Gendering the Representative Work of the European Parliament: A Political Analysis of Women MEP's Perceptions of Gender Equality in Party Groups*

JOHANNA KANTOLA[1] (iD) and LISE ROLANDSEN AGUSTÍN[2] (iD)
[1]Tampere University, Tampere [2]Aalborg Univesity, Aalborg

Abstract

European Parliament's (EP) party groups are crucial to democratic representation in the EU. Much of the academic research about party groups has been gender-blind. This article draws on qualitative methods to undertake a gender analysis of EP party groups. The article analyses the gendered experiences of women MEPs from two Nordic countries, Denmark and Finland, and draws on interview data with 18 women MEPs from these two member states to explore their perceptions of gender equality in the political groups. The findings illustrate that party groups exhibit some shared and some diversified gendered norms as well as concrete practices for advancing the position of women, including informal women's networks. We draw attention to the shortcomings in m/paternity leave rights in the EP and the lack of political will within the party groups to tackle this, which is further cementing exclusionary practices of the institution.

Keywords: European parliament; party groups; gender; gender equality; institutions

Introduction

The European Parliament (EP) party groups are crucial to democratic representation in the EU and their powers have increased over the recent years (Brack, 2018). The EP is directly elected by the citizens of the member states and the party groups form the backbone of its decision- and policy-making processes. Research on party groups has shed light on voting patterns, internal cohesion and the relationships between national political parties, MEPs and EP party groups (Hix, 2008; McElroy and Benoit, 2010; Yordanova, 2013). Party groups have emerged as highly cohesive, the left–right cleavage has maintained its central role, and most votes are adopted with broad majorities (Raunio and Wagner, 2017). Cohesion, cleavages and majorities increase the powers and the importance of the party groups.

However, in most of the current research on EP party groups these appear gender neutral: as if they were not inhabited by representatives with very different backgrounds on the basis of their gender, nationality, race and ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation; and as if the party groups did not have organizational or institutional cultures based on gendered and other norms, which may shape their functioning. Gender and politics research has exposed how political parties operate in gendered ways in a number of different countries. Most recently, this political gender analysis has shifted to the study of informal institutions to understand how they act as barriers to gender justice in party politics. For example, new scholarly insights have been generated into candidate selection and gender

quotas (Bjarnegård and Kenny, 2016; Kenny and Verge, 2016), and studies have shown how men perform gendered rituals in party meetings to dominate conversations even in gender balanced bodies (Karpowitz and Mendelberg, 2014, p. 5; Verge and de la Fuente 2014, p. 73). Such studies focusing on the genderedness of political culture and its impact on the representative process and the representatives of the EP party groups remain scarce.

This is the key challenge undertaken in this article. Our research objective is to analyze women MEP's perceptions of gender equality in party groups, thus filling part of the research gap on gender and EP party groups. We acknowledge the limitations of a qualitative study of this nature; ideally a mixed methods approach would be warranted if research were to explain in depth the gendered dynamics of this particular setting. However, narrowing in on the women MEPs' perceptions of gender equality in party groups offers the possibility of a more in-depth analysis of the discourses about gender equality.

For these reasons, we have chosen to conduct a qualitative study based on a discursive-political analysis of 18 interviews focusing on the gendered perceptions of women MEPs from two Nordic countries, namely Denmark and Finland. In this way, we begin to pave the way for political gender analyses on the topic. Generating research data from two Nordic countries poses research questions and challenges that we tackle in this article: How do women MEPs from Denmark and Finland perceive their party groups in relation to gender equality? What light does a gender analysis shed on the workings of EP party groups? What differences are there between MEPs from different political groups?

We have selected the EP as it is often portrayed as the most gender equal actor of the European Union's political institutions, the 'real champion for gender equality' (Locher, 2012, p. 68) and a 'strong supporter of gender justice' (Van der Vleuten, 2012, p. 49) or 'an important actor in improving women's rights' in some member states such as Ireland (Cullen, 2018, p. 483). Our article sheds light on the EP's political struggles around gender equality and the persistence of gender inequalities within it (see also Kantola and Rolandsen Agustin, 2016). Our findings illustrate that gender continues to shape the work that the MEPs do in party groups. EP party groups exhibit some shared and some diversified dimensions of gendered organizations as well as concrete practices for advancing the position of women. A traditional left/right distinction persists at the EU level with the left leaning groups being more amenable towards gender equality practices and policies. In the construction of the meaning of gender equality within the party groups we identify a multiplicity of discourses, ranging from gender equality as something which has already been achieved over those who construct gender equality as being irrelevant due to the neutrality of the selection processes, to the construction of gender equality as being hampered by stereotypes, most prominently in relation to the gendered division of labour in the context of the party groups. At the same time, we provide new empirical data about constructions of the significance of new women's networks within party groups on the political right. We also draw attention to the constructions of institutional practices such as shortcomings in m/paternity leave rights in the EP and the lack of political will within the party groups to tackle this, which is further cementing the exclusionary practices of the institution.

I. Background: The Gender Composition of the EP Party Groups

The representation of women in the EP has risen steadily over the past decades, most recently from 35 per cent female MEPs in the 7th legislature to 37 per cent in the 8th

legislature (see also Lühiste and Kenny, 2016; Kantola and Rolandsen Agustin, 2016). Big differences remain in the numbers of women elected by different member states. Gendered inequalities are also revealed when looking at the different positions and institutions of the parliament more closely – such as parliamentary leadership positions, committee positions, and party group co-ordinators to the committees. We begin by looking at these figures to provide a background for the gendered experiences of individual MEPs within their party groups, which we analyze more closely in this article.

Of particular interest to us are the large differences in the numbers of women and men in the eight political groups, and the uneven developments in reaching gender parity.

The figure shows the situation right after the EP elections in 2014 for the political groups of European People's Party (EPP), Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR), Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (ALDE), European United Left – Nordic Green Left (GEU/NGL) and Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD). As Figure 1 shows, the level of female representation among MEPs is highest in the GUE/NGL group (50 per cent), S&D (46 per cent), Greens/EFA (42 per cent), ALDE (39 per cent) and EFDD (38 per cent) groups in the 8th legislature (2014–2019). The share of female representation is the lowest in the EPP (31 per cent), NI (29 per cent) and ECR (21 per cent). Looking at the development from the 7th (2009–2014) to the 8th legislature (2014–2019) the most notable progress can be seen in the EFDD (from 16 per cent to 38 per cent) and GUE/NGL (from 29 per cent to 50 per cent) whereas Greens/EFA decreased from 55 per cent to 42 per cent. Percentages increased more moderately for S&D, ECR and NI, while they decreased for both EPP and ALDE. The political group Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) was formed only in 2015 and women MEPs constitute 31 per cent of the group.

At leadership level, we find that all political groups except GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA have male presidents. GUE/NGL has a female president, and Greens/EFA a shared presidency with one male and one female (by default). The composition of the bureaus of the political groups shows equal gender balance for EPP, S&D and GUE/NGL, whereas Greens/EFA and ALDE have more women than men in the bureau

Figure 1: Gender composition (by political group). [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com][11]
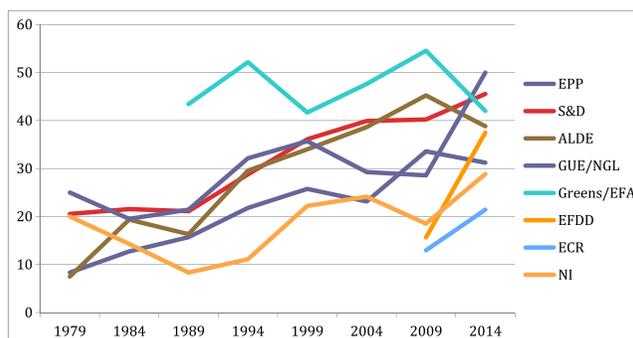
Source: Authors' own elaboration on the basis of EP data.

(both 71 per cent). EFFD has a female representation of 38 per cent and ECR of 17 per cent.

The position of women as chairpersons of the respective parliamentary committees of the EP shows a certain degree of gender balance overall: 43 per cent of the committees have female chairs whereas female representation among vice chairs amounts to 39 per cent. Mapping the representation of women among committee co-ordinators, we found that GUE/NGL (58 per cent), S&D (57 per cent) and Greens/EFA (56 per cent) have the highest level of female representation among their committee co-ordinators, followed by ALDE (43 per cent) and EFDD (35 per cent). The ECR (22 per cent) and EPP (13 per cent) have the lowest female representation among committee co-ordinators. Looking at horizontal gendered divisions, the strongest female representation (with a female chair and 50 per cent or higher female representation among vice chairs) is found in culture and education, women's rights and gender equality, petitions, internal market and consumer protection, and human rights. Weakest representation (no female representation among chairs and vice chairs) is found in foreign affairs, economic and monetary affairs as well as transport and tourism. The strongest representation of female co-ordinators (5 out of 7 or more) is to be found in culture and education, petitions, employment and social affairs, civil liberties, justice and home affairs, and women's rights and gender equality. The weakest representation (one female co-ordinator or none) is in budgetary control, agriculture and rural development, industry, research and energy, money laundering, and tax avoidance and tax evasion. A familiar and traditional distinction between hard male dominated economic, budgetary and foreign affairs and soft female-dominated culture, education and social affairs is evident.

In sum, both GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA have high numbers of women as MEPs, at leadership level and among committee co-ordinators. S&D and ALDE have relatively strong gender equality profiles when assessing the same dimensions whereas EFDD has recently increased women's representation among its MEPs and has a moderate representation among committee co-ordinators. EPP and ECR are the political groups with the weakest gender equality profile although the EPP maintains gender balance in its bureau.

II. Conceptualizing EP Party Groups as Gendered

Our theoretical approach is inspired by discursive reflectivist feminist studies into the EU, which are interested in how discourses construct social reality and their effects on people. Such approaches explore the role of norms and discourses in the social construction of gendered practices in the EU (Kantola and Lombardo, 2017). This entails analyzing the ways in which gender is constructed in discourses and practices that privilege some representations of the problem/solution of gender inequality over others and construct subjects in specific gendered ways (Bacchi, 2017; Verloo, 2007). Our perspective is to study gender as a discourse that is continuously de- and re-constructed in political debates (Lombardo et al., 2009). Gender is also always intersectional: it is cut through with race and ethnicity, sexuality, age, and class to name but few of the relevant inequality categories in today's Europe (Hancock, 2018; Hill Collins and Bilge, 2018).

To make sense of these gendered constructions and their effects, we draw on feminist new institutionalism. Feminist new institutionalism has defined 'formal institutions' codified rules, with enforcement and legitimacy, and 'informal institutions' as customary

elements, traditions, moral values, religious beliefs and norms of behaviour (Chappell and Waylen, 2013, p. 605). When informal institutions are analyzed from a gender perspective, analytical attention is paid to a) rules about gender, b) gendered effects of formal and informal institutions, and c) the gendered actors who work with rules (Chappell and Waylen, 2013, p. 606; Kantola and Lombardo, 2017a). To understand the persistence of inequalities and difficulty of change, it is crucial to study the interactions between formal and informal institutions. Their relationship may be competitive or complementary as informal rules may subvert or reinforce formal ones (Waylen, 2014, p. 213).

A set of gendered informal norms operate in relation to political parties (Bjarnegård and Kenny, 2016; Kenny and Verge, 2016; Piscopo, 2016). Men can dominate conversations even in gender balanced bodies as well as perform gendered rituals (Verge and de la Fuente, 2014, p. 73). Women, in contrast, may face different forms of surveillance and carry 'burden of doubt' about their competencies. Those women who do not conform to the norm and show political ambition or assertiveness may face informal sanctions such as removal from high ranked offices or a weakening of their competencies (Kenny, 2013; Verge and de la Fuente, 2014, p. 73). Social psychological approaches also study the prejudices that female politicians face and show that attitudes are less positive towards female than male leaders (Eagly and Karau, 2002). Men may also have more access to informal networks where political decisions are made and consensus sought (Bjarnegård, 2013, p. 24). If networking or meetings take place in the evenings or weekends, women with care responsibilities have difficulty attending (Verge and de la Fuente, 2014, p. 73). The long working hours culture in many parliaments poses challenges for reconciling political career and family.

We combine the feminist new institutionalist approach with Joan Acker's theory of gendered organizations (1990, 1992) to organize our empirical analysis. Acker's distinction between four dimensions in the process by which gender differences and hierarchies are constantly produced and reproduced in organizations is useful and applicable to EP political groups. The dimensions include: (i) gendered divisions of labour; (ii) gendered interaction; (ii) gendered symbols; and (iv) gendered subjectivities (Acker, 1990, pp. 146–147; Acker, 1992, pp. 252–254). Each dimension captures both formal and informal institutions and the interplay between them, as we illustrate in the empirical analysis. For instance, gendered division of labour captures the above-mentioned tendency for female politicians to still be defined by their assumed feminine and motherly roles. Gendered interaction pinpoints the ways in which women and men interact differently in party meetings. Part of the gendered interaction entails gendered evaluations of success – the political work of women and men might be evaluated in different ways (Kantola, 2008). Gendered symbols focus on gentlemen's clubs and men's networks, or male heroes. Finally, gendered subjectivities describe female politician's super-surveillance and burden of doubt, as well as the need to conform to gender norms to avoid sanctions. We approach each of these dimensions through discourse analysis – as explicated below – and are interested about the constructions of gender, and gender equalities and inequalities in the political groups around these in the interview material.

III. Methodology and Research Material

Methodologically, many studies on political groups of the EP and on women in the EP have been quantitative analyses of roll call voting behaviour or of gender gaps in political

attitudes (Cullen, 2018, p. 485; see Fortin-Rittberger and Rittberger, 2014; McEvoy, 2016; Raunio and Weber, 2017). For instance, Fortin-Rittberger and Rittberger (2014) study the candidate selection practices of 100 political parties across the EU and show that inclusiveness at an early stage is key to more gender balanced representation. Luhiste and Kenny, in turn, compiled a dataset of the backgrounds of more than 700 MEPs in the context of the 2014 EP elections and found that political parties were key determinants to women's electoral success with some pathways to power being very different for women than men (Lühiste and Kenny, 2016).

In line with our theoretical approach and key research questions, our article takes a different approach. We draw on small-scale in-depth interview material to shed light on the gendered norms and practices, which shape the work of women MEPs in the political groups of the EP. We conducted 18 semi-structured interviews with current and former women MEPs from Denmark and Finland, in 2014–2016. Politically, the interviewees belong to ALDE (5), S&D (4), Greens/EFA (4), EPP (3), GUE/NGL (1) and IND/DEM (now EFDD) (1). The focus of our paper is on the 7th and 8th legislatures (2009–2014, 2014–2019) of the EP and its party groups. All of the interviews followed a similar semi-structured guideline and addressed questions about: gender equality within the party group; selecting MEPs to different positions by the party group; unofficial groups or networks; space for discussing gender; and practices for gender equality.

Our analysis and findings are clearly limited by the fact that the interview data come from only two member states. For instance, Pauline Cullen (2018) interviewed six Irish women MEPs to provide nuanced insights into their possibilities for advancing women's concerns in the EP. She notes that this provided focus on the views with strategically placed political actors. At the same time, the generalizability of the research findings and explanatory capacity is of course limited (Cullen, 2018, p. 485). In our case, we had relatively easy access in both countries to the MEPs and were able to produce similar interview data, which enhances its quality. This may not have been the case in more hierarchical political contexts where the distance to politicians would have been bigger and elite interviews harder to secure.

We also suggest that Denmark and Finland are relevant cases to study because of their status as model countries for gender equality. An analysis of these countries' women MEPs' perceptions of the EP party groups is valuable as it exposes both the opportunities and limitations for advancing gender equality within and by the political groups. As both Denmark and Finland represent gender equal Nordic countries (Borchorst et al., 2012; Freidenvall, 2015), we might expect that the women MEPs' expectations and standards on equality were high in relation to EP party groups. Yet, gender inequalities persist in both countries and 'gender equality has been achieved' acts as a discourse obscuring continuing gender inequalities (see Kantola et al., 2012; Rolandsen Agustín and Sata, 2013). This creates a fruitful tension that can be exploited to explore the women MEP's perceptions of gender equality in their EP party groups.

Relating to our interpretivist and constructivist theoretical and methodological approach it was also important that we were culturally well-versed in these two contexts, which, in turn, informs our analysis of the interview data. Focusing on single cases or comparing just two cases is common for discursive analyses of gendered actors and policies (see, for example, Rönnblom, 2009; Verloo, 2007). Fewer cases, such as the case

for MEPs from Denmark and Finland, allows for an in-depth analysis of interview material and focusing on the nuances and their meanings (*cf.* Cullen, 2018). We nevertheless recognize that our findings need to be supplemented with more interviews in order to diversify the perspectives from MEPs from different member states, from all party groups, from both men and women, and from minority MEPs. Such a research agenda would enable an in-depth analysis of the gendered practices of the EP party groups.

Methodologically, by focusing on perceptions, we combine the individual perspectives of the MEPs, as '[p]erception is a uniquely individualized experience' (McDonald, 2012, p. 3), with the institutional dimension, since perceptions are also affected by 'sociocultural elements' (*ibid.*). In their recent study of the Swedish parliament as a gendered working place, Erikson and Josefsson (2018, p. 2) suggest that 'evaluating how legislators themselves experience their work environment constitutes an important first step in the effort to uncover informal aspects of a legislative body's inner workings'. Thus, we analyze the perceptions of the women MEPs as they are expressed in the interviews in order to identify discourses which are simultaneously embedded in the institutional context of the EP and its party groups and expressed through their practices. Institutions contain a background, where ideas are expressed as 'underlying assumptions' and a foreground, where they are 'conscious perceptions' (Wahlström and Sundberg, 2018, p. 169).

In particular, we are interested in the ways in which the meaning of gender equality is resisted through discursive political struggles since contestation opens up potential for institutional change, depending on power dynamics and alliances (Kenny and Mackay, 2009). Studying, understanding and making resistance visible is central to discursive studies of gender equality (Benschop and Verloo, 2011; Lombardo and Mergaert, 2013). Thus we combine the theoretical framework of feminist institutionalism and Acker's theory of gendered organizations with a discursive approach in order to analyze the ways in which the meaning of gender equality is constructed discursively in the institutional context of the EP party groups. We focus on the ways in which meanings are produced and contested through (conflicting) discursive constructions of key concepts like gender equality. Perceptions, as they are expressed by the interviewees, as well as established rules and practices of the party groups and the European Parliament as institutions together form the way in which gender equality is institutionalized, in discursive terms, in this context.

IV. Gender (in)Equality in the Party Groups of the European Parliament

We argue that despite a strong discourse in some political groups that gender equality has been achieved, unequal gendered norms and practices continue to exist. They relate to gendered divisions of labour, interaction, symbols and subjectivities, such as Acker's four dimensions. The different dimensions are deeply intertwined and support one another in shaping the experiences of gender inequalities. In other words, it is possible to make analytical distinctions between them, but it is crucial to understand how they form a totality in the experiences of inequality and functioning of the party groups. In the following, we analyze the interviewed MEPs' perceptions of their party groups from the point of view of gender equality. We identify prevalent discourses by relating perceptions to institutional practices through the use of the theoretical framework explained above.

Gender Equality Has Already Been Achieved

The interviewed MEPs from the Greens/EFA, GUE/NGL, S&D and ALDE perceived their party groups as gender equal in their practices. These were also the most gender equal political groups in terms of the numbers of women and men in different positions as illustrated in the first part of this article.

> I would say that if you looked with a magnifier you might find something. But I would say that things are pretty much in good condition (Greens/EFA).

> Our own understanding of our standpoint on gender equality is that this is something that we are proud of. That is the kind of thing we shout out like: 'Hurray, look at our group, we are actually doing it'. […] It is also a part of our self-understanding (GUE/NGL).

The latter interviewee also said that there was solidarity among women in the group: the women would support each other and seek alliances with some men in the group in order to prevent expressions of sexism. Interestingly, she suggested that they did this rather than openly denouncing such practices when they occurred, in order to avoid being labelled an 'angry feminist', already pointing to some difficulties in talking about gender equality openly in the group. Thus, on the surface, gender equality is celebrated as a characteristic of the party group but underlying, stereotypical assumptions persist in the group.

Gender Equality as Individual Opportunity and Responsibility

Differences come to fore when digging deeper into why party groups are perceived as gender equal. When asked whether gender equality is a norm for the party group an MEP from ALDE wrote that:

> I think that gender equality needs to be always taken into account but it depends a lot on how active the MEP herself is and that she takes her place. Women must also demand good places (ALDE).

Here the MEP places significant responsibility on women politicians' own role and activities in pursuing significant political positions. Her statement is well in line with liberal and more conservative notions of equality: equality is an opportunity for all that needs to be taken up by individual women.

Interviewees reflected on their own position within the political groups and how gendered interpretations may shape the views on the possibilities for key positions within the groups (gendered subjectivities).

> As long as you kind of settle for your own framework […] and don't try to go outside this framework. And then there are no contradictions. And during the first term as a representative I had nothing against it. […] maybe in the end there was outside pressure on us [country] MEPs to get important positions and then you started to note things (S&D).

The interviewee describes gendered expectations – a framework within which one should operate – that make one not strive too high. The national pressure made her realise the factors that were at play and which prevented her from gaining a higher position.

A woman EPP MEP offered an alternative explanation as to why she does not seek higher positions in the EPP, highlighting the differences between the party groups from the perspective of gender equality:

> And if I were the group's vice chairperson my hands would be a lot more tied to vote against the group. It would turn into a much bigger question of loyalty. And it would be difficult for me, because in our group, from my point of view, often in these really big questions I just cannot vote in the same way. So I have from this position of distance more freedom. I feel that my possibilities to have a political impact is bigger than when you sit in a formal place … well, it's quite an illusion that there would be a lot of power involved [in these formal positions] (EPP).

In her case, less official positions allowed her more freedom to pursue the kinds of politics that were important to her and less in line with the official party group line. This would not have been possible in leadership roles. Similarly, another EPP interviewee explains that she was advised not to seek leadership positions since the workload carried by the small delegations was so huge that it would not be compatible with holding a position of power (EPP).

A Greens/EFA MEP, in turn, said that she had achieved everything that she had been interested in and aspired for:

> I didn't strive for anything that I didn't achieve. The reason might be that in all the party groups in the EU there is this kind of hierarchy that at least in the Green Party is not divided on the basis of gender but that is divided along the lines that all groups of course appreciate people who have been chairpersons of their parties or ministers. So of course such a person has more influence in the group (Greens/EFA).

The interviewed MEP thus explains the impact of national-level politics on the practices of EP party groups. They show how gender and gender equality plays a role as an opportunity (to be used by the individual MEP), and how it can also act as an obstacle on the road towards leadership positions within the institutional context.

Gender Equality Is Not Relevant

Several interviewees refer to the electoral system as 'neutral' and 'automatic' and thereby increasing transparency and equality. Leadership positions within the groups are delegated according to the number of seats each national delegation brings to the group. The power of the national delegations depends on the electoral results and the party practices of nomination at the national level. Thus, many interviewees argued that gender does not play much of a role in the distribution of power in the group -- the size of the delegation trumps gender as a criterion, for instance. Talking about how she herself got a significant position in the group an MEP from the IND/DEM group notes that:

> I did not [get the position] because I was a woman but because our side [of the group] demanded that it should be a visible person […] I do not think that gender inequality is insignificant […] there are just so many points of division that were more important (IND/DEM).

The notion of which competences are associated with whom, and how 'competence' itself might be based on masculine norms is not addressed in the citation (*cf.* Acker, 1992). For

example, 'a visible person' might pose different requirements for a woman and a man respectively rather than 'competence' acting as a neutral norm (Verge and de la Fuente, 2014). Furthermore, the citation illustrates how gender equality becomes one dimension among many, and the one that is left far down the list of priorities when MEPs are appointed to key positions.

Gender Equality Is Hampered by Stereotypes

A number of interviewees spoke about perceived expertise in the field of economics and finance. This was constructed as a masculine field, and women's expertise was challenged, for instance gendered divisions of labour were established.

> But of course if you look at who has been active in this economic crisis so they have often been men. The ones that have been making this banking union, and the Greens have been extremely active about that in the parliament so maybe there [you can perceive gender differences] (Greens/EFA).

> They don't hear that but they just see what they want to presume, which is that she does not understand the economy (EPP).

At the same time the interviewee mentions two women from the group who have been active in these matters and are appreciated for their expertise and work, perhaps as a deviation from the norm that then confirms it.

The focus of our article – and indeed the interviews -- is on the political groups of the EP. Much of the gendered dynamics were evident also on the level of committees, so important to the work that the political groups do in the parliament. We give a brief example here. Describing gendered interaction, an MEP from the Greens/EFA group characterizes the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs as raw and arrogant, with a harsh tone in political debates. An interviewee from the GUE/NGL group further emphasizes the differences between the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs in terms of the gendered working environment:

> I think it is difficult to be heard and to be taken seriously. I think that is quite a struggle. It is a bit like the old men's club. […] You are excluded or socially you are left out and that also results in the insider jokes for example, it makes it difficult to participate in the negotiations at times because you don't get the insider joke or something like that. […] When we negotiate in the Committee on Employment I have yet to experience a situation where I have had the feeling of having ended up in the men's club again. I have actually only had that feeling in the Committee on Economy […] I think it relates both to me being a woman, a young woman, and that I represent the far left (GUE/NGL).

The citation illustrates well the way in which gendered divisions of labour relate to gendered interactions within the EP and its party groups. Another interviewee noted gender differences between the fields of consumer protection, on the one hand, and internal market and economy, on the other, characterizing the latter as the 'heavy male seats'. She further argued that some men would prefer the Committee on Foreign Affairs due to its prestige – an example of gendered symbols – even though it is an area where the EP has no competence, whereas the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs is more popular among women, addressing politics related to the refugee situation which is considered to be a hot topic at the European level (S&D). The underlying norms of the

institutions are perceived by the interviewees as being gendered and they are reproduced in the priorities and choices made within the party groups.

Gendered interaction also influences gendered subjectivities as women MEPs reflect upon their own role as politicians and the way in which they are perceived by fellow MEPs. One of the interviewees from the Greens/EFA group explains how she was regarded as well-prepared and earned respect on account of her image as hardworking:

> Maybe I am also the type of person who is a bit fearless. […] 'The tough one', I think they called me sometimes. That is of course also a way to, as a young woman, that you are not marginalised too much, then you become extra tough perhaps and well-prepared and to-the-point […] I also think that being a young representative and added to that a woman, that probably also made me overcompensate (Greens/EFA).

Age and gender intersect in the experiences of the MEP, showing particular challenges that young women MEPs face when they seek to be seen as experts. The interviewee further noted that women MEPs can use the advantages which come with the image of the tough woman strategically and benefit from it. Similarly, another interviewee argued that, along with solidarity among women, her strong character and the way in which she was perceived as a powerful and energetic woman made it possible for her to face sexism with irony and ridicule (IND/DEM). Several interviewees argued that the gendered struggle is individualized even though the problems are structural, for example an MEP underlined that she did not experience any disadvantages from being a woman in top-level politics, but at the same time she recognized that the problems are there since fewer women than men reach that level (EPP).

Gender Equality Is Challenged by Conservative Ideology

Whereas one of the MEPs from the EPP emphasized the non-sexist character of her group and the way in which issues were discussed with mutual respect at the national level (EPP), another interviewee, describes the party group as 'totally unpredictable' from the point of view of gender.

> It contains a pretty strong, pretty big group of sensible politicians, both men and women. And if I think about the issues that I have been involved with, the group supports surprisingly radical things. I mean that the majority of the group supports those […] and then on the other side there are these, well, our conservatives, our, well, these catholics … (EPP).

She continues to explain that it is actually not religion but rather a nationalist conservative ideology that shapes the gender politics of part of the group. And that there are no 'in between' politicians. The EPP group's gender politics depends very much on who is a rapporteur or shadow rapporteur on a given topic, the interviewee explains. In Cullen's interviews with Irish women MEPs, one from the EPP suggested that 'ultraconservative women within the group were an obstacle' to advancing gender equality within the group (2018, p. 499).

Institutional Change Towards Further Equality: Obstacles, Resistance and Potential

We also explored in the interviews the MEPs' perceptions of possible mechanisms for advancing gender equality within party groups by changing institutional practices. A

general observation is that this was not an easy topic for most interviewees. The difficulties in answering the question may relate to the notion that gender equality was already achieved (hence there was no need to address it with specific measures) and to the structural and unobservable nature of the remaining inequalities (hence it is harder to imagine how one might tackle them). It also reflects the tendency to distance gender inequality problems and solutions away from the party groups to the wider context of the EP. Three issues that stood out included: (i) internal official or unofficial gender quotas; (ii) (non) practices for reconciling motherhood and the political career of an MEP; and (iii) networks and alliances for gender equality.

Some EP party groups have internal quotas and rules for ensuring equal representation of two genders in some representative and decision-making bodies. Some of these date back to the 1990s (Greens), others to the time of the Eastern enlargement (S&D), and some are very recent (EPP).

The EPP has newer rules to guarantee women's equal representation, and they are the result of lobbying by the W group ('W' for 'Women' as discussed in more detail in the next section). The favourable political climate was created by nearly all male EP presidencies:

> Q: And, well, does gender equality take place when people are chosen to certain positions in the EPP?
> A: No, it has not taken place but in fact there has been a big change. […] and it was exactly this W group where we jointly did this initiative and started to push it through – okay, this is something that we need to get fixed in the rules. And now it is in the EPP rules […] And we have the EPP's commitment that we take care about this also in the parliament's vice presidents (EPP).

As illustrated by the citation, according to the interviewee, individual women MEPs joined efforts to push for progressive change. The interviewee suggested that a broader unfavourable context for women's roles and representation in the EP (the lack of women in top positions) triggered progressive change in the party groups. The actual outcome and effect of this remain to be seen.

The practices around m/paternity leave rights have consequences for the representation of (young) women MEPs. The average age for women MEPs is 50.6 years[1] and thereby past the age where women often have small children. The challenges that the young women MEPs face in such a context stood out starkly in the interview material. The right to vote in plenary sessions is considered to be personal, according to the European Electoral Act, and therefore none of the MEPs can be substituted while taking leave. They can be 'excused attendance' according to the Rules of Procedure of the EP, but they cannot be replaced during their leave. None of the political groups has placed the issue of shortcomings in m/paternity leave options in practice on the political agenda. This is either due to a lack of prioritization of gender equality issues or because they assess it to be impossible to reach any agreement in this area. Thus, the interviewees constructed attempts to raise the issue on the political groups' agenda as a 'lost battle', and it was clearly related, in their minds, to the work environment and expectations placed on MEPs:

---

[1]For male MEPs the average age is 52.1 years. The average age for women (compared to men) is significantly lower in the GUE/NGL group in particular. In the Greens/EFA group we find a slight tendency towards underrepresentation of women between 30 and 50 years of age.

> We do not discuss work-life balance in our own group, neither regarding our employees nor ourselves as EU parliamentarians because we expect that when you are elected by the people to have a seat in the EP, then it is no problem sacrificing everything and working at least 70 hours a week and due to this we also have an extremely unhealthy work environment (GUE/NGL).

The interviewed MEPs explain how the work culture of the political groups is characterized by huge workloads and long hours.

> I think that the hindrances lie in the fact that it is a game that does not allow for family life, the working hours do not allow for family life. […] The work culture is 8–22 and meetings are held until late in the evening and you are simply not taken seriously as a parliamentarian or as a civil servant if you think that you can be at home at 4 o'clock (IND/DEM).

> To be away 3–4 days a week […] is only possible if you have chosen the right husband and have some family at home. […] It is hard sometimes. […] To me it has all been worth it. I loved my job in the European Parliament […] When you work in that way where you are an ex-pat 3–4 days a week then you don't care if you are back from work at 4 o'clock or at 8 o'clock. Then you just work, right (EPP).

The long working hours relate to expectations of presence, from colleagues and electorates. The sacrifices are often related to the family and articulated as being gendered because as female politicians and mothers many of the MEPs are met with expectations about how they should behave as politicians (where presence and hard work are a key norm) and as mothers (where they feel judged precisely for not being present). They are critiqued and questioned in both roles:

> I have to defend and explain why it is okay that I leave my child a couple of days a week to an extent which I have never seen applied to any man ever, having to defend and explain that (GUE/NGL).

> You do not reach the top level […] without working hard […] you have to put some things aside, you have to prioritize […] Reaching the top level involves lots and lots of sacrifice […] You have to put the bad conscience aside and then you must say 'well, I do this, and I do it because I want to and I set up some framework for my children so that they are still doing well' but the bad conscience is useless […] I did not do any sports, no theatre, nothing, I had my children and my family and my work (ALDE).

Some of the young interviewees explicitly mention their own concerns in terms of whether or not it is feasible to combine having children and being a MEP. These experiences relate to the 'full-time dedication norm' referred to above (Verge and de la Fuente, 2014); presence is vital to gaining positions of power, such as committee coordinator, and it implies long working days, late meetings and informal networking which is a challenge to combine with family life.

Finally, in terms of gendered patterns of co-operation, our overall observation in the interview material is that cross-party co-operation is constructed as far more important in the EP than gender-specific organizing within political groups. The political groups where gender equality was perceived to be less of a norm but that had active feminist

MEPs, such as the EPP, had gender-specific organizing within the party group. The MEPs from Green/left groups saw less need for such organizing, which was mainly taking place in relation to the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) and as more informal social gatherings.

The EPP had an unofficial women's network within the party group, called the 'W' (for 'Women') as mentioned above. It had been functioning for a couple of years and consisted of MEPs from different member states that were interested in women's rights within the group.

> So we just started to invite the women with whom we had co-operated a lot. Shall we chat a bit as we seem to have similar interests in these questions and we know the pains of our own group and the ways in which these things need to be taken care of, so shall we do something together? … We didn't agree that there would be a chair or anything, it's more about who happens to be there and as you know this is typical for women's organizations (EPP).

According to the interviewee, the women in the W exchanged information before voting. The group has sought to advance gender equality questions in the EPP party programme and election programme. In particular, it has succeeded in pushing for a change in the party group rules about how to negotiate about vice chairperson positions. There has not been big publicity for the group, but the group chairperson has been 'pretty ok' with the group (EPP). The group is an example of working through informal institutions of gender-specific organizing for more gender equality.

Among the interviewed MEPs of the Green/EFA group there seemed to be no need for a women's group.

> Of course, you choose the people you co-operate with […] But personal relationships are a lot more important than in the national parliament. For this reason, a formalized network might be a bit more difficult or not timely (Greens/EFA).

Nevertheless, gender did play some role and social networks were described as being gendered. Some interviewees said they socialise more with women as friends in 'these kinds of relations where you can just sit and chat without any specific issues' (Greens/EFA). Cullen's findings with the Irish women MEPs provided opposing results: for them, the EP was a place to do work and there was no time for friendships (2018, p. 500). In our interviews, several women MEPs, from different groups, were part of informal women's networks, for instance as part of social gatherings (ALDE) or dinners with Nordic women (GUE/NGL). These were perceived as safe spaces to talk more openly about political strategies, sexism, and also to ask 'the dumb questions', the ones the political group as a setting did not allow for or which could question one's political authority or competence. Childs suggests (2013, p. 129) that a shared sense of identity and experiences manifested through women parliamentarians' friendships can potentially enable female representatives to negotiate gendered political institutions.

Other interviewees did not belong to informal women's networks, either, because there was a tradition for mixed networks (EPP), especially in terms of political co-operation across party groups (Greens/EFA), or because their informal groups were formed on the basis of other criteria such as age, with for example one interviewee participating in

a network of young MEPs (Greens/EFA). Furthermore, a Social Democrat MEP emphasized the role of the FEMM Committee in such networks within the group, as the committee group of MEPs from S&D arranged events and co-ordinated political action (S&D).

Several of the MEPs interviewed stressed the importance of networking across party groups. They highlighted the differences between national parliaments where co-operation was hampered by government-opposition politics and the EP where this axis was not relevant.

> One has more room for manoeuvre, and you can find majorities and alliances for your views and positions more freely (Greens/EFA).

> In my opinion the role of the party groups is in a way big, but they constrain individual MEPs less (Greens/EFA).

Alliances in the EP were said to be based more on individuals and less on party politics, and there was more concentration on advancing specific issues than infighting (Greens/EFA). Sharing political issues was a bigger uniting factor than political group, political party or country of origin (EPP). One interviewee answered a question about a gender perspective on these networks of like-minded people that access is easy for both women and men to these because the groups and networks are a lot more permeable than at the national level (EPP). Interestingly, this may counter the difficulty of advancing gender equality issues in one's own political group and enable feminist agency also for the women MEPs from more conservative right political groups.

Conclusions

In this article, our aim was to analyze the EP's party groups from a gender perspective. The gender composition of the political groups (at leadership and co-ordinator level), and the gendered practices depicted in the interviews show that the most gender equal groups are GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA, followed by S&D and ALDE. The composition of EPP and ECR are the most gender unequal when looking at the empirical data combined; however, the EPP group also shows some recent practices to enhance gender equality in their structure such as the W group and gender quota provisions.

The gendering of institutions takes place at different levels; the first level of analysis concerns dimensions which are visible to MEPs (own perceptions of group practices), whereas the second level of analysis identifies and questions those unequal gender practices which are not immediately visible. It is illustrative that interviewees themselves used metaphors like 'scratching the surface' and 'using magnifiers' to address the difference between those (gender equal) practices which are immediately visible and those (gender unequal) structures which need more digging to be uncovered.

We related perceptions, as expressed in the interviews, to institutional practices and found that the discursive constructions of gender equality are contested in a number of ways. We identified five discourses across the party groups: gender equality has already been achieved; gender equality as individual opportunity and responsibility; gender equality as irrelevant; gender equality as hampered by stereotypes; and gender equality as challenged by conservative ideology. These discourses are related to institutional rules and practices such as the lack of m/paternity leave rights and the establishment of rules for

nomination for leadership positions or intra-party feminist alliances. Together these dimensions show how the struggle over meaning of gender equality is embedded in the party groups and the EP as gendered institutions. Furthermore, the findings question the image of the EP as a champion of gender equality or its party groups as gender neutral: by taking a closer look at the party groups as one of the most important sub-units, we nuance the analysis of this gendered institution.

Interviewees' perceptions depict gendered stereotypes in terms of expertise and prestige of specific policy areas (gendered divisions of labour and gendered symbols). These differences spill over into the culture and work environment of the party groups (gendered interaction) and into expectations concerning what women and men MEPs can do and achieve (gendered subjectivities). Furthermore, expectations also converge around the competences which are valued in relation to positions of power and political career advancement. This relates in particular to visibility, hard work and presence in addition to the size of the national delegation and individual political experience from the national level. These factors are highlighted by interviewees as equally significant to gender in their (lack of) success in achieving key positions in the political group hierarchy. However, in relation to expectations and competences the way in which the young women MEPs talk about the significance of a 'strong character' and a certain need to overcompensate by working harder than the other MEPs reveals continued relevance of gender.

Our findings also point to differences between national – Danish and Finnish – and European levels as the latter is described by interviewees as characterized by politeness and mutual respect in contrast to the former. The political culture of the EP party groups entails political correctness which, to a certain extent, also acts as a safeguard against sexist language and condescending remarks, at least formally and on the surface of the practices of the groups. Gender unequal and sexist practices are described by some interviewees as more restricted to the informal level and as taking place 'in the hallways', although accounts differ between the political groups.

We discussed gender quotas and internal rules on nominations as practices for advancing gender equality within the groups. Our analysis shows how they need to be upheld by more informal dynamics to ensure implementation, including 'tough women', which implies the existence of significant resistance. We also find that the interviewees attributed the factors hindering progress to individualized problems rather than structural ones.

The shortcomings in m/paternity leave rights in the EP suggest an exclusionary character of the institution. Some interviewees felt that they had to choose between a political career in the EP and motherhood, whereas others found challenges in balancing work and family life when expectations towards them as politicians and as mothers collided. However, another groups of interviewees, especially from the ALDE and EPP groups, articulated the need to make choices and sacrifices more positively and at the same time implicitly sought to break the gendered stereotype of the 'political animal' as entirely male.

Through the analysis of its party groups, we show that the EP is a gendered institution with contested and conflicting norms and practices related to gender equality. The findings contribute to the development of feminist institutionalism as a theoretical framework for analyzing contemporary political institutions. By combining an analytical perspective on perceptions, practices and structures we shed light on discursive constructions and characteristics of gendered organizations which serve to better understand the ways in

which gender (in)equality is embedded in an institution like the party groups of the EP and, more generally, how gender and gender equality play a role in institutional cultures at large.

Correspondence:
Johanna Kantola
Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences
Tampere University,
Finland.
email: johanna.kantola@tuni.fi

References

Acker, J. (1990) 'Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations'. *Gender and Society*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 139–58.

Acker, J. (1992) 'Gendering Organizational Theory'. In Mills, A.J. and Tancred, P. (eds) *Gendering Organizational Analysis* (Newbury Park, London and New Delhi: SAGE Publishing), pp. 248–60.

Bacchi, C. (2017) 'Policies as Gendering Practices: Re-Viewing Categorical Distinctions'. *Journal of Women, Politics and Policy*, Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 20–41.

Benschop, Y. and Verloo, M. (2011) 'Gender Change, Organizational Change and Gender Equality Strategies'. In Jeanes, E., Knights, D. and Yancey-Martin, P. (eds) *Handbook of Gender, Work and Organization* (London: John Wiley), pp. 277–90.

Bjarnegård, E. (2013) *Gender, Informal Institutions and Political Recruitment. Explaining Male Dominance in Parliamentary Representation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).

Bjarnegård, E. and Kenny, M. (2016) 'Comparing Candidate Selection: A Feminist Institutionalist Approach'. *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 51, No. 3, pp. 370–92.

Borchorst, A., Freidenvall, L., Kantola, J., Reisel, L. and Teigen, M. (2012) 'Institutionalising Intersectionality in the Nordic Countries? Anti-Discrimination and Equality in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden'. In Krizsan, A., Skjeie, H. and Squires, J. (eds) *Institutionalizing Intersectionality? Comparative Analyses* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 59–88.

Brack, N. (2018) *Opposing Europe in the European Parliament: Rebels and Radicals in the Chamber* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).

Chappell, L. and Waylen, G. (2013) 'Gender and the Hidden Life of Institutions'. *Public Administration*, Vol. 91, No. 3, pp. 599–615.

Childs, S. (2013) 'Negotiating Gendered Institutions: Women's Parliamentary Friendships'. *Politics & Gender*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 127–51.

Cullen, P. (2018) 'Irish Female Members of the European Parliament: Critical Actors for Women's Interests?' *Politics & Gender*, Vol. 14, pp. 483–511.

Eagly, A. and Karau, J. (2002) 'Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice Toward Female Leaders'. *Psychological Review*, Vol. 109, No. 3, pp. 573–98.

Erikson, J. and Josefsson, C. (2018) 'The Legislature as a Gendered Workplace: Exploring Members of Parliament's Experiences of Working in the Swedish Parliament'. *International Political Science Review*, Online first https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512117735952.

Fortin-Rittberger, J. and Rittberger, B. (2014) 'Do Electoral Rules Matter? Explaining National Differences in Women's Representation in the European Parliament'. *European Union Politics*, Vol. 15, No. 4, pp. 496–520.

Freidenvall, L. (2015) 'Women's Descriptive and Substantive Representation in Nordic Politics'. In Hofmeister, W., Sarmah, M. and Kaur, D. (eds) *Women, Policy and Political*

Leadership. Regional Perspectives in Today's World (Singapore: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung), pp. 95–102.

Hancock, A.-M. (2018) *Intersectionality. An Intellectual History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Hill Collins, P. and Bilge, S. (2018) *Intersectionality* (Cambridge: Polity Press).

Hix, S. (2008) 'Towards a Partisan Theory of EU Politics'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 15, No. 8, pp. 1254–65.

Kantola, J. (2008) '"Why Do All The Women Disappear?" Gendering Processes in a Political Science Department'. *Gender, Work and Organization*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 202–25.

Kantola, J. and Lombardo, E. (2017) 'EU Gender Equality Policies'. In Heinelt, H. and Münch, S. (eds) *Handbook of European Policies: Interpretive Approaches to the EU* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar), pp. 331–52.

Kantola, J. and Lombardo, E. (2017a) *Gender and Political Analysis* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).

Kantola, J. and Rolandsen Agustin, L. (2016) 'Gendering Transnational Party Politics: The Case of the European Union'. *Party Politics*, Vol. 22, No. 5, pp. 641–51.

Kantola, J., Nousiainen, K. and Saari, M. (eds) (2012) *Tasa-arvo toisin nähtynä: oikeuden ja politiikan näkökulmia tasa-arvoon ja yhdenvertaisuuteen* (Helsinki: Gaudeamus).

Karpowitz, C. and Mendelberg, T. (2014) *The Silent Sex: Gender, Deliberation and Institutions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

Kenny, M. (2013) *Gender and Political Recruitment. Theorizing Institutional Change* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).

Kenny, M. and Mackay, F. (2009) 'Already Doin' It for Ourselves? Skeptical Notes on Feminism and Institutionalism'. *Politics & Gender*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 271–80.

Kenny, M. and Verge, T. (2016) 'Opening Up the Black Box: Gender and Candidate Selection in a New Era'. *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 51, No. 3, pp. 351–69.

Locher, B. (2012) 'Gendering the EU Policy Process and Constructing the *Gender Acquis*'. In Abels, G. and Mushaben, J. (eds) *Gendering the European Union: New Approaches to Old Democratic Deficits* (Basingstoke: Palgrave), pp. 63–84.

Lombardo, E. and Mergaert, L. (2013) 'Gender Mainstreaming and Resistance to Gender Training: A Framework for Studying Implementation'. *NORA: Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, Vol. 21, No. 4, pp. 296–311.

Lombardo, E., Meier, P. and Verloo, M. (eds) (2009) *The Discursive Politics of Gender Equality. Stretching, Bending and Policymaking* (London: Routledge).

Lühiste, M. and Kenny, M. (2016) 'Pathways to Power: Women's Representation in the 2014 European Parliament Elections'. *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 55, No. 3, pp. 626–41.

McDonald, S. (2012) 'Perception: A Concept Analysis'. *International Journal of Nursing Knowledge*, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 2–9.

McElroy, G. and Benoit, K. (2010) 'Party Policy and Group Affiliation in the European Parliament'. *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 40, No. 2, pp. 377–98.

McEvoy, C. (2016) 'Does the Descriptive Representation of Women Matter? A Comparison of Gendered Differences in Political Attitudes between Voters and Representatives in the European Parliament'. *Politics & Gender*, Vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 754–80.

Piscopo, J. (2016) 'When Informality Advantages Women: Quota Networks, Electoral Rules and Candidate Selection in Mexico'. *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 51, No. 3, pp. 487–512.

Raunio, T. and Wagner, W. (2017) 'Ideology or National Interest? External Relations Votes in the European Parliament'. ACCESS EUROPE Research Paper, No. 2017/01.

Rolandsen Agustín, L. and Sata, R. (2013) 'Gendered Identity Constructions in Political Discourse: The Cases of Denmark and Hungary'. In Mokre, M. and Siim, B. (eds) *Negotiating*

Gender and Diversity in an emergent European Public Sphere (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 60–77.

Rönnblom, M. (2009) 'Bending Towards Growth: Discursive Constructions of Gender Equality in an Era of Governance and Neoliberalism'. In Lombardo, E., Meier, P. and Verloo, M. (eds) *Discursive Politics of Gender Equality* (London: Routledge), pp. 105–20.

Verge, T. and de la Fuente, M. (2014) 'Playing With Different Cards: Party Politics, Gender Quotas and Women's Empowerment'. *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 35, No. 1, pp. 67–79.

Verloo, M. (ed.) (2007) *Multiple Meanings of Gender Equality. A Critical Frame Analysis of Gender Policies in Europe* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press).

Van der Vleuten, A. (2012) 'Gendering the Institutions and Actors of the EU'. In Abels, G. and Mushaben, J. (eds) *Gendering the European Union: New Approaches to Old Democratic Deficits* (Basingstoke: Palgrave), pp. 41–62.

Wahlström, N. and Sundberg, D. (2018) 'Discursive Institutionalism: Towards a Framework for Analysing the Relation Between Policy and Curriculum'. *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 163–83.

Waylen, G. (2014) 'Informal Institutions, Institutional Change and Gender Equality'. *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No. 1, pp. 212–23.

Yordanova, N. (2013) *Organising the European Parliament. The Role of Committees and their Legislative Influence* (Colchester: ECPR Press).