences in the Riksdag with indicators taken from surveys. In order to further underpin the results, I have chosen also to analyse the MPs committee assignments. Table 3 shows the proportion of women among regular MPs in Riksdag committees during the period of 1971-2008. The committees have been divided into four groups with four committees in each: social welfare, culture/law, basic functions, and economy/technology. For each group, the average proportion of women is compared to the average proportion of women in the entire committee organization. A plus sign means that the proportion of women in that committee group is higher than the average among all committees, while a minus sign denotes that the proportion of women is lower than the average among all committees. An effect measurement is also shown in Table 3, which is the most interesting measure to watch. A high figure indicates major gender effect on committee assignments whereas a low figure indicates minor effect.

Table 3. Proportion of women on Riksdag committees 1971–2008

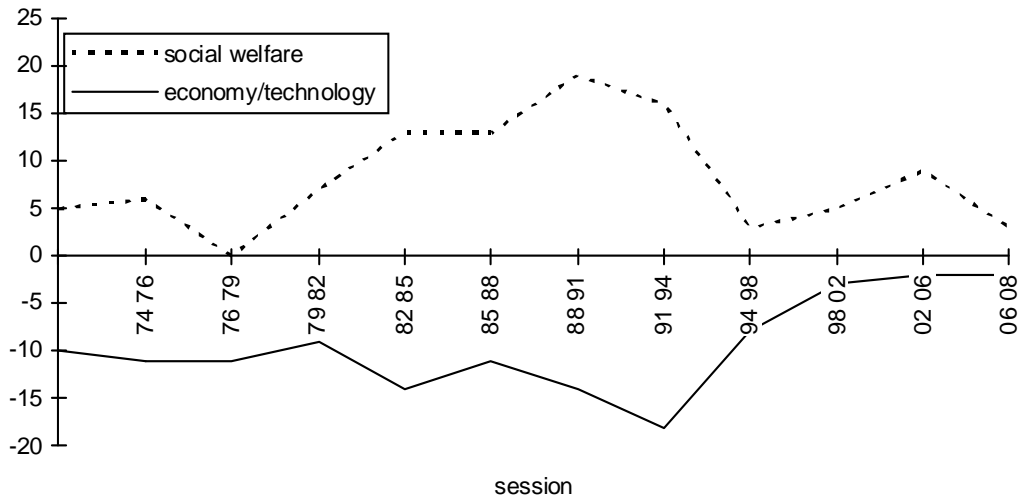
Session	Social welfare		Culture/law		Basic functions		Economy/technology		average 16 com	Effect
	% women		% women		% women		% women			
1971/73	20	+5	24	+9	9	-6	5	-10	15	10
1974/76	22	+6	23	+7	15	-1	5	-11	16	10
1976/79	19	0	26	+7	24	+5	8	-11	19	6
1979/82	29	+7	27	+5	21	-1	13	-9	22	9
1982/85	39	+13	34	+8	20	-6	12	-14	26	16
1985/88	42	+13	36	+7	22	-7	18	-11	29	14
1988/91	54	+19	41	+6	24	-11	21	-14	35	19
1991/94	49	+16	41	+8	25	-8	15	-18	33	19
1994/98	47	+3	49	+5	42	-2	36	-8	44	7
1998/02	50	+5	50	+5	40	-5	42	-3	45	6
2002/06	56	+9	44	-3	44	-3	45	-2	47	6
2006/08*	49	+3	48	+2	43	-3	44	-2	46	4

Notes: The policy area of social welfare includes the following committees: social affairs, social insurance, labour market, and education; culture/law includes cultural affairs, justice, law and constitutional affairs; basic functions includes foreign affairs, defence, environment, agriculture, and housing; economy/technology includes finance, tax, business, and transport. The figures in the table show an average for each session and include regular committee members. The comparison measure compares the proportion of women MPs on committees in each policy area with the average proportion of women in the entire committee organization: (+) denotes that women MPs were overrepresented in relation to the average, and (-) that they were underrepresented. The number of regular MPs in each committee is 15, except for the sessions of 88/91, 94/98, 98/02, 02/06 and the current session, for which the number is 17. The effect measurement shows the average difference that emerges upon a staged comparison of the four committee groups. (*) current session, ending in 2010. Source: Riksdag Members rolls.

If we begin with the effect measurement, it shows that the gender effect was greatest in the 1988/91 and 1991/94 sessions (effect measurement 19 for both periods) and that it is the lowest for the current session (effect measurement 4). In a review of the comparison measurements, the most prominent result is a pattern of overrepresentation (plus signs) of women on committees in the area of social welfare, and underrepresentation (minus signs) in the economy/technology area. The proportion of women in the culture/law and basic functions areas is comparatively close to the average for the committee organization as a whole.

Figure 7 focuses on committees in the areas of social welfare and economy/technology. The straight horizontal centre line on the chart represents the percentage of women in the committee organization as a whole; a line above the centre line shows overrepresentation and a line below the centre line shows underrepresentation. That which becomes immediately apparent in this chart is how particular gender patterns emerge in the 1980s and early 1990s and then subside. The 1994 election is a notable breaking point. Also noteworthy is that the lines nearly converge in the current, 2006-2010, session.

Figure 7. Proportion of women on committees in the policy areas of social welfare and economy/technology 1971–2008



Notes: The comparison measurement compares the proportion of women MPs in each policy area against the average proportion of women in the entire committee organization. (+) denotes overrepresentation of women in relation to the average, and (-) denotes underrepresentation. See Table 3 for further information. Source: Riksdag Members Rolls.

That which can be seen today, now that a few sessions have passed since the 1994 election, is that the major parties are the most capable of maintaining parity of women and men on the committees. The Social Democrats have had an exact division since the 2006 election, half women, half men, among their representatives on every committee. The division varies somewhat for the Moderate Party from one committee to the next, but when counted by groups, as shown in the chart in Figure 7, gender distribution is also very even within Moderate Party.¹²

I will return later to the question of the possible factors underlying the diminished gender differences in the Riksdag, but I can already say that the change after the 1994 election shown in Figure 7 (sharply reduced gender effect) did not correspond to any significant changes in priorities among women and men with regard to which committees on which they would most prefer to serve. The parliamentary surveys asked MPs about their committee preferences and the results of the 1994 survey show that gender differences in preferences did not decline in a manner corresponding to the actual assignments (Wängnerud 1998).

Explanations for the diminished gender differences

What explains these patterns of diminished gender differences? There is no simple answer to this question; rather, we are faced with a combination of different explanations. It is interesting to note that the diminished gender differences are first apparent and particularly marked with regard to committee assignments. I have previously shown (Wängnerud 1998, 109) that this change was mainly a result of conscious acts on the part of party leadership. The feminist network *Stödstrumporna* (“The Support Stockings”) was active in the 1994 election campaigns and the established parties were pushed into implementing visible changes in the area of gender equality. This applied not only to the “every other seat for a woman” policy on the ballot lists, but also to internal bodies of power in the Riksdag, such as committees.¹³ One can imagine a process in which “every other seat for a woman” has become a general norm in politics – gender parity has become a goal for the parties to strive for in a wide variety of areas.

In some cases, the diminished gender differences stem from changed support ratios among the parties. This is particularly apparent in the analysis of attitudes towards concrete policy issues. Here, the survey shows (Figure 5 and Table A3 in the appendix) that the difference between women and men in the Riksdag was widest in 1994. What one must remember is that the parties on the left of the spectrum enjoyed much greater public support then than they did in the 2006-2010 Riksdag, and that at that point, the leftist parties also had a comparatively high proportion of women politicians. The development toward diminished gender differences also has to do with more general attitudinal changes. For instance, we have seen that more men MPs now say that representing women's interests and concerns is important to them personally than was the case before.

Another part of the explanation is that there has been a generational shift in the Riksdag. The generational difference is most apparent in priorities for the social welfare area. This was once a very typically female policy area in the Riksdag, but among younger MPs in the current Riksdag, it is men, rather than women, who are more likely to have social welfare as an area of particular interest.

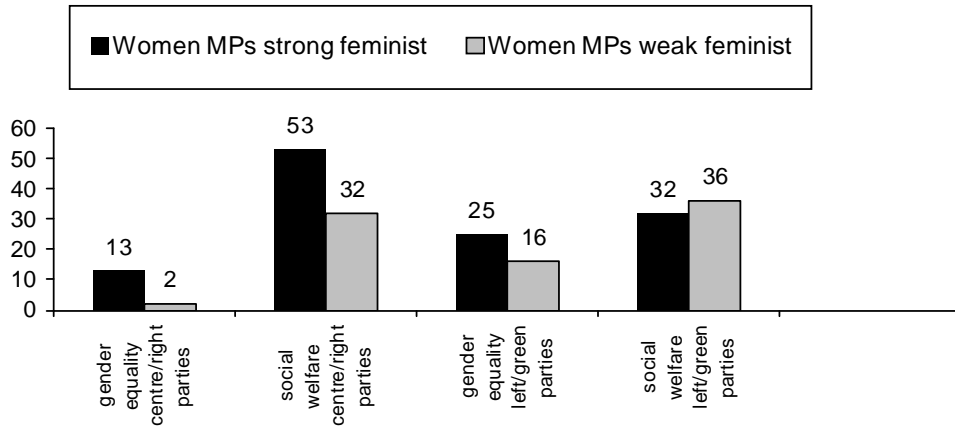
The explanations I have discussed so far are such that can in various ways be connected to individual MPs or to the Riksdag and the political parties as institutions, but I believe one must apply a wider view to gain perspective on the development that has taken place. It could be, as shown in Norwegian studies on the expansion of preschool programmes at the municipal level, that the significance of politicians' gender is at its zenith in an *innovation phase*. When the preschools were relatively new, the drivers of development were women politicians and there was a clear correlation between the proportion of women municipal councillors and the expansion of child care services. Now that the issue has become established, it has lost its explosiveness between the sexes. It could be that the 1994 election in Sweden represents the end point of a distinct phase in the Swedish gender equality project – a phase characterized by initiatives like “every other seat for a woman” and various solutions to the conflict between work and family life, that which Skjeie (1992) has called care and career politics.

The politics of presence or the politics of awareness?

Before I start to wrap up the findings I will present an analysis that more directly speaks to the tension between the theory of the politics of presence and the theory of the politics of awareness. In this section I will do the analysis among women representatives only and I will focus on the parliamentary survey from 2006.

There is no straightforward way to measure how politicians *consciously* relate to a particular group's social experience. Here I use the answer to the question previously reported in Figure 2 – that is MPs' views on how important it is to them personally to promote women's interests and concerns. Women MPs have been divided into two categories: *strong feminist* refers to representatives who consider the duty to promote women's interests and concerns as very important and *weak feminist* refers to those who consider this duty as fairly important, not very important, or not at all important (categories are merged). Figure 8 presents results for policy priorities – both gender equality and social welfare are included – among women representatives, strong feminist or weak feminist, belonging to the different party blocs (the left/green or the centre/right alliance). This analysis strengthens the picture of a complex situation in the current Riksdag.

Figure 8. Proportion of women in the Riksdag who are strong or weak feminists that cite gender equality and/or social welfare as a policy area of particular interest



Comments: The figure shows the response to an open question which read: 'Which political issues/area are you personally most interested in?' Up to three issues could be mentioned. The responses were coded according to a detailed code scheme. The members of parliament whose answers included gender equality, the woman issue, sex discrimination, affirmative action, etcetera were entered into the 'gender equality policy' category and those who included social policy, family policy, elder care and health care were entered into the 'social welfare policy' category. Strong feminist refers to members of parliament who consider the duty to promote the interests/views of women as 'very important,' weak feminist refers to those who consider this duty as 'fairly important,' 'not very important,' or 'not at all important' (categories are merged). Rightwing parties refers to the four parties in government during the current mandate-period (Moderate Party, People's Party, Center Party and Christian Democrats) and leftwing parties refers to the three parties in opposition, yet represented in the parliament (Social Democrats, Left Party, Ecology Party). Source: Parliamentary Studies, Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg.

For the area of gender equality policy the results in Figure 8 show that it is foremost women representatives categorized as strong feminists that are active in this field. However, it is also clear that party affiliation is important to take into account. In 2006 it is especially women from left/green parties that give priority to gender equality policy in their political work.

For the area of social welfare policy the picture that emerges is that the degree of feminist awareness is of importance among women from the centre/right alliance, but less so among women from left/green parties. The gap is 21 percentage points (53 minus 32 percent) among women from centre/right parties but only 4 percentage points (36 minus 32 percent) among women from left/green parties. Among women from left/green parties the situation in 2006 is also that it is women categorized as weak feminists that give highest priority to social welfare policy. In a more comprehensive study along the same vein, I have suggested that that the theory of the politics of presence is credible when it comes to understanding the area of social welfare policies, especially in earlier time-periods, whereas the theory of the politics of awareness is credible when it comes to understanding the area of "pure" gender equality (Wängnerud 2010).

What is the consequence of diminished gender differences?

What do these diminished gender differences in the Swedish Riksdag mean? Is it a good thing or bad that gender equalization is going faster at the elite level, among politicians in the Riksdag, than among the electorate?

Table 4 shows the results of an open-ended question that has been asked in the election studies since 1982. The question has to do with what issue was most important to voters when they chose a party. Voters were asked to state their thoughts in their own words, and the women's and men's answers were divided afterwards. The table shows the three most

frequently cited issues among women and men voters. What becomes clear is that there are signs of a closing gap also among the electorate; however social policy remains a very important issue when women voters make their choice of party. In the 2006 election, social policy was the most frequently mentioned issue among women voters, ranked before jobs as a key issue. Among men voters, jobs came first in the 2006 election, followed by social policy.

Table 4. The three most important policy areas in voters' choice of party 1982-2006

	Women	Percentage	Men	Percentage
2006	Social policy	39	Jobs	37
	Jobs	32	Social policy	26
	Education	31	Education	18
2002	Social policy	54	Social policy	44
	Education	43	Education	35
	Pensions/elder care	29	Taxes	25
1998	Social policy	30	Jobs	33
	Jobs	27	Social policy	20
	Pensions/elder care	19	Taxes	18
1994	Jobs	39	Jobs	42
	Environment	26	Economy	37
	Social policy	25	Social policy	18
1991	Environment	29	Economy	24
	Social policy	27	Jobs	23
	Family policy	26	Environment	22
1988	Environment	50	Environment	43
	Family policy	24	Taxes	23
	Social policy	18	Social policy	12
1985	Family policy	25	Jobs	26
	Environment	23	Environment	23
	Jobs	23	Taxes	23
1982	Workers' funds	27	Workers' funds	38
	Jobs	27	Jobs	31
	Social policy	14	Economy	19

Source: *Kvinnor som väljare och valda* by Maria Oskarson and Lena Wängnerud and supplementary data for 1998, 2002, and 2006 derived with the assistance of Per Hedberg. The table is based on results of election studies conducted by the Department of Political Science, Gothenburg University. The election studies are based on a sample of about 2-3,000 respondents.

More comprehensive analysis would be needed to provide any unambiguous answer to how the diminished gender differences in the Riksdag should be interpreted. However, a further basis that will be provided in this study is the answer to a question asked in the 1994 and 2006 parliamentary surveys. The question deals with whether the representatives themselves believe there are issues in which party positions have changed due to increased number of women elected. The question asked reads: "The number of women has increased in the last 20 years in most Riksdag groups. Are there concrete issues about which you believe your party's position has changed due to a higher number of women elected?" MPs who answered yes were asked to specify one or more such issues.

Once again, we can note diminished gender differences. In 1994, 74 percent of the women and 50 percent of the men answered "yes" when asked if changes had occurred, a difference of 24 percentage points. In 2006, 80 percent of the women and 64 percent of the men answered "yes," a difference of 16 percentage points. Gender differences have thus declined,

even as more representatives overall answered “yes” to the question of whether their party’s position on any concrete issues had changed.

Looking at which issues were cited, three areas are high on the list in both surveys: gender equality, family policy, and social policy. Interestingly enough, considerably fewer mention social policy in the 2006 survey compared to the 1994 survey: 19 percent versus 33. In 2006, the area of law and justice/violence against women had instead climbed high on the list.

Table 5 Concrete issues on which the party’s position has changed due to a higher number of women elected

Ranked according to the percentage who specified the issue			
1994	%	2006	%
Gender equality	45	Gender equality	41
Family policy	34	Family policy	29
Social policy	33	Law and justice/violence against women	19
Perspective change, multiple issues	16	Social policy	13
Environment	11	Jobs	10
Education	5	Perspective change, multiple issues	8
Morality/pornography	5	Education	7
Senior citizens’ issues	4	Healthcare	4
Jobs	4	Culture/leisure	4
Economy	2	Environment	4
Culture/leisure	2	Foreign affairs	4
Housing	2	Economy	3
Communications	2	Business policy	3
Law and justice/violence against women	2	HBT issues	3
Business policy	2	Senior citizens’ issues	2
Taxes	1	Morality/pornography	2
Healthcare	1	Energy	2
Agriculture	1	Taxes	1
Foreign affairs	1	Housing	1
Immigration	1	Decentralization	1
Municipal/regional issues	1	Agriculture	1
Energy	1	Immigration	1
Number of people specifying an issue	165	Number of people specifying an issue	180

Notes: The results show the answers to the question “Women’s representation has increased in the last 20 years in most Riksdag groups. Are there concrete issues about which you believe your party’s position has changed due to higher women’s representation?” MPs who answered “yes” were asked to specify one or more such issues. Up to five issues could be specified. Source: Riksdag Surveys, Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg.

Swedish gender equality in an era of transition

The theory of the politics of presence has gained widespread acceptance. The analyses in this chapter further support the theory. Although gender differences have declined over time, more women than men representatives are still putting the spotlight on women’s situations and addressing issues of particular significance to women voters. A reasonable description based on this and other studies in the field is that greater numbers of women representatives is accompanied by *shifts of emphasis* in political work: women’s interests are given greater weight and become more central.

However, what is most evident from the results presented here is that the theory of the politics of presence needs further development. One way to progress is to give serious consideration to the ideas on the meaning of context put forward by Phillips herself. The analyses in this paper cover a period of more than 20 years and the lives of women and men in Sweden have likely changed during this period. For instance, the percentage of men who use parental leave has increased: in 1985, men used 6 percent of parental benefit days, while the corresponding figure in 2008 was 21 percent. Quite simply, the discussion of women’s interests and which gender-related differences in society today are most significant needs to be updated. Such an analysis would likely show that society has become more complex; it is

probably even harder today to talk about women as a homogeneous category than it was only 20 or 30 years ago.¹⁴

The theory of the politics of presence also needs to be evolved in line with Iris Marion Young's ideas about the importance of feminist awareness. Studies that have investigated the consequences of politicians seeing themselves as representatives of a specific group, such as women, show that this is not just empty words. For instance, representatives who say that promoting women's interests and concerns is important to them personally contact cabinet ministers about matters pertaining to women's situations more often than other MPs do (Esaiasson 2000). One central element is also to continue working with the interaction that occurs between parties, the Riksdag, and extraparliamentary movements. The *Stödstrumporna* threatened to form a separate party in the 1994 election, but it never happened. The Feminist Initiative, which ran in the 2006 general election and the 2009 European Parliament election, can be seen as an heir to the *Stödstrumporna*. So far, these feminist movements have not managed to gain seats, but they may have on a deeper level contributed to changing the way we think about gender relations in Sweden (Teigen & Wängnerud 2009). If the 1970s and 1980s were the decades defined by the struggle for a higher number of women in Swedish politics, the 1990s and 2000s have become the decades in which parity in the sense of an equal distribution of women and men across all fields have come to the forefront. However, what the future innovations will be remains to be seen.

Lastly, the analyses in this study highlight the importance of contrasting theoretical definitions of women's interests against the views women themselves express. The debate on gender equality must be grounded in the everyday lives of women and men. We cannot ignore the fact that far-reaching equalization in the Riksdag in certain areas, such as regarding attitudes towards six-hour working day and a ban on pornography, has resulted in a somewhat wider gap between the attitudes among representatives in the Riksdag and women voters. Long term, it is problematic if gender parity in the Riksdag occurs at the expense of the opinions and priorities of women voters, or of men voters for that matter. Elected representatives do not sit in the Riksdag for their own sake, but to represent the people.

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Appendix

Table A1. Priorities: Proportion of women and men in various Riksdag groups who cite gender equality as an area of particular interest, 1985, 1994, and 2006

	1985			1994			2006		
	women	men	diff.	women	men	diff.	women	men	diff.
Total	9	3	+6	12	1	+11	15	1	+14
Party									
Left Party	33	0	+33	30	0	+30	23	0	+23
Social Democratic Party	14	3	+11	9	0	+9	20	4	+16
Centre Party	0	7	-7	20	6	+14	10	0	+10
Liberal Party	6	3	+3	25	6	+19	20	0	+20
Moderate Party	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Christian Democratic Party	NA	NA		20	0	+20	0	0	0
Green Party	NA	NA		11	0	+11	33	0	+33
Bloc									
Left/Green	14	3	+11	12	0	+12	22	3	+19
Centre/Right Alliance	2	2	0	13	2	+11	5	0	+5
Age									
41 and older	8	2	+6	9	0	+9	13	2	+11
40 and younger	14	5	+9	13	1	+12	18	0	+18
Riksdag experience									
Longer tenure in the Riksdag	4	1	+3	18	2	+16	18	2	+18
Shorter tenure in the Riksdag	15	6	+9	8	0	+8	10	0	+10

Notes: The results show the answers to the open-ended question "Which area or areas in politics are you most interested in?" (up to three issues could be specified). The least number of interview subjects (women/men) 1985 Left (3/14), Soc Dem (52/98), Cen (13/28), Lib (18/29), Mod (16/51); 41 or older (88/199), 40 or younger (14/22); longer tenure in the Riksdag (48/134), shorter tenure in the Riksdag (54/87); 1994 v (10/11), Soc Dem (74/78), Cen (10/16), Lib (8/16), Mod (16/52), Ch Dem (5/10), Green (9/7), 41 or older (109/159), 40 or younger (23/31), longer tenure in the Riksdag (54/103), shorter tenure in the Riksdag (78/87); 2006 Left (13/7), Soc Dem (50/48), Cen (10/16), Lib (10/11), Mod (29/47), Ch Dem (9/12), Green (9/7), 41 or older (97/104), 40 or younger (33/43), longer tenure in the Riksdag (78/81), shorter tenure in the Riksdag (52/67) (NA.)= not included in the survey. See also Figure 3. Source: Riksdag Surveys, Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg.

Table A2. Priorities: Proportion of women and men in various Riksdag groups who cite social welfare as an area of particular interest, 1985, 1994, and 2006

	1985			1994			2006		
	women	men	diff.	women	men	diff.	women	men	diff.
Total	52	10	+42	41	22	+19	35	26	+9
Party									
Left Party	33	0	+33	30	0	+30	54	14	+40
Social Democratic Party	56	10	+46	48	24	+24	32	35	-3
Centre Party	54	7	+47	20	12	+8	30	25	+5
Liberal Party	50	17	+33	38	38	0	40	27	+13
Moderate Party	44	10	+34	31	19	+12	28	19	+9
Christian Democratic Party	NA	NA	NA	80	20	+60	67	33	+34
Green Party	NA	NA	NA	11	29	-18	11	14	-3
Bloc									
Left/Green	54	9	+45	42	20	+22	33	31	+2
Centre/Right Alliance	49	12	+37	37	22	+15	36	23	+13
Age									
41 and older	51	11	+40	43	20	+23	41	28	+13
40 and younger	57	9	+48	30	29	+1	15	23	-8
Riksdag experience									
Longer tenure in the Riksdag	48	8	+40	35	18	+17	38	32	+6
Shorter tenure in the Riksdag	56	15	+41	45	25	+20	33	24	+9

Notes: See Table A1 for the number of respondents. See also Figure 4. Source: Riksdag Surveys, Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg.

Table A3. Attitudes: Proportion of women and men MPs who support specific proposals

	1985			1988			1994			2002			2006		
	w	m	diff	w	m	diff	w	m	diff	w	m	diff	w	m	diff
Reduce the public sector	33	43	-10	29	36	-7	21	38	-17	34	41	-7	40	49	-9
More healthcare under private management	42	44	-2	36	41	-5	20	41	-21	42	47	-5	47	56	-9
Ban pornography	60	29	+31	72	49	+23	74	38	+36	66	29	+37	50	23	+27
Introduce six-hour workday	65	38	+27	63	32	+31	52	19	+33	35	18	+17	24	13	+11
Average difference			18			16			27			16			14

Notes: The question reads. "The following list covers a number of proposals that have featured in the political debate. What is your opinion of each of them?" For each proposal, the possible answers were "very good proposal," "good proposal," "neither good nor bad proposal," "bad proposal," and "very bad proposal." The table shows the percentages who support the proposals (very good and good proposal, combined). The exact wording of each proposal is: "reduce the public sector;" "provide more public healthcare under private management;" "ban all forms of pornography;" "introduce a six-hour workday for all workers;" and "reduce income disparities in society" (the last question was not asked in the 1985 survey). Number of respondents (women/men): 1985 (100/230); 1988 (126/203); 1994 (132/183); 2002 (145/175); 2006 (153/170). Source: Riksdag Surveys, Department of Political Science, Gothenburg University.

Table A4. Attitudes: Proportions of women and men MPs who support each proposal by bloc affiliation, 1985, 1994, and 2006

	Reduce the public sector	More healthcare under private management	Ban pornography	Introduce six-hour workday	Average difference
1985					
Left/Green					
Women	0	0	67	96	
Men	2	4	36	60	
Diff	-2	-4	+31	+36	18
Centre/Right Alliance					
Women	75	94	51	27	
Men	85	86	21	15	
Diff	-10	+8	+30	+12	15
1994					
Left/Green					
Women	1	0	81	66	
Men	2	0	46	32	
Diff	-1	0	+35	+34	18
Centre/Right Alliance					
Women	68	68	58	20	
Men	75	82	31	6	
Diff	-7	-17	+27	+14	16
2006					
Left/Green					
Women	1	4	61	45	
Men	1	5	35	29	
Diff	0	-1	+26	+16	11
Centre/Right Alliance					
Women	84	98	37	0	
Men	88	97	13	0	
Diff	-4	+1	+24	0	7

Notes: Least number of respondents (women/men): 1985 Left/Green (56/116), C/R Alliance (44/112); 1994 Left/Green (92/93), C/R Alliance (40/90); 2006 Left/Green (82/76), C/R Alliance (71/94). See also Table 3 for information. Source: Riksdag Surveys, Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg.

End notes

¹ More areas and issues could of course be relevant to study; the choice here is based on areas where previous studies have shown marked gender differences. The overall conclusion of this study, that there is diminished gender differences in the Riksdag, might, if other areas were included need to be mitigated. There is a possibility of a process of changing, instead of diminishing, gender differences.

² Worldwide, average women's representation in national parliaments is 19.0 percent; the average in Europe is 22.0 percent. Women's representation is highest in Rwanda, where 56.3 percent of members of the national parliament are women (www.ipu.org). The figures reflect the situation as of 31 May 2010).

³ I should comment on the fact that I focus on "women's interests" and related changes. The reason is because, even though women are making steady progress in political life in Sweden, there is a dynamic in Swedish society (as in most contemporary societies) that put women, as a group, in a sub-ordinated position vis-à-vis men. Therefore, I find it relevant to focus on changes that can be presumed to strengthen the position of women.

⁴ The downturn was due mainly to a changed ratio of public support among the parties. The Moderates, who had a relatively low percentage of women (28 percent) in their party group gained greater support in the election while the New Democracy Party, with only 12 percent women in their party group, gained seats in the Riksdag for the first time (Wängnerud 1998, 33).

⁵ After the 2006 election, the percentages of women in the various party groups in the Riksdag were as follows: Left 64 percent, Green 53 percent, Soc Dem 50 percent, Lib 50 percent, Mod 43 percent, Cen 38 percent, and Ch Dem 38 percent (www.riksdagen.se).

⁶ The difference between Phillips and Young, can be partially described as a difference in emphasis of social representation (Phillips) versus representation of ideas (Young). Phillips' point is however, that this should not be viewed as two separate phenomena, but the politician's social background is key to their priorities and views. Young, for its part, emphasizes the importance of awareness of social structures – differences between women and men's positions in the society – which extends beyond the representation of, for example, attitudes towards concrete policy issues. See Pitkin (1967) and Esaiasson & Holmberg (1996) for a discussion of social representation versus representation of ideas.

⁷ International research also discusses the significance of women constituting a *critical mass*, that is, are sufficient in number to have an influence on the terms and conditions of the political work. There are no absolute boundaries here, but 20-40 percent is a frequently mentioned proportion. Drude Dahlerup (2006b) has criticized the concept of critical mass because it suggests changes that occur automatically once women become more numerous; instead, she suggests focus on critical actions that are directly intended to bring about change.

⁸ The Swedish National Election Study Program, SNES, is headed by Sören Holmberg and Henrik Oscarsson at the Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg. Responsible for the parliamentary studies have been Martin Brothén, Peter Esaiasson and Sören Holmberg. The response rate at each occasion is ~95%.

⁹ More areas and issues are relevant to study; the choice here is based on areas where previous studies have shown marked gender differences. The overall conclusion of this study, that there is diminished gender differences in the Riksdag, might, if other areas were included need to be softened. There is a possibility of a process of *changing* gender differences.

¹⁰ The voter results were taken from election studies within SNES Per Hedberg assisted with statistical processing.

¹¹ 2008 National SOM study, SOM Institute, Gothenburg University. Sören Holmberg and Lennart Weibull are the study directors.

¹² The number of committee seats varies according to the number of parliamentary seats held by the party; minor parties often have only one regular MP on each committee.

¹³ "Half the power, half the pay" was one of the slogans used by *Stödstrumporna* in the 1994 election campaign. "Every other candidate a woman" has become code for the Swedish parties' initiatives to alternate women and men on candidate lists for various political assignments (see Eduards 2002, 69-73; Freidenvall 2006).

¹⁴ What I am primarily thinking about here is that group affiliations such as class and ethnicity need to be incorporated into the analyses. *Intersectionality* has become an established concept in theoretical discussions to denote interaction among various affiliations. Unfortunately, there are still few empirical analyses in which this has been analysed in depth.