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Women's Representation in European Parliament Committees

An Honors College Project Presented to
the Faculty of the Undergraduate
College of Arts and Letters
James Madison University

by Reagan Elise Harrison

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Accepted by the faculty of the Department of Political Science, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors College.

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PUBLIC PRESENTATION

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Dedication

To my parents: thank you for the endless support, love, and encouragement and weekly
(sometimes daily) phone calls that helped me get here.

And to my grandmother: your inspiration has stayed with me and I owe it to you for giving me
my strength and hope.

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Abstract

Increasing globalization and growing importance of the European Union has facilitated an important discussion about who makes policy decisions within the EU, specifically within the European Parliament. This thesis aims to discuss women's representation within the EP at the committee level. By compiling a database of MEPs from 1st July 2014 to 18th January 2017, it looks into the question of whether or not committees are gendered. It argues that committees have gendered patterns, with women disproportionately focused within certain committees, that left parties have less gender discrepancies than right parties, and less women have committee leadership positions compared to men. A focused comparison of two committee chairs, Cecilia Wikström from Sweden and Jean Arthuis from France, addresses the argument that women govern differently than men within committees. Applying this research, it becomes evident that committees are gendered with more women on "less prestigious" committees. While it is unclear the effect of parties and differences in legislators between genders, it is proved that committee leadership during this time is almost equally distributed between male and female MEPs.

Introduction

When it comes to power and influence within Europe, the first institution many think of is the European Union. Since World War II and the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community, the EU has evolved to become a dominant trading power in the 21st century. With 27 member countries and others looking to join, it has become an exclusive club that has become increasingly important and vital to the functioning of European countries and their economies.

Within the European Union is the European Parliament, or the EP as it will be referred to for the rest of the thesis. Women's representation within the European Union has been well-examined and a topic that has become of more prominence in recent years. As the EU grows in economic and political power, it is vital to look at the different aspects of the institutions that make up the EU itself. By looking at the makeup of the EU, we can see where the power lies, how policy is made, and especially *who* is making these decisions. The EP encompasses much of the decision-making regarding policy within the EU. The Members of Parliament, or MEPs, are elected and represent both their home country and party group. The breakdown of who these representatives are and the gender balance within the EP can tell us much about how the EU is being run and the decisions being carried out, specifically within committees.

A large amount of policy is made within committees and sub-committees. This idea has been explored in many other democracies, such as in the U.S. in Congress, and other parliaments across Europe. Within these committees, figuring out how gender plays a role can determine a large amount in how policy is created and formed. Knowing the details of these committees can be vital to understanding the innerworkings and functioning of an institution. However, there is a

gap in the literature when it comes to looking at the influence of gender and gender balance of committees in the European Parliament. In this study, I will attempt to remedy that gap by examining the influence of gender within committees, how female MEPs are assigned committees, and the role of leadership positions in a committee and the differences between female and male leaders.

Looking at the extent to which committees are gendered will reveal more about the gender distribution of MEPs among committees and how that plays out at the committee level. I aim to get a deeper look at the EP at a level at a decision-making level more intimate than the general EP plenary. While there are many votes and debates at the plenary, committees are where much of the “grunt work” is completed. Standing committees review and prepare law before the plenary meets and does many of the things necessary to prepare for the functioning and overall efficiency of the EP and, in turn, the EU.

This paper is divided into several sections. I will first outline the previous literature and where my study will add onto that. I will then dive into the data and methodology of the study, where I have compiled a data set of all MEPs and will use that to analyze my independent variables and determine the effect of gender within committees. I then analyze and report on my findings in regard to the data and determine how gender plays a role in committee assignment, within party group, the breakdown of committee by percentage of women, and the role of MEPs belonging to more than one committee. After that, I then analyze the specifics of committees and the minute differences between two committee heads, Cecilia Wikström and Jean Arthuis, in a structured committee comparison.

Women's representation is an important concept to look at, and as the European Union grows stronger in influence across not only Europe but the world, it is vital to see who is making those decisions and whether or not women are included in the most basic decision-making processes. By looking at the basics, I reveal more about committees and their relation to gender.

Research into the representation within committees of the European Union must be started off by a look into the previous data and literature on both representation within the European Parliament and democracies themselves. There are multiple elements of representation that will serve as a base for explaining further the reasons for gendering within committees. First, I will delve into reasons for women making it into national parliaments, specifically within Europe. Then, I will examine the proportion and details of the European Parliament in more recent studies with a focus on recruitment in elections and the functioning of the EP. From there, I will conclude by looking into the limited studies done on the EP committees and where my research will add to the literature.

Why do women make it into national parliaments?

Within Western democracies, there are a plethora of reasons on the national level for why women are more or less represented within their own country.

One theory about women's representation within the literature is related to electoral systems and the type being used within a country. By looking at countries over time, Ian McAllister and Donley Studlar reiterate a long-held belief: that women's representation is higher within countries that have a proportional representation (PR) system versus a single-member district (SMD) and other mixed systems (2002). However, their argument is that the most important variables to this increased women's representation are not just the electoral system, but also how early on a country granted women the right to vote and participate in politics, as well as

the use of gender quotas in parties. Quotas are especially important and there is a correlation between their use and the year of women's enfranchisement (McAllister and Studlar 2002). Even with this analysis of various other factors, SMD electoral systems are still seen as an obstacle for women's representation; systems that have previously been SMD and integrated a mixed system such as Scotland and Wales have seen immense jumps in women's representation after the changes (McAllister and Studlar 2002).

The date of enfranchisement has been an obstacle to women's representation and is also an explanation for differences among countries in regard to the percentage of women in elected bodies, although it is not a perfect measure. The disparity between EU member states, for example, is large – Finland and Denmark both have the most amount of female parliamentarians are some of the earliest dates of enfranchisement, 1906 and 1915, respectively while others such as Portugal have not fully accepted women until the 1970s (Mateo Diaz 2005, 39-40). There are three ways of looking at underrepresentation and how they function in society: the cultural structure, socio-economic structure, and socio-political structure. Mateo Diaz, after producing bivariate regression models on these structures, finds that the most important variables from the models that explain women's underrepresentation are viewpoints of gender roles and date of enfranchisement (Mateo Diaz 2005, 65-66, 81). However, even though McAllister and Studlar claim that PR systems are definitively better than SMD systems for women's representation, Mateo Diaz claims that due to the effects of electoral systems not being the same in all tests conducted that these systems only work as well as they should depending on the context in which they take place. It also establishes the relationship between women gaining greater political gains and “cultural changes and economic advancement” as endogenous, meaning the direction of their

causal relationship cannot be determined, and that it is likely that one may cause the other and vice versa (Mateo Diaz 2005, 81).

Women's representation in Western democracies has various trends and patterns: the positive effects of early enfranchisement and more gains for women when there are visible female leaders. These trends will be looked at in the context of the European Parliament, to see if they transfer between democracies and the institutions of the EU.

Why are women elected to the European Parliament?

When it comes to studying gender and women's representation within the European Parliament, it is important to look not only just at the EP but within the other institutions as well. By being able to understand women's representation, we must first understand the importance of the European Parliament and how it has gained traction and influence among the institutions and the effects this can have on how MEPs are elected and how others view the institution. Overall, it is argued that the connection between the EP and electoral systems is very weak and almost nonexistent, which differs from some of the literature out there on this topic. However, one aspect of that argument is that national parties will become more invested and drive the actions and decisions of members of the EU parliament, which is a common theme. The real meaning behind this is that there is no reelection incentive driving MEPs and their actions, which is important to note as political parties take on a different function in the EP by helping members carry out and pass policy close to their personal preferences but also the preferences of the party (Hix and Hoyland 2013). Hix and Hoyland argue that this should be incentive for research to focus less on applying models from the U.S. Congress to the European Parliament and look at other incentives for MEPs such as policy interests, which is often explored in studies trying to explain gender representation in the EP.

Since the Treaty of Rome in 1957, gender issues have been relevant within the EU with the inclusion of article 119 on equal pay (Kantola 2009). While there have been movements over the decades towards better laws, there are critiques that can be applied to the EU and their actions. One relevant critique is that while there have been efforts made, they are mainly “soft law,” which consists of things such as encouragement of good practices and campaigns for gender equality rather than “hard law,” which is direct laws put in place. This is contrasted over time, where in the 1970s and 1980s there was more “hard laws” versus the 1990s and 2000s, which has consisted mainly of “soft laws” (Kantola 2009). Kantola also studies in-depth the practical figures and numbers of representation at the time of research, which was 2009. It is a more recent study, which is helpful rather than limiting in terms of being able to more closely understand current gender balance. It is noted that there is a link between national parliaments and the European Parliament, and the gap of women’s representation varies widely in the member states; one example being that in 2007, Sweden had near gender parity at 47.3 percent versus Malta with 9.3 percent women. Importantly, it is found the EP is the most gender balanced of the institutions and that the average amount of MEPs from each member state has increased significantly from 1979 to 2007, from 16 MEPs to 31 and the number of female MEPs at the time of this article was at 31 percent (Kantola 2009). These changes and the ones made throughout the history of the EU attempt to bring gender issues to the forefront and continue to do so.

The European Union in the past thirty years has served as a forum to discuss women’s representation and encourage member states to increase their number of female legislators, and some member states have taken this to heart. However, as MacRae notes, over this time the EU has not followed its own advice as there has been quite a significant amount of stagnation when

it comes to progress towards increasing women's representation throughout decision-making areas and its institutions. For example, the Constitutional Convention held in 2004 had "only 17 of 105...women" (MacRae 2012). In regards to the EP, while there have been major gains and the biggest jump in representation out of all the institutions, in the 2009-2014 parliament there was not a large increase and it remained at being 35 percent female showing that there is still work to be done and the EU has not come close to reaching gender parity (MacRae 2012). Member states are required to use proportional representation systems to elect their MEPs, and while there is some debate on whether PR is more effective than SMD, MacRae argues that this is a step in the right direction towards increasing the number of female MEPs (2012). This establishes the EP as one of the more gender balanced institutions, but also shows that there is still a long way to go despite the progress, specifically within elections.

Elections to the European Parliament have been established across these studies as "second-order," meaning voters view the EP as second to any other kind of domestic election and believe there is less at stake (Kovář and Kovář 2012). At the base of it all, candidate selection is critical to women getting the percentages and better proportionality in both the country and EP level. In the Kovář piece, they use the SOE model that suggests there is a "qualitative difference" between certain elections, and it is used to explore how political parties participate in elections by confirming what others have established: that the EP is an important space to get women involved as parties are the controlling entity when it comes to who is nominated and eventually put on the ballot (2012). On the other hand, a lot is revealed about representation by simply conducting a bivariate analysis with variables such as age and ideology as well as looking at the specific women themselves. Over time, women's representation has increased within the EP and on top of that, women's representation increases are higher among

those under 40 and gets lower as an MEPs age increases (Stockemer and Sundström 2019). This is restated in another Stockemer and Sundström study where throughout time since World War II, women's representation has increased with each new generation, occurring the most quickly in western Europe, with a boom in representation in this recent generation across European regions (2019). This is reflected in the trends and patterns at the ballot box.

Voters and their attitudes are vital aspect of women being elected to the EP, and there are large gender differences when it comes to certain issues, specifically abortion and attitudes toward women (McEvoy 2016). This varies across countries, and parties may attempt to limit MEPs who push for a "female-friendly policy agenda" (McEvoy 2016). This is just more evidence to support the fact that elections are essential and that factors such as voters' attitudes, parties and their actions and attitudes, and the views of party and domestic leadership control what MEPs are capable of doing and how female-oriented or gender focusing policy may be controlled.

Both Maarja Lühiste and Meryl Kenny along with Jessica Fortin-Rittberger and Berthold Rittberger tackle the question of women's representation from the angle of studying EP elections more closely. While the first two look at the 2014 more recent elections, the second pair looks at the 2009 election. They both look very closely at the role parties play in the process, and both find that they are a significant gatekeeper in allowing women to be included. The 2009 study focused more on the timing of the election process, and how that would affect women's entrance to the election system, allowing a closer look at each step of the way. After looking at 20 member states and over 100 political parties, the two looked came up with proportions, percentages, and OLS regressions that helped decipher that women were more likely to continue down the path to elections if parties were able to nominate women at the initial selectorate stage;

meaning, if the initial pool of candidates was skewed from the start, it would remain that way down the line (Fortin-Rittberger and Rittberger 2015).

Meanwhile, Lühiste and Kenny reiterated what recent studies have said that challenges the notion that electoral systems are significant in helping balance out gender (2016). Instead, they establish that greater context is needed from each country, but they emphasize that the greatest determinant in women's representation is parties and their role, as shown by the focus on parties and their nomination techniques in the previous study mentioned. While the paths of both women and men MEPs are similar in being elected, women tend to be more experienced from right wing parties rather than left wing parties, which is attributed to age and left leaning candidates being younger (Lühiste and Kenny 2016). Both these studies emphasize the importance of elections in attempting to explain women's representation in the EP and the involvement of parties in the process.

The question of why it has been easier for women to get elected to the European Parliament compared to national legislatures is a question tackled by Jane Freedman as well as by Cullen, who takes a deeper look through the lens of Irish MEPs. Freedman explores the variables that make it harder for women to become politically active domestically compared to the EP. One of these variables is the fact that women are chosen by parties to run often through having experience in other areas of life, and "over 30% of women MEPs elected in 1999 had local or regional experience" (Freedman 2002). From interviews with MEPs, Freedman concludes that these difficulties to politically participate still linger even in the EP, but that the viewpoint of the EP not being as salient as domestic legislatures and positions may be the reason for women's ability to get more easily elected into this body (2002).

The gap between the EP and national legislatures is often mentioned and is a spot of debate, but it is generally agreed upon that national legislatures often elect less women versus EP elections. There are a few patterns that emerge when it comes to explaining why there is a gap and it comes down to parties, voters, and the view of the EP on the behalf of politicians (Xydias 2016). The view of the EP within countries that only elect a small number of women to their national legislatures has a higher importance than in countries that elect higher numbers of women; meaning, women who are unable to be elected within their own country may be more enticed to join the EP. Conversely, in countries with a higher interest and investment in the EP elects less women. (Xydias 2016). This is corroborated in the data from Christina Xydias' research, where she finds that countries whose women's representation in their lower national legislature house is above the median in the data set has a mean gap between the national legislature and EP at 4.4 percentage points; meanwhile, countries with female representation below the median have a greater gap of 15.0 percentage points (2016). This data is just some of the few examples that lay out patterns of women's representation not only in EP but establishes a link between national legislatures and the EP itself.

As McAllister and Studlar established, evidence points towards PR systems being easier for women to gain more representation in compared to SMD. However, a contrary belief to this is presented by Jessica Fortin-Rittberger and Berthold Rittberger as they argue that rather than a causal relationship between electoral rules and the gap between national legislatures and the EP in terms of women's representation and instead it may be an endogenous one (2014). Differences between the EP and national legislatures are not caused by the different electoral systems; rather, electoral systems have a much larger impact at the domestic level and other factors can account for representation in the EP. Representation and the electoral system are variables of which the

direction their relationship cannot be determined and are therefore exogenous variables (Fortin-Rittberger and Rittberger 2014). Putting these variables in the context of countries is helpful to put these bigger trends in the EP and understand how they affect certain countries and how they affect the legislative process at a smaller scale.

Some of the literature takes a closer look at individual member states, such as in the case of Ireland, which is helpful to illustrate some of the larger trends of the women's representation in the EP at a closer lens. By looking at whether Irish female MEPs are "critical actors in women's interests," it looks at how relevant the democratic aspect of the EP is when it comes to gender issues (Cullen 2018). This research by Pauline Cullen is particularly important, as Ireland is a country that represents one of the countries Xydias discusses, as they have a large gap of women's representation between the EP, 6 out of 11 MEPs are female, and national legislatures, with a large disparity of 22.3 percent of legislators as female within the parliament (2018). However, what is discussed is not how factors at the national level have an effect on the EP and EU policies, but rather how gender discussion and policies at the EU level affect Irish politics and women's representation, which is a departure from other studies. It is established that critical factors that influence female Irish MEPs in particular and are what they take to the EP are their operation under established gender norms and the influence of Irish culture, specifically political (Cullen 2018). It would be worth looking at how these patterns affect all female MEPs, not just specifically Irish ones, when looking at committees and how female MEPs are allocated. From these female Irish MEPs, four of the six had some kind of prior political experience, whether that be at the national or EU level. From interviews Cullen concludes that MEPs choose committee membership due to interest from party guidance or their expertise from working with national or local issues, which is further evidence to support patterns that committee membership is driven

largely by parties and specialization, which is discussed further in the next section (2018). A significant finding of this study established that MEPs felt pressured to follow certain paths from their parties, showing how parties are largely capable of influencing their actions and how these women operate under the current political system. (Cullen 2018). One limitation of this study is that it was done at a smaller qualitative scale rather than conducting quantitative analysis and focused on one country, which makes it hard to establish any kind of pattern between countries.

Also focusing in on a specific country is Kantola and Agustin in their interviews with female MEPs from Denmark and Finland. By getting their perspective on how they see gender equality in party groups, we are able to understand from a more personal viewpoint how female MEPs experience gender issues and operate within the EP being a woman. Political parties in the parliament vary in terms of gender distribution but left leaning parties such as GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA have higher numbers of women compared to more right-leaning parties such as EPP and ECR who are statistically weak in this area. Highlighted is the fact that political parties often are not willing to press forward on gender issues, and it is not prioritized enough by parties in particular (Kantola and Agustin 2019). The group of MEPs included in this study identified stereotypes and sexist attitudes still occurring in the EP, and that more informal aims at enforcing gender quotas and other practices would be needed to help representation (Kantola and Agustin 2019).

Women's representation within the European Parliament is vastly tricky and debated. While some believe that electoral systems have a significant impact, others find evidence to be contrary to that. However, one thing that is agreed upon is the influence that political parties have on the process of women being given leadership positions, chosen as an initial nominee for a party to run for the EP, and even the actions and decisions made by female legislators while a

MEP. The statistics show that while there is a low number of women within the EP that it is progressing and women have been more represented in the EP than any other generation.

Why do women legislators receive specific committee assignments?

While researching the committees in the European Parliament, there will be a few limitations, one being that there is very limited research concerning committees in general, let alone women's representation. Therefore, it will be imperative to add onto and take into consideration the few studies that are out there and that will be the basis for my task of determining leadership and the role of gender in specific. Many researchers have looked into the U.S. Congress, U.K. Parliament, and other Western institutions. However, not many have delved into the EP, specifically committee assignments and the question of gender balance. While there's a difference between legislative committee assignments and cabinet appointments, some of the work on the latter can help to generate expectations about the former.

An early explanation comes from Bowler and Farrell, who first came up with the evidence to support that the EP has become increasingly an important institution, and that parties have become involved in committees to push their policies (1995). It argues that going deeper and looking at whether specialization is being developed by MEPs as a consequence of the committee system is the vital part. Specialization is a good thing, but that overall institutional preferences, by parties, take precedence over individual interests, seeing as parties recognize the legislative power held within committees; this spills over into leadership positions, as parties will attempt to control who achieves these positions. What is important to note about this study is that it was done at a time when the EP had a different level of importance granted to committees, and therefore may not place as high a value on the system and may present contrasting evidence, as Gail McElroy notes in her study on committee representation (2005).

Other statistics that are imperative are the breakdown of leadership and basic numbers of women's representation throughout the 20 committees, as they are often a place where the base work is done before legislation is sent to the plenary for a vote and where an enormous amount of influence can be exerted. From 2004 - 2007, five were chaired by a woman and were well represented in the Women's Rights Committee and Internal Market and Consumption with over fifty percent women, while Legal Affairs, Security and Defense, and a few others had less than twenty percent meaning "committee work continues to be segregated on the basis of gender" (Kantola 2009). This presents a clearer picture of the committees my research should be focused on.

One study and book written by Rebecca Davis explains the broad basis for what we understand to be prominent trends among European democracies. The study looks at fifteen countries, all but one of which is a member of the European Union, the exception being Norway. It connects representation to elections and the institutional set-up of parliaments, as well as the broader representation of women within parliaments and cabinets and in leadership positions (Davis 1992, 2-3). There are a set of informal rules that parties and government leaders play when it comes to appointing women to positions of power and nominating them to be on the ballot and eligible for parliament and national legislatures. When it comes to cabinet assignments or portfolio allocations held by women, the numbers over the years have increased, but it has not been a unidirectional change (Davis 1992, 14). While looking at women's committee assignments, it is noted that portfolios are allocated to them based on traditional roles and occupations that women have been given in past history. This means portfolios such as family-youth, education, health, and social welfare are the top four portfolios that are assigned to women (Davis 1992, 16). Female representation within a cabinet is also dependent upon the

gender of the prime minister, as there is a strong correlation between a female prime minister and a larger proportion of women in government. This shows women are encouraged to participate by other visible women in leadership positions and roles, but the catch is that with less important and more 'feminine' portfolios means less visibility and less opportunity (Davis 1992, 18-21). It is evidential that leadership positions are important to women's representation within these Western democracies.

Often within European governments, there are portfolios that are assigned to ministers of a government of a parliament, as mentioned by Davis. By looking at how portfolios are distributed to female ministers compared to male ministers, we can establish how both women and each individual issue area are viewed. Goodard hypothesizes that party leaders and their attitudes shape how portfolios are allocated (2019). As established in previous literature, policy areas are divided up into more 'feminine areas' compared to 'neutral' and 'masculine' portfolios, including another category where they are put in 'core' or less salient, meaning less important, portfolios (Goodard 2019). It is important to note that there is significant debate surrounding what constitutes feminine and masculine areas. This differentiation may also occur differently across cultures and countries. Alternatively, Yordanova (2009) similarly did this division with committees and assigned them to "more important" versus "less important" committees, as well as dividing them up further based on output from a committee, such as if regulations or purely overarching policy is produced. Overall, women are less likely to be given a highly salient and 'core' portfolio compared to male ministers. Ideology also plays a role and does across the board when it comes to Western democracies, in that left-wing parties will have a greater amount of women's representation, and therefore will be less prone to assigning female ministers what Goodard considers 'feminine' portfolios such as health and family. This builds on to what Davis

has researched as this is a much more current and up to date study (Goodard 2019). Since gender trends within national governments have an impact on the EP and other EU institutions and vice versa, this study is critical in understanding how women are assigned to certain tasks and areas of domestic politics. This could be understood in terms of how female MEPs are assigned committees in the EP, and whether more women are assigned to certain committees relative to others, which is an issue that my research plans on tackling and trying to explain.

Building upon this trend of women being assigned to low prestige policy areas is explaining the recent surge in women's representation within cabinets. While some countries are experiencing these trends of women and their allocation to low salience policy areas, others have had a shift towards an increasing number of women in cabinet positions. Political factors, rather than social ones, have the greatest impact and come the closest to explaining this trend (Krook and O'Brien 2012). These political factors include having more women among the political 'elite,' and while analyzing a dataset of 117 countries increasing women in leadership was found in "three times as many countries" compared to the variable "design of political institutions" (Krook and O'Brien 2012). By being elected to more political offices and being able to access political networks previously not open to women, women are able to gain greater influence and access to the political system. Krook and O'Brien suggest that getting more women in this position could be achieved through steps such as implementing gender quotas, a step found to be beneficial in other studies (2012).

One landmark study, completed by McElroy, which tackles the issue of whether or not committees are representative of the EP as a whole, which includes gender (2006). It argues that the importance of the role of committees has increased, and therefore should be a greater area of study and focus on the individual members of parliament (MEP), as it allows greater

understanding of the ideological standpoints of those who belong to each committee, which is one reason for my research.

The research of McElroy finds three things that are vital: that the committee members strongly reflect the overall representation of the EP, that members have policy-specific expertise that pertains to their committee assignment, and that their views and ideological beliefs along party and policy lines don't differ drastically from what is already present in the EP (2006). This core finding of continuous proportionality over time comes from there being no deviance in any of the committees, meaning the EP strove to obey the 'Rules of Procedure' that require this strict proportionality and truly stuck to it, creating "no systematic bias," whether that be partisan or ideological (McElroy 2006). Gender is a variable included, and one small but striking piece of evidence found is that female MEPs are more likely to be assigned to the Environment and Public Health Committee than male MEPs (McElroy 2006). This provokes the question of why, and how this might have to do with traditionally 'masculine' versus 'feminine' portfolios and how committees may play into gender stereotypes, which is researched more later on.

One study that specifically addresses and attempts to add onto the evidence presented by McElroy is shown in a study conducted by Nikoleta Yordanova. Instead of it being over time, this study focuses strictly on the 6th European Parliament, which may be limiting in seeing how patterns emerge over time. It studies the same main questions as McElroy as well as adding on whether committee assignments serve outside interests (2009). What Yordanova does well in continuing to further explore committees and that serves this research study well is the division of committees based on their output, whether that's regulatory or distributive - meaning decisions affect specific interests or areas, as well as based on whether it's information or interests driven. They are also categorized by "more powerful" or "less powerful," which is one

area that is connected to gender as is. This is similar to a lot of research conducted around the U.S. Congress, and is a similar focus on the model used for looking at the U.S. legislative body. This characterization allows a fuller look at how each committee is viewed, and how this may affect MEPs assignment and the committee system as well as implicit interests in the system (Yordanova 2009). Building upon McElroy's findings, Yordanova also found committees to be representative of the EP but disputes the ideological theory by saying more research needs to be done due to possible data flaws (2009). It also brings up the distributive theory, linking election times as ideal for interest groups to promote their candidates and ideas. As stated before, it seems as though election cycles and parties are imperative for allowing a broad representation of gender and viewpoints, and this is further evidence to support that it is a critical time for not only women's representation, but for other candidates with specific ideas such as interest groups. Elections are critical to gaining legislative power, and this leads to the argument by Whitaker that states national parties should have a vested interest in European Parliament elections. As Yordanova links committee power to elections, Whitaker does the same as well as elaborating on how committees provide a further outlet for power and influence.

Committees have grown in power as the European Parliament has gained more importance within the legislative process, as they are often where a lot of the work is done other than in the plenary. Therefore, the committees should be just as powerful and have just as much focus on as the main chamber (Whitaker 2011, 17). The study conducted by Whitaker connected national parties to committees to argue the necessity for them to have a more vested interest in the EP and emphasize how this affects domestic affairs. One particular measure used by Whitaker and the authors previously mentioned in this section is the Nominat score, which is an algorithm commonly used for legislative bodies, including the United States Congress and helps

to elaborate on certain variables using data such as roll-call votes and characterize a “policy space” (McElroy, 2006). In this study, it uses it to find that “committee contingents are largely representative of the preferences of national parties” (Whitaker 2011, 121). However, in McElroy it is used in the context of determining the representativeness of the committees compared to the EP, which was established earlier on as being an accurate assessment.

Overall, the findings support the original hypothesis and argument and shows that national parties do not neglect committees and will successfully use them to further their policy objectives by ensuring their representativeness on those that have more importance (Whitaker 2011, 120). It also finds evidence to support the claim that MEPs that have relevant EU experience and have more specific expertise at the national level when it comes to either committees or the EU is a huge indicator of who is awarded leadership positions (Whitaker 2011 121). This could potentially raise an issue when women seek leadership positions, as this more specific expertise could be another obstacle to a higher position within the institution, and adds onto the earlier argument set forth by Bowler and Farrell that parties see importance in the committee system and want to control who achieves leadership positions to increase their ability to influence the legislative system (1995).

Petra Ahrens has a more relevant and recent study that is closely connected to my research, since many of the previous articles are helpful in understanding committees and the system but not necessarily a closer look at gender or one specific committee. This comes in the form of looking at the Women’s Rights and Gender Equality Committee, or the FEMM Committee. This is a unique case, as it deals directly with the very subject being researched as well as examining closer the importance and emphasis on the subject at the EU level, seeing how MEPs and the EU responds to gender issues within the committee system. The FEMM

Committee has ‘neutralized’ status, since its membership is voluntary and has traditionally been seen as a downside, as MEPs may not want to accept the extra workload of a committee that is perceived to have little influence (Ahrens 2016). However, it benefits from being voluntary in three areas: institutional persistence, thematic inclusion, and networked integration. This includes having a committee fully of MEPs who have personal interest in the area, and results in the committee being able to have strong networks with other compulsory committees, resulting in a large network and a foot in the door in a variety of policy areas. This is the one committee interested solely in gender issues, and it keeps the idea of gender at the forefront of policy and can work across political parties and make use of rules and policies to their advantage in the name of gender issues (Ahrens 2016). Lise Agustín also takes a look into the role of the FEMM committee and its place not in the committee system but in the general world of gender itself. The committee holds hearings that allow discussion and discourse about gender issues and in politics, but it is political groups that ultimately determine who speaks at the hearings and what is talked about. On top of that, there has been a surge in challenging gender ideals from conservative focusing actors, and the FEMM committee has been one spot for that (Agustín, 2012).

Why do women behave differently than men as legislators?

Within the context of legislatures, it is evident that women behave differently than men in terms of policy creation, sponsoring of bills, and in other policy decisions. One area of focus surrounding this question is the United States Congress, where multiple studies have been conducted looking into these specific differences. One measurement that can be used to determine the effectiveness of women versus men in terms of policy is the amount of bills they sponsor along with amount of spending secured, as looked at by Anzia and Berry. To start, they

argue that women and men are elected differently, and that the electorate process is where the differences between the two genders emerge (2011). This so-called “sex-based selection” is argued to drive female legislators to be more successful than men due to the fact that women elected are more qualified and held to a higher standard than their male counterparts. Women outperform men in both securing more federal funding, not just in Congress but other branches of government, and significantly sponsor more bills and are able to secure more cosponsors than men (Anzia and Berry 2011).

Another study that builds upon women legislator’s effectiveness is done by Volden, Wiseman, and Wittmer. The three authors come to the same conclusion that Anzia and Berry come to: that women can outperform men. However, they make a few more distinctions that Anzia and Berry do not. They conclude that a female legislator in a minority party is able to introduce and sponsor more bills, getting them further along in the legislative process, due to women being more willing than men to “reach across the aisle” and be keener to do policy work with the other party compared to what their male counterparts do: block legislation and stay more polarized (2013). However, this advantage is reduced when a woman belongs to the majority party.

These two studies establish that women in the U.S. Congress will behave differently than men. It has been established that policy makers behave differently based on their gender, and I will aim to address that within my research in this thesis. Overall, the issue of committees and assignment will be an important task to research and to extend upon the already present literature on this topic going forward. Keeping in mind the patterns established in this section will be vital: the importance of election cycles on legislative influence, parties and their involvement in the committee system, the advantage of specialization and prior experience in achieving leadership

positions, as well as the division of committees into more ‘masculine’ and more ‘feminine’ roles and how that plays a role in committee allocations. Therefore, I present multiple hypotheses regarding women’s representation in committees and in leadership roles as derived from the literature. Following are five hypotheses:

*H*₁: Committees will show gendered patterns of assignment.

*H*₂: Women will be disproportionately tasked with serving on low-prestige and/or “feminine” committees.

*H*₃: Left parties will have less marked gender discrepancies than right parties.

*H*₄: Less women are afforded leadership positions on committees compared to men.

*H*₅: Women as committee chairs will govern differently than men as committee chairs.

I conduct research into these hypotheses in the forthcoming sections by looking at committees more closely through a compiled dataset of MEPs from 2014 to 2017. I also conduct a focused comparison between committee chairs of the Committee on Petitions and Budgets, allowing insight into the fifth and final hypothesis.

Data and Methodology

The dataset compiled in this research is composed of multiple categories: name of a MEP, gender, domestic political party, EP party group, committee 1, 2, and 3, subcommittee 1 and 2. The unit of analysis is the individual MEP. For each MEP that was present in the Parliament on 1 July 2014, I coded the gender, national political party membership, EP party group membership, and names of the committee/s that the member was a part of. For each committee, I coded whether the MEP was a member (0=not a member; 1=member), vice-chair (0=not a vice-chair; 1=vice-chair), or chair (0=not a chair; 1=chair). On top of that, I coded if a MEP held a leadership position of being president, vice-president, or quaestor for the whole of

the European Parliament (1=not president, vice-president, or quaestor; 1=president, vice-president, quaestor). This was recorded as it would assist in revealing how many women compared to men held leadership positions, which will assist in research in the second section, “Comparison of Committee Leadership.”

Due to the variable nature and seat changes within the Parliament, there were time restrictions to the data able to be recorded. To keep the data consistent, the only members (n=751) that were recorded were ones who had their seat on 1/7/14 and any membership in a committee or a party was counted only if they had membership in that party or committee on 1/7/14. Many members would later join or switch committees later in the term, with many switching committees after the two- and half-year mandate. However, to get a full picture of the plenary and the composition of committees, it was best to limit the data to the composition of the parliament and committees to this certain date. There are EP party groups (n=8) along with domestic political parties, and while there were not many changes in a member’s EP party group affiliation, domestic party affiliation appeared to change often in smaller countries, of which was not limited by gender. I gathered all of this information by going through each individual MEP’s profile on the European Parliament website. On this page, not only was I able to gather information pertaining each individual’s party affiliation and committee assignment, but it also listed their leadership roles and participation in delegations. A delegation within the European Parliament is a group of MEPs that focuses solely on EP relations with countries not in the EU and with countries across the globe. For example, within North America there is a delegation for relations with the United States and one for relations with Canada. It appeared within my research that while many women may not have had a leadership position within a committee, they often took on a role within their EP party group or in a delegation. While this was limited in

my research and I was only able to record and look at data regarding women's leadership roles on committees, as this is my main goal in researching, this would be a path for future research.

Therefore, the dependent variables in this research are: (i) the percentage of women/men on each standing committee and (ii) the percentage of women/men with a leadership position (chair or vice-chair) within a committee. The independent variable of interest is the EP party.

Despite any limitations within a time frame, by collecting and looking at data between male and female and specifically the divisions between men and women on a committee level, we will be able to see differences that are more minute than general representation at the general parliamentary level. By comparing the gender balance in each committee, understanding how each party distributes women's membership within the range of committees, and seeing how many women take on leadership positions compared to men, whether that is in committees themselves or in some sort of capacity for the EP such as vice-president or even quaestor, we are better able to answer the aforementioned hypotheses. We can address these questions: *How equally distributed are women among committees, Are women assigned to more "feminine" and "less important" committees than men, How does party affect gender balance across committees, and How many leadership positions are afforded to women?*

The goal of this first section is to address the first four hypotheses derived from the literature review to determine the extent to which the composition and leadership of EP committees are gender imbalanced. As stated earlier, women who are assigned to less "important" and responsibility-heavy committees consistently are afforded less visibility, which can poorly impact their representation and voice within the European Parliament (Davis 1992).

The first and third hypotheses will be examined by looking at the percentage of women within parties and within each committee, as will be examined by Table 1. Parties that have an

ideology that is more left leaning, or more liberal parties such as the Greens/EFA or GUE-NGL, compared to their more conservative and right counterparts, like the EPP, are expected to have a larger percentage of women in their party membership to begin with. Therefore, if there is a greater number of women and these left parties are closer to gender parity than others, we can expect committee membership to reflect that.

The second and fourth hypotheses will be addressed by examining the differences in percentages of women across each standing committee as well as the distribution of women across committee leadership positions. I expect the raw numbers to reveal that less women are chairs of committees compared to men, on top of more women belonging to less prestigious or salient committees such as Culture and Education and Employment and Social Affairs.

Since establishing how gender plays a role in portfolio allocation and how this may inhibit a rise in the ranks for women, I expect that the same patterns seen in national legislatures will apply within the context of the European Parliament (EP). Therefore, by looking at the spread of women within leadership positions within committees, we can get a better understanding of how women are given responsibility and visibility, which will be investigated in the next section with a focused committee comparison.

Committees, Structure, and Leadership Appointment

Within a given committee, the structure consists of its members, four vice-chairs, and a chair. For two and a half years, they consist of a set of members that ranges between 25 and 81 members (European Parliament). Committees also have the ability to create their own subcommittees or special committees. For example, there are the Security and Defence and the Human Rights subcommittees under the Foreign Affairs Committee. These internally created portions of the committees often have more specific goals to address, such as the special committee on terrorism. Along with the regular members, there also consist of substitutes. While a member of parliament has their regular membership, they also have one or more committees they act as substitutes on. There are twenty permanent standing committees which reflect the plenary assembly in party makeup and are meant to be representative of the larger parliamentary body.

The available leadership positions to members are chair and vice-chairs, which are elected after the committee is formed. In this case, in the 8th parliament, the first round of committees picked those for leadership on July 7th, 2014. The chairs also form what is called the ‘Conference of Committee Chairs,’ which they are on in addition to any other committees they are a part of. In general, in compiling the data set of all MEPs, almost all, with the exception of a few MEPs, are on one committee. Some may choose to be on more than one, with the rare MEP choosing to be on three. Whether or not more women are on one committee or two compared to the number of committee men are on will be explored in this section.

Findings

In order to fully understand the gender balance of EP committees in greater detail, we must first understand how the standing committees compare to one another in terms of gender balance, as displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Gender Balance of Standing Committees, Least to Most

<i>Committee</i>	<i>Percentage of Women (%)</i>	<i>Number of Women</i>	<i>Total Number of Committee Members</i>
Constitutional Affairs (AFCO)	16	4	25
Foreign Affairs (AFET)	19.44	14	72
Budgetary Control (CONT)	23.33	7	30
Industry, Research, and Energy (ITRE)	24.24	16	66
Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON)	24.59	15	61
Development (DEVE)	26.92	7	26
Budgets (BUDG)	29.27	12	41
Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI)	31.11	14	45
Fisheries (PECH)	33.33	8	24
Regional Development (REGI)	36.36	16	44
International Trade (INTA)	36.59	15	41
<i>Plenary Assembly*</i>	<i>36.62</i>	<i>275</i>	<i>751</i>
Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO)	37.5	15	40
Transport and Tourism (TRAN)	42	21	50
Legal Affairs (JURI)	44	11	25
Environment, Public Health, and Food Safety (ENVI)	44.29	31	70
Culture and Education (CULT)	48.39	15	31
Civil Liberties, Justice, and Home Affairs (LIBE)	59.68	37	62
Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL)	60.71	34	56
Petitions (PETI)	62.86	22	35
Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM)	91.43	32	35

**As a comparative point of data, the percentage of women in the plenary assembly has been included*

As seen in Table 1, the percentage of women in each committee (n=20) is laid out, as is the percentage of women who are in the larger parliament. Each committee is intended to be

representative of the party makeup of the entire parliament, but the same does not apply to gender, as is indicative of the large range of representation among committees.

The least number of women is in the Constitutional Affairs committee, consisting of 16% of women. This is striking when compared to the 62.86% composing the Petitions committee. It is nearly split down the middle, with 11 of the committees being composed of less than the percentage of women in the EP and only 9 committees being greater than that. This could be a simple argument against McElroy's point about committee members being representative of the EP as a whole (2006). However, that would only take the percentages of gender and how that is balanced across committees and specifically in the first half of the 8th parliament, which may not be true for all parliamentary sessions.

Looking at the specific committees themselves in the context of portfolio allocation and how more "important" committees may have more men assigned to them than women, we can see that this may be true to an extent. Typically, more "masculine" committees have some of the least percentages of women: Foreign Affairs, Budgetary Control, and Economic and Monetary Affairs all consist of less than 30% of women. Compare this to more "feminine" committees such as Culture and Education and Employment and Social Affairs, where women make up nearly 50% or more of the committee. This confirms the idea that women are less likely to have membership within a committee that has "more importance," or dictates more of the problems the EP faces when it comes to economic and international issues, which generally take up more agenda space.

Over the committees, we can break the findings further by dividing the percentages of women in committees over EP political party as displayed in Table 1. This allows us to see whether or not more right leaning party groups have less representation of women within their

party and within their respective committees. By looking at Table 2, we are able to see the general representation of women across committees on a party basis.

Table 2. Percentage of Women on Committees Across EP Political Party

<i>EP Party</i>	<i>Average Number of Women on a Committee (%)</i>	<i>Least Number of Women on a Committee (%)</i>	<i>Highest Number of Women on a Committee (%)</i>	<i>Percentage of Women in Party Groups (%)</i>	<i>Min % Women on a Committee</i>	<i>Max % Women on a Committee</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
EPP	33.9	7.7	90	31.22	7.7 (REGI)	90 (FEMM) 50 (EMPL)	17.33
S&D	47.9	11.1	100	45.45	11.1 (AFET)	100 (FEMM) 83.3 (JURI)	23.6
ECR	24.7	0	100	21.43	0 (DEVE/ BUDG/CONT/ ITRE/JURI/AFCO)	100 (FEMM) 60 (EMPL)	24.75
ALDE	40.81	0	100	36.49	0 (DEVE/PECH/ JURI/AFCO)	100 (FEMM/EMPL/ PETI)	33.22
Greens/EFA	47.83	0	100	42	0 (CONT/ITRE/ IMCO/AGRI/ FCO)	100 (PETI/CULT/ REGI/DEVE/ EMPL)	38
EFDD	42.2	0	100	37.5	0 (DEVE/BUDG/ ECON/ITRE/ PECH/CONT)	100 (CULT/JURI/ FEMM)	35.6
GUE/NGL	50.67	0	100	50	0 (IMCO/CULT/ JURI)	100 (LIBE/BUDG/ FEMM)	30.48
NI	31.6	0	100	26.92	0 (AFET/DEVE/ CONT/REGI/ PECH/AFCO)	100 (FEMM/PETI)	29.94

Table 2 reveals the balance of women across party group. While there is a wide range of information we can gather from the percentages displayed by each party's average amount of women in each permanent committee, it is unclear from both the highest and least amount categories. This is due to both overall party size as well as the FEMM (Women's Rights and Gender Equality) committee. Since both the EPP and S&D are the largest two party groups

within the European Parliament, they have the ability to allocate an appropriate number of members across all committees. Therefore, the least number of women in a committee is discernible in those two party groups unlike the other six. Due to the smaller number of women in the other party groups, they are unable to allocate as many members, sometimes only assigning one female or one male member to certain committees. Therefore, they have a greater number of committees that have all women or all men since only one or two members of either sex may be assigned. Therefore, that is why the least number of women on a committee show mainly '0.'

On the other extreme, the highest number of women show '100' percent due not only to party size, as discussed, but also because of the FEMM Committee. This committee consists almost solely of women, with the exception of 3 male members out of a total number of members at 32. Therefore, most party groups will achieve a '100' percent of members within this category, explaining why each party has such an immense range. Aside from these two exceptions, the average number of women is very revealing when it comes to figuring out which party groups are closer to reaching gender parity in their allocation of women across committees compared to others.

Overall, the best performing party in terms of women's representation during this initial period of elections to the EP in 2014 is GUE/NGL at a 50.67% average of women across committees compared to the worst performing party, ECR, at 24.7%. It is striking since each party is smaller in size, and while GUE/NGL has reached a high representation, ECR remains at having women represented across committees very poorly. As expected, the more left-leaning party groups such as GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA have a high average as does S&D. On the other end are the more right-leaning party groups that have a lower average of women are ECR and

EPP. Overall these findings indicate that party has an effect on the membership of women in committees.

The minimum and maximum percentage of women on committees as divided up by party group reveals that many party groups assign the most and least number of women to the similar committees. Of all of the committees, most party groups have the greatest number of women in the FEMM committee. Other than the FEMM committee, they also assign many women to Employment and Social Affairs, which as we know from Table 1, has one of the highest percentages of women. One party group that breaks away from the rest in terms of their allocation of women is GUE/NGL. Along with having the best gender balance of all the party groups, they assigned the highest apportionment of women to a committee that is considered more prestigious and typically associated with male dominance: Budgets. That committee has the worst gender balance of them all, and GUE/NGL assigned all women to it, along with FEMM and LIBE. While this shows an attempt at gender balance from GUE/NGL, they seem to be the exception as the rest of the party groups follow a familiar trend of assigning women to what are considered less prestigious committees: Petitions, Culture and Education, and Employment and Social Affairs.

It can be assumed that the standard deviation would play a large role, as parties that care more about gender balance would have a smaller deviation and those that care less would have a higher standard deviation. However, many of the smaller parties have lots of instances where there are 0% women on a committee. This is because they do not have the numbers like larger groups, such as the EPP or S&D might have, and therefore do not have the ability to stretch members across all committees evenly. Instead of looking at the smaller party groups and their standard deviation, we can still glean information out of the larger parties that may not have any

committees with no women. Looking at the EPP and S&D groups, you can see that EPP has a smaller standard deviation in comparison to S&D, despite have a smaller average percentage of women on a committee. However, this value cannot be compared to every other party within the data and cannot be as reliable as the other measures listed.

The number of committees that members are on was also researched when it comes to gender balance to answer this question: are women more likely to be on multiple committees compared to men? Table 3 displays the balance of men and women and comparing the percentage of women versus men who are on only one committee, are on two committees, or who are on three, or none at all.

Table 3. Gender on Number of Committee Memberships

<i>Number of Committee Memberships</i>	<i>Number of Men</i>	<i>Number of Women</i>	<i>Percentage of Men (%)</i>	<i>Percentage of Women (%)</i>
1 Committee	400	204	84.03	74.18
2 Committees	64	62	13.44	22.54
3 Committees	2	6	0.42	2.18
None	10	3	2.1	1.1

The noticeable finding here is that there is a higher percentage of women on more than one committee compared to men. Both the majority of men and women are on only one committee, but when it comes to looking at whether or not someone is on a second committee, there is a higher chance of it being a female MEP than a male MEP. The percentage of women on 2 or 3 committees is higher than men by 10.86%. The ‘None’ category consists mainly of members who have a position within EP leadership, such as Vice-President or President of the Parliament. It would appear from the number of women who take on extra committees is that they are assigned to committees that have less of a workload, allowing them to take on extra responsibilities and committees. This would imply that women are assigned to committees that

have less of a burden on their time and resources, meaning that they are able to take on extra committees, and therefore are being assigned to those that are of less prestige. It shows that male MEPs may not feel the need to take on extra committees or are unable to due to time constraints from the one committee they are assigned to. This is most likely because they are assigned to more prestigious committees, and ones that fulfill their time and requirements more than ones female MEPs are assigned to. Leadership appointments are also vital point to look into when trying to see any possible gender disparities.

Leadership positions are a point of my findings that are displayed in Table 4. Unlike the rest of the figures, this table includes the two subcommittees of the Foreign Affairs committee: Human Rights and Security and Defence.

Table 4. Gender in Leadership Positions

<i>Leadership Position</i>	<i>Number of Men</i>	<i>Number of Women</i>	<i>Percentage of Women in Position (%)</i>
Vice-Chair	53	35	39.8
Chair	12	10	45.5
Quaestor	3	2	40
Vice-President	8	6	42.86
President	1	0	0

On committees, there are two possible leadership positions, vice-chair and chair. However, there are other leadership positions within the European Parliament, which include Quaestor, Vice-President, and President of the EP. I decided to include those positions as well as they are another aspect of representation across the EP itself outside of committees. The percentage of women in leadership positions when it comes to men is not completely equal, but it is pretty close to gender parity in these leadership positions. The position with the highest percentage of women that hold that title is the chair of committees at 49.5%, which is arguably

the position with the highest amount of authority on committees. The lowest percentage is due to there being only one President of the EP, so naturally it will be 0% for women since only one person can have the position and a male was elected. The overall percentage of women, while under 50% in all leadership positions, there is a higher percentage out of the entire plenary of women having a leadership position on a committee (16.36%) compared to men (13.66%). Overall, the balance of women and men taking on committee leadership positions such as these vice-chair and chair positions is almost 50% women and 50% men. This is striking as while it may not show invisible barriers to women achieving these positions, it may not show immediately from the numbers.

From these findings, we can determine that gender plays a role in determining which committee a MEP will be assigned to. The percentage of women across committees and broken down by party groups shows that women are typically assigned to what are typically known as less prestigious committees compared to more prestigious ones such as Budgets and Foreign Affairs. This is further backed up by more female MEPs taking on more than one committee compared to their male counterparts. It can be deduced that women take on more than one committee as they have more time and resources on their hands if they are assigned to a less salient committee. The gender balance is better among more left leaning party groups, such as GUE/NGL, but across the board follows the trends that the previous literature has established: that women are assigned to less prestigious committees compared to men.

Comparison of Committee Leadership

Having analyzed the general structure and division of committees based on gender, we can look at leadership at a smaller scale and how gender may influence the ways that European

Parliament committees function. Testing the fifth hypothesis, I have created a structured, focused committee comparison between different gender two committee chairs to see if and how women behave differently than men in these leadership roles within committees. Looking at different legislative activities will allow further insight into the extent of which women chairs act differently compared to men. I predict that female chairs perform more and are more engaged politically than male chairs, testing that by looking at two different gender chairs within the standing committees.

By looking more closely at the innerworkings of EP committees, we can begin to understand whether and how gender affects committee leadership and the ways that committees function. A zoomed in look at a small number of committees and their leaders has the tendency to be more explanatory. Still, this section proceeds from the assumption that careful research design can yield valuable insights. To that end, I have conducted a focused comparison of “most similar” committee chairs by taking two committees and comparing specific functions. This structured, focused comparison allows us to see striking similarities and differences in the ways that men and women lead committees and the ways that gender influences committees on a more intimate level. I will be examining how female chairs might behave differently than male chairs, as well as the idea that committees with a higher percentage of women will behave differently compared to committees with a higher percentage of men.

I have chosen to examine the Committee on Petitions and the Committee on Budgets during the 8th parliamentary term (2014-2019). By keeping the parliamentary term constant, we can use the previous data to determine which committees would be most beneficial to study and most useful for determining the influence gender has within committee workings. First, the committees were chosen by determining which were most female and male-heavy using the data

from “Committees, Structure, and Leadership Appointment.” As expected, the FEMM Committee is comprised of almost one-hundred percent women. However, taking into consideration committees in terms of prestige, it was important to choose two committees of equal prestige and the FEMM Committee generally is not as prestigious as other potential committees. Listed is a table adapted from Yordanova (2009) and her classification of “more” versus “less” powerful committees:

Table 5. Classification of EP Committees Based on Their Output and Power

	<i>More powerful committees</i>	<i>Less powerful committees</i>
Information-driven committees with predominantly regulatory output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgets (BUG) • Transport and Tourism (TRAN) • Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) • Legal Affairs (JURI) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreign Affairs (AFET) • Development (DEVE) • International Trade (CONT) • Budgetary Control (CONT) • Constitutional Affairs (AFCO) • Petitions (PETI)
Interest-driven committees with predominantly distributive output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture (AGRI) • Fisheries (PECH) • Regional Development (REGI)
Mixed committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON) • Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) • Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) • Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) • Culture and Education (CULT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM)

Note: Adapted from Yordanova, Nikoleta. 2009. “The Rationale behind Committee Assignment in the European Parliament.” *European Union Politics* 10 (2): 253–80.

As indicated, Yordanova believes that the FEMM committee is “less powerful” compared to others. It has been described as being a ‘neutral’ committee and having significantly less legislative power and having a weak position compared to the rest of the committees (Ahrens 2016). It is also described as having a ‘neutral’ position, compared to the rest of the committees. Along with its neutral status, it traditionally been a voluntary committee and therefore not viewed in the same regard as other committees. The attempts to abolish it in recent years and its disregard puts it at a different power level than the other committees (Ahrens 2016). Due to these factors, it would not have been a suitable committee to compare since it is difficult to research the influences of gender on a committee solely dedicated to women’s rights and gender equality on top of this weak legislative position on top of its neutralized and voluntary status.

Therefore, Petitions and Budgets were chosen for comparison. On top of ensuring that each committee was either heavily male or female membership, the chair for the female-heavy committee had to be a woman and the male-heavy chair had to be a man. Past this requirement, to keep things as constant as possible, I attempted to make sure that both chairs belonged to the same party group and the same home country. However, there simply are not enough chairs that match both the party and gender requirements and therefore they are not from the same country. Despite this, the two chairs belong to the same party group: ALDE. The chair for Petitions who was first selected during the first half of the 8th parliamentary term is Cecilia Wikström from Sweden. The chair for Budgets is Jean Arthuis from France. Despite the country difference, it helps that both Sweden and France are Western European countries and therefore are not geographically different.

In the 8th session, ALDE was composed of 40.81% women, which was behind GUE/NGL, S&D, and Greens/EFA, accordingly, in terms of gender balance and the largest

representation of women within a party group. The ideological leanings of ALDE are closer to centre, focused on liberalism. According to Kantola and Agustín, "...ALDE [has a] relatively strong gender equality profile..." when it comes to "women as MEPs, at leadership level and among committee co-ordinators" (2019). ALDE is split on policies, being "located to the right on economic policy but to the left on social conservatism" (McElroy and Benoit 2011). Knowing this, we can make the assumption that the majority of MEPs would agree with the advancement of gender equality and a generally supportive stance on women's representation. However, an important note to consider that is presented by McElroy and Benoit is that ALDE is quite a diverse group, and therefore may be less homogenous on where each member stands on policy (2011). Taking this into consideration, we consider that most ALDE members lean towards increasing women's representation in the EU.

The percentage of women in Petitions compared to Budgets is the largest difference when taking into account the aforementioned requirements of party and gender. The percentage of women on Petitions is 62.86%, the second highest percentage of women on a committee, right behind Women's Rights and Gender Equality. Looking at Budgets, of their membership there is 29.27% women. Compared to the rest of the committees, they have the 7th lowest percentage of women out of the twenty standing committees. Looking back at Table 1, we can see that this percentage is still below the percentage of women in the plenary assembly at 36.62%.

When examining the committee percentages against the gender of the chair for each, there was an interesting trend of male-heavy committees having female chairs and vice versa for female-heavy committees. For example, the committee with the lowest percentage of women, Constitutional Affairs, has a female chair: Danuta Huebner (EPP, Poland) as does Budgetary Control: Ingeborg Grässle (EPP, Germany) which has the third lowest percentage of women

right behind Foreign Affairs. Meanwhile, the female-heavy committee Civil Liberties, Justice, and Home Affairs that has the greatest number of women and a high percentage of women at 59.68% is chaired by Claude Moraes (S&D, U.K.). Further research could be done on examining if this trend continued over time and occurred in other parliamentary terms.

The difference in percentage of women between the two committees is the greatest between two committees that could have potentially be chosen to research. Therefore, I chose Petitions and Budgets, being able to keep constant party and gender on committee with the greatest difference in percentage of female membership possible. To examine these two, there are multiple qualifications that I measured the two committees against.

For the purposes of this analysis, and bearing in mind the functions that all EP committees undertake, I chose to look at four dimensions of inner workings: agendas, social media, and post-leadership roles by committee chairs, to compare the two and see how gender may influence the day to day workings of EP Committees. I looked at multiple categories to compare the two: (i) rapporteur assignments, (ii) social media presence, and (iii) post-chair role. This will allow the closest examination of the differences and similarities between the two committees.

Rapporteur Assignment

While not a discretionary prerogative of the chair, rapporteur assignment falls to parties competing for rapporteur assignments through a points system based on party size. It is then up to the committees themselves to then elect a fellow MEP to be assigned the report to draft up (European Parliament 2006). Therefore, this shows that the composition of the committee will have an effect on how rapporteur assignment is conducted. If a committee is more women-heavy

or more male-heavy, or leans more towards one party or the other, this will have an effect on who is assigned rapporteur.

The assignment of rapporteurs is listed within the agendas and minutes of each committee. Within committees, rapporteurs are assigned to prepare a report on how they believe the rest of the MEPs should vote. The allocation of these assignments is influential in helping direct the way the committee votes. Therefore, looking at the proportion of men versus women who are allocated rapporteur assignments is vital to discerning through a gendered lens the way that committees function.

When it comes to the Committee on Petitions, the most “woman heavy” committee at 62.86% women aside from the Women’s Rights and Gender Equality committee, there appeared to be quite a large significance when it came to the gendering of committee assignments. Of the rapporteur assignments, 12 of the 14 (85.7%) rapporteurs during this 2014-2017 8th session were women. Of these women, three were vice-chairs and one was the chair. Of the fourteen members, 2 men were rapporteurs.

The Committee on Budgets, a “man heavy” committee at 29.27% women, shows an entirely different story as 11 out of 41 (26.83%) rapporteurs were female compared to the 30 male rapporteurs. The percentage of women rapporteurs is even lower than the percentage of women on the committee to begin with at 26.83%. This shows that if there is a large number of female memberships, this will be reflected in the choices within rapporteur assignment. Since Budgets is male majority and Petitions is female majority, it reflects within who is assigned to be a rapporteur.

Social Media Presence

Communications has been expected to be different between men and women. For example, it has been suggested in previous literature that men are more likely to use social media compared to women (Scherpereel, Wohlgemuth, and Schmelzinger, 2016). Therefore, I look specifically at quantity and quality of tweets from Wikström and Arthuis.

The social media presence of individual committees is very limited. Looking at the listing of the social networks that belong to the European Union and more specifically the European Parliament, it appears that the committees all have almost identical social media pages. All of the committees are limited to Twitter and have identical pages as seen below:



Figure 1. Twitter Homepages of the Committee on Petitions and Budgets

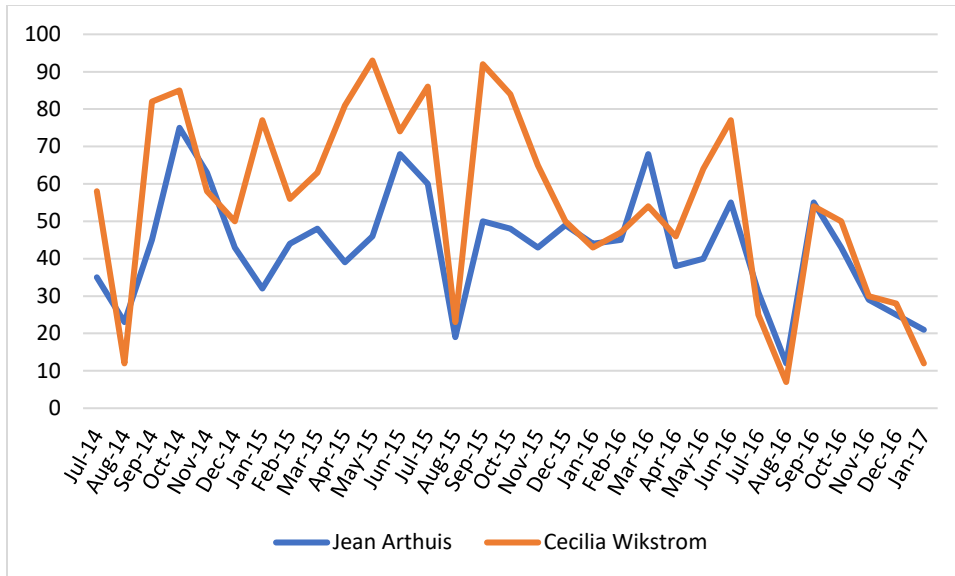
The coordination of press pages across the committees and European Union in general seems to be common. They have around the same number of followers at under 10,000 and are reaching a similar size audience. When looking at the tweets themselves on the individual pages, there tends to be a lot of overlap in terms of content and the focus is primarily on the committee and overall work of the EP itself.

Instead of looking at the social media of the committees themselves, it may be more helpful to take a look at the social media presence of the committee chairs. Similar to the committee accounts, the two chairs Wikström and Arthuis are present mainly only on Twitter.

while they both have Instagram accounts, Wikström's account is private while Arthuis posts very inconsistently. Both have a negligible number of followers and therefore focus solely on their Twitter accounts which appears to be the main way they reach their constituents. Comparing Wikström and Arthuis, there are a couple of main differences when initially looking at their social media presence. Arthuis has approximately 25,500 followers at the date of writing this (October 2020) while Wikström has 8,746 followers. They both created their Twitter profiles at different times, with Arthuis joining Twitter in January 2010 and Wikström in March 2012. The number of followers reveals that Arthuis has a larger audience to reach with his tweets compared to Wikström. As found by Scherpereel, Wohlgemuth, and Schmelzinger, "there is no evidence men and women behave differently [on Twitter]" (2016) which will be considered when looking at the quantity of tweets compared to one another as well as what each individual is tweeting about: whether they're retweeting, creating original tweets, and how often they interact with others.

Compared to their respective committee accounts, they tweet about varying subjects rather than solely committee news and events. The two accounts tweet about a multitude of things but can mainly be divided up into multiple subjects: committee dealings, EP and EU news, international politics and news, and personal topics. Overall, Wikström tweets more about every subject area, solely due to the large quantity that she tweets in comparison to Arthuis. In total, during the time period of July 1st 2014 to January 18th 2017, Arthuis tweeted 1383 times compared to Wikström at 2152, almost twice that of her colleague. On average, Arthuis would tweet 45 times a month while Wikström would tweet 69 times. This variation of tweets was comprised of original tweets as well as replies and the occasional Twitter poll.

Figure 2. Quantity of Tweets from Jean Arthuis and Cecilia Wikström during 8th Plenary



As indicated by the statistics and the above figure, it further shows the amount of times Wikström would tweet is much more than what Arthuis would regularly tweet. However, what is more striking about the figure is that they would both tweet around an equal amount and very little at around the same times each year, specifically the months of July and August. These dates line up right with the European Parliament’s summer recess that occurs from late July to late August. This also occurs over the holidays in December and January.

While there is one instance where Arthuis tweets more than Wikström in a month, she consistently tweets more often and is more active on her page. This is indicated by the number of replies and occasional Twitter polls she creates on her page. In total, she had 426 replies, or 19.79% of all tweets, and averaged per month 13 replies to other Twitter users. Arthuis on the other hand had 57 replies (4.12%) and averaged only around 2 responses a month. This is a significant difference in the interaction and engagement the two chairs have with users and the community.

Wikström is much more engaged, interacting with others about policy and often creating polls on policy. In one instance, she created a poll on Brexit to see what users thought about the

issue. Wikström replies and engages with others over social media more often and in different ways than Arthuis. Wikström would also tweet videos and pictures of herself during work or for, more limitedly, personal topics. While Arthuis would do this, he refrained from posting anything personal and stuck almost solely to pictures. There are differences in their engagement, and it shows that while Arthuis may have more followers, this does not necessarily mean he has a larger social presence compared to his fellow committee chair.

Post-Chair Role

When considering the chairs themselves, it is important to see how they fare after holding their position such as whether they have moved to the private sector, taken another leadership role, or stayed within the EP. Both Wikström and Arthuis held their position as chair of their respective committees throughout the entire 8th parliamentary term.

Wikström was not a candidate in the next EP election and instead became the Chair of the Board of Governors for EIPA and has succeeded Guy Verhofstadt, former Belgian prime minister and fellow MEP, in the position. While Wikström has publicly advanced into a new leadership position, Arthuis has not been elected to a new position. However, he has prior experience in French politics dating back to the 1980s before Wikström had gotten started in politics.

Wikström and Arthuis are just two examples of chairs of two committees that are both strikingly similar and different in multiple ways. There are many ways in which they are similar: their social media presence is consistent, and both the chairs of the committees have either held a prestigious position outside of the European Parliament either before or after their chair-ship. However, their meeting frequency and allocation of rapporteur positions based on gender is widely different. The Committee on Budgets has more than double the number of meetings that

Petitions has. However, this may be due to the prestige and increased legislative power of Budgets in comparison to Petitions. In line with their membership, the allocation of rapporteur positions to women is greater in Petitions compared to Budgets, which can be linked to the high number of women in Petitions compared to Budgets.

Conclusion

This study has examined women's representation across committees in the European Parliament. The aim was to further explore how women are represented within committees – how many women are assigned to committees, their distribution across party group, and how this compares to the plenary – as well as to see how gender may or may not play a role in access to and enactment of leadership positions. Overall, the study focused on the distribution of women across committees and how gender plays a role in their allocation.

Gender plays a large role, especially in larger party groups, on how women are allocated across committees and the prestige of the committees they are assigned to. The percentage of women across committees and broken down by party groups shows that women are typically assigned to what are typically known as less prestigious committees compared to more prestigious ones such as Budgets and Foreign Affairs. This is further backed up by more female MEPs taking on more than one committee compared to their male counterparts. It can be deduced that women take on more than one committee as they have more time and resources on their hands if they are assigned to a less salient committee. The gender balance is better among more left leaning party groups, such as GUE/NGL, but across the board follows the trends that the previous literature has established: that women are assigned to less prestigious committees compared to men.

The differentiations between men and women in leadership positions is minimal. The differences in the way that women run committees compared to men is not too significant, and they have many similarities when it comes to social media and other factors. Overall, gender plays a large role in committee assignments, but less so when it comes to the nitty gritty of leadership roles.

Looking back at the initial hypotheses, the extent to which these hypotheses have been supported is mixed. It has been proved strongly that there are gendered patterns to committees and that women are distributed among committees according to their prestige or saliency, specifically low prestige committees. There is significant support for hypothesis one and two, while hypothesis three and five have mixed results.

From the study, it was difficult to get a clear empirical result on the ways that parties influenced women's representation. While it was clear that left parties fared better and had a greater number of women within the party, when it came to specific party representation within committees, it was difficult to get any solid measure due to the small size of many of the party groups and their inability to distribute women or MEPs in general across all committees equally because of their size.

It was also mixed on the differences in the two committee chairs, Wikström and Arthuis, and if there were any significant differences in how they operated. They both went on to other positions, they had different home countries, and were of a different gender. While gender may have played a role in the amount they communicated and operated their committees, it would be worth further research into two committee chairs that would be more similar during a different time period than the one I examined in this thesis.

One hypothesis completely rejected was hypothesis four, in which it stated that women would receive less leadership positions than men. Women almost made up 50% of committee chair positions (10/12) and were represented within other committee leadership positions. However, while this may have been true of the timeframe I examined, this may not hold up across other sessions. Whether or not there is a pattern of this equal representation across other parliaments has not been established.

Further Research

The research conducted in this thesis is a start at looking more intently at women's representation within the EU, specifically at a deeper policy making level within the European Parliament. The trajectory of future research into the subject should be aimed at further research into the committees of the EP at a more analytical level. Since my time frame was limited, it would be insightful to look at the trends of women's representation over time and across parliamentary sessions. While the timeframe I examined from 2014 to 2017 had an almost equal gender representation of female to male committee chairs, would this pattern hold over time? Are there other factors within certain years that make it more difficult for women to hold these leadership positions? While women have made progress in recent years, this may not have always been the case within the EP.

Further research should also be done on the hypotheses that turned out to have more mixed results. In determining party effect on women's representation within committees, further research that better handles party size and its effects on the data could get a better picture on party influence.

If we want to examine women's representation further, it should be examined whether female chairs or those with leadership positions are more efficient and powerful in terms of

decision making compared to their male counterparts. Questions to explore would be whether or not they are able to enact more laws within the plenary, or if having a leadership position makes a woman more powerful compared to the typical female MEP.

All of these areas of research would be meaningful to look into a research to further the research and understanding of women's representation within the European Parliament. It is vital to understand how powerful a female MEPs voice is within the EP and if they are able to be heard, specifically how they are treated compared to their male counterparts. Policy making is an important process as the EU grows in importance on the world stage, and women's representation within such an institution should be reexamined.

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