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Women's issues on the *Riigikogu*'s floor – do female MPs substantively represent women?

Bachelor's thesis

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## Introduction

Demands for women's equal participation in political decision-making are historically rooted in the ideas of democratic justice. Yet, arguments for increasing women's share in political structures often move beyond these notions to suggest that women's involvement has also practical implications to women's substantive representation. Advocates of gender quotas claim that women should be granted with equal opportunities to participate in decision-making not only because they have the right, but because increasing their number in legislatures is necessary for representing women's interests that result from specific experiences women have in their social roles.

The vast majority of current studies analysing female politicians behaviour in legislative bodies have been conducted in Latin America and United States. Despite recent popular interest, no previous research has been conducted to examine the impact of women on the process of legislative decision-making in the *Riigikogu*. This paper aims to fill this gap in research by analysing if gender is a factor that determines which policy areas MPs deliver legislative questions and speeches. More precisely, this paper examines whether women are needed to represent the areas of women's interests.<sup>1</sup> In order to do that, a content analysis of legislators' floor speeches and questions during the first year of the 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> *Riigikogu* is being used. For the analysis, both of these types of speech acts are allocated into 22 policy areas, from which 4 are pre-defined as women's issues.

Most scholarly works that have investigated the representation of women's interests have generally focused exclusively on women's policy priorities. As this paper is interested in finding out whether women in the electorate would be better substantively represented by legislators descriptively similar to them, that is, by women themselves, it seems crucial to examine both, male and female MPs' policy preferences. In case the analysis reveal that

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<sup>1</sup> In line with many authors (e.g. Piscopo 2010; Erzeel 2012; Volden, Wiseman, and Wittmer 2013), the terms *women's interests* and *women's issues* are used interchangeably in this paper

men are as dedicated to women's issues, and therefore as good representatives of women as female MPs' are, one often used argument for the necessity of gender quotas would be rejected.

Another novel feature of this work is its approach to women's issues. A distinction between women's issues as either traditionally or directly relevant to women is made due to scholarly disagreement on what exactly constitutes "women's issues" - a dispute about whether women are concerned with the matter because of its connection to women's traditional gender roles, or whether the issue has a direct influence on women's well-being. This paper does not exclude neither of the opportunities. On the one hand, it is hypothesized that women are more likely to address both, traditional and progressive women's issues through their speech acts. On the other hand, this paper hypothesizes that women's issues, regardless of the definition, are the only policy areas where gender differences are noticeable.

This paper begins with a a overview of women's descriptive representation in Estonia after the elections of 1992. To build a theoretical framework for this study, the paper continues in the second section by discussing the concept of women's representation, and women's interests in political theory. In order to transform these insights into a strategy for empirical research, the second part of the second section looks on how scholars have previously examined women's roles in legislatures. Building on this comprehensive understanding of women's legislative behavior, two hypotheses are developed that structure the empirical analysis of this study. Before presenting the results of the analysis, the dataset and the coding method of the dependent and independent variables are introduced. Finally, the results of this study are presented in a descriptive and analytical manner. The final section concludes and discusses further incentives for the analysis of parliamentary debates.

In sum, the thesis makes an original contribution to the analysis of women in legislatures by including male legislators in the analysis, examining women's issues from two different

perspectives, and by choosing Estonia as a less examined case in this field of political research. This study supports to the notion that electing women has a substantive and positive effect on the representation of women's progressive and traditional issues, and proved that many of the policy areas are significantly gendered in Estonian parliament.

## **1. Gender and politics in the *Riigikogu***

What makes Estonia and women's legislative behavior an interesting subject to study is its recent socialist history and profound and rapid changes during post-communist transition. These changes included transforming gender roles, attitudes and ideologies, brought about democratization, the shift to a market economy, joining the EU, and opening to the global community. Despite the seemingly favourable conditions for the development of women's political activism created by these phenomena, women did not enter the politics in large numbers during the first years of post-communist Estonia. Country's politics was dominated by rational, forceful and individualistic decisions; and as Drews (2013: 56) reported, was "very masculine value based".

### **1.1. Gender distribution of the members of the *Riigikogu***

The number and share of female and male candidates elected and actually entered the *Riigikogu* between 1992 to 2011 is presented in Table 1. As seen from the figures, during the two decades, women's participation in the work of the parliament rose slowly but almost steadily. Although there were only 15 women sitting in the 7th parliament, by the legislative periods 2003 to 2007 and 2007 to 2011 this number had increased by 14 and 20 women respectively. As a proportion, women held 13% of the seats in the 7th *Riigikogu*, but compared to the first years of post-independent Estonia's parliament, gained nearly two-times more seats after the 2007 elections. Yet, while there exists no data by the time of doing this research about the whole number of women and men in the 12th *Riigikogu*, it can be seen from the table that there were four women less elected in 2011 than in previous elections. Also, despite the average growth of the number of women in the *Riigikogu*, these figures are still far from proportionally reflecting the gender distribution of Estonia.

**Table 1. The number and percentage of MPs elected and worked in the *Riigikogu***

Legislature	Years	MPs elected		MPs entered	
		Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)
<b>7th</b>	1992-1995	13 (13)	88 (87)	15 (13)	105 (87)
<b>8th</b>	1995-1999	12 (12)	89 (88)	14 (11)	112 (89)
<b>9th</b>	1999-2003	18 (18)	83 (82)	21 (16)	110 (84)
<b>10th</b>	2003-2007	19 (19)	82 (81)	29 (18)	132 (82)
<b>11th</b>	2007-2011	24 (24)	77 (76)	35 (25)	105 (75)
<b>12th</b>	2011-2014	20 (20)	81 (80)	NA	NA
<b>Total</b>	1999-2011	106 (17)	500 (83)	85 (20)	346 (80)

Source: The official webpage of the *Riigikogu* ([www.riigikogu.ee](http://www.riigikogu.ee))

Notes: Only the number and percentage of elected members is available for the 12<sup>th</sup> *Riigikogu*

## 1.2. Gender patterns in committee membership

Even though the number of women entering the parliament has increased steadily over the years, there are no studies conducted to evaluate the impact of the increased number of female MPs on the legislative priorities in Estonia. One way to build some expectations regarding the gender patterns in legislative behavior would be to look at the composition of the committees in the *Riigikogu*. Several studies of West European and North American legislatures have indicated that women tend to serve on committees dealing with traditional women's issues like education and social welfare and are absent from the committees that are formally more influential - those handling financial, budgetary, and economic legislations (Thomas and Welch 1991; Dolan and Ford 1997).

**Table 2. Gender composition of standing committees in the *Riigikogu***

Committee*	7 <sup>th</sup>		8 <sup>th</sup>		9 <sup>th</sup>		10 <sup>th</sup>		11 <sup>th</sup>		Total	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men (%)	Women (%)
EU Affairs	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	6	10	5	35 (76)	11 (14)
Environment	12	1	12	0	11	1	18	0	7	2	60 (94)	4 (6)
Cultural Affairs	13	0	16	2	10	6	11	5	9	1	59 (81)	14 (19)
Rural Affairs	12	1	12	1	15	1	15	0	8	1	62 (94)	4 (6)
Economic Affairs	12	2	18	1	19	1	16	3	9	3	74 (88)	10 (12)
Constitutional	12	2	21	1	15	5	19	6	6	2	73 (82)	16 (18)
Finance	12	2	20	3	16	4	17	2	9	3	74 (84)	14 (16)
National Defence	14	1	13	0	6	3	14	3	8	1	55 (87)	8 (13)
Social Affairs	8	3	14	1	14	2	10	6	4	7	50 (72)	19 (28)
Foreign Affairs	16	4	13	4	14	6	13	3	9	0	65 (79)	17 (21)
Legal Affairs	15	1	13	3	9	1	15	2	8	1	60 (88)	8 (12)
<b>Total (%)</b>	126 (88)	17 (12)	152 (90)	16 (10)	129 (81)	30 (19)	173 (83)	36 (17)	87 (77)	26 (23)	667 (84)	125 (16)

Source: The official webpage of the *Riigikogu* ([www.riigikogu.ee](http://www.riigikogu.ee))



On the one hand, the figures clearly reflect the expectations regarding traditional women's areas (see subheading 2.1.2.), showing female representatives serving mostly on the committee addressing social policies. The Committee of Social Affairs is also the only committee where there has been more women sitting during one legislative term than men: in the 11th *Riigikogu*, there were seven female and four male MPs assigned to this committee. However, women are also frequently assigned to committees dealing with foreign affairs and constitution, known as heavily male dominated areas. The sharpest contrast between male and female MPs lies in the composition of Environment Committee and Rural Affairs Committee, in which women have been present four times between the period of 1992 and 2011.

Despite the rather clear gender patterns in committee membership, one should, however, be cautious in drawing definitive conclusions regarding Estonian male and female MPs' policy interests. Namely, it is hard to determine, whether the gender patterns originate from legislators own preferences or from the decisions made by the party's leadership. Some empirical studies dealing with this question have found support for the the former explanation and concluded that the composition of the committees mostly reflect the individual member's rather than party's choice (Frisch and Kelly 2003; Baekgaard and Kjaer 2012) and that the “divisions stem from men’s and women’s different preferences for committees” (Wängnerud 2009: 61). Nonetheless, as Carroll (2006: 2) notes, the preference of the legislator is only one factor influencing the committee assignment. Keeping in mind that the “final decisions about committee assignments are made by legislative leaders, still predominantly men” who often “bring their own attitudes about gender differences to bear on their decisions” (Ibid.: 2), these gender patterns may or may not reflect the policy priorities of Estonian MPs.

## **2. Review of literature and hypotheses**

The feminist scholarly literature that has surfaced in political science during recent decades has brought the question of social representation into ever sharper focus, asking whether it makes any difference if representative bodies are made up of women or men. More precisely, it has been widely discussed if male-dominated legislatures are willing, or even able to represent the interests of male and female citizens. In order to examine Estonian MPs' gender-specific political interests in the *Riigikogu*, it is first important to be familiar with some of the key theoretical concepts that are often used in this literature on gender and politics – these are political representation and women's political interests. Moreover, it is necessary to describe the central premises regarding the relationship between these two terms. Also, to understand the rationale of the hypotheses, earlier scholarly works addressing women's political interests and legislative behaviour should be considered.

### **2.1. Theoretical considerations**

#### 2.1.1. Descriptive and substantive representation

Most of the discussions on political representation start with Hanna Pitkin's (1967) theory of political representation that she introduced in her influential work, *The Concept of Representation*. In this work, Pitkin claimed that there is a crucial difference between "standing for" and "acting for" the constituencies. The former, also known as descriptive representation is concerned with how the representatives reflect the features and viewpoints of their constituents. Therefore, representation is determined by the shared characteristics between representatives and those whose interests do they represent.

[R]epresenting ... depends on the representative's characteristics, on what he is or is like, on being something rather than doing something. The representative does not

act for others; he —stands for them, by virtue of correspondence or connection between them, a resemblance or reflection. In political terms, what seems important is less what the legislature does than how it is composed (Pitkin: 61).

From this perspective, in order to send out accurate information about constituents' wishes and needs, a legislative body should reflect the social make-up of the citizens. As such, precondition for descriptive representation is quite blunt in that only women representatives can descriptively represent women in legislatures. As Barasa (2011: 22) explains it, “because women share descriptive characteristics, if elected to public decision-making office they will be sympathetic to group interests by taking actions that are favourable to women as a group”. Correspondingly, Tremblay (1998: 439) argues that “a female MP represents women merely by her presence in office, since only women can descriptively represent women”.

Substantive representation, on the other hand, stresses the importance of the actions of the representatives. The substantive conception of political representation states that any person who supports the group's particular concerns by their positions and actions acts as this group's representative. From this viewpoint, the representation is determined by the policy matters an MP concentrates and acts upon. As Pitkin writes, to be representative, “his actions, or his opinions, or both must correspond to or be in accord with the wishes, or needs, or interests, of those for whom he acts, that he must put himself in their place, take their part, act as they would act” (Ibid.: 114).

The common view that women represent women not only physically but also substantively once elected to a public office is grounded on the notion that there are important differences between the interests of men and women (see Phillips 1995). But what is noteworthy here, is that descriptive representation is not a precondition for substantive representation. In principle, women's concerns, wishes and interests can be represented by both a female and a male MP, given that she or he supports women's issues through her or his positions and

actions. In the end, an increase in the number of female representatives has a meaningful effect on the female constituencies only if those representatives address policies and positions that further women's interests and increase the quality of women's lives. As such, the character of the relationship between women's political representation and women's interests largely determines which concept is most accurate to use. If women's interests are represented, then it is possible to speak about substantive representation. If women are represented only in token numbers, then this can be considered as descriptive representation.

When analysing the relationship between women's presence in Estonian parliament and the representation of women's interests, this study is guided by Mansbridge's (1999: 630) argument that “the primary function of representative democracy is to represent the substantive interests of the represented” and “descriptive representation should be judged primarily on this criterion”. Employing Pitkin's framework of political representation, this study departs from the notion that members of the *Riigikogu*, irrespective of their gender, substantively represents women if they, as Fick (2000: 35) puts it, “reflect those political issues which are of significance to women” in their legislative work.

#### 2.1.2. Women's political interests

The attention of feminist scholars of political science became focused on women's interests largely as reaction against the understanding that if there exists distinct women's concerns at all, these issues did not have a political relevance due to their belonging into private sphere of society and because male members of the family were representing them in the “outside world” (Sapiro 1981, 701). Currently, the notion that women have a certain set of shared interests that need to be represented in politics is an underlying assumption in most of the studies on women and politics. But how narrowly or broadly should this term be defined, and therefore, what these interests actually are, however, has been a question of much dispute (see Reingold 2000).

With respect to traditional understandings of gender roles in society, women's issues contain a relatively stable set of culturally and biologically determined topics. In the early 1980s, scholars of feminist political theory were of the opinion that women's distinct political interests were generated by the division of labour and exclusion from the public sphere which gave women a different socio-economic position in society (Celis 2007). According to Sapiro (1981: 704), women's interests result from the "gender division of labour" - their roles as nurturers and caregivers - that places women into a distinct socio-economic positions than men, and as such, gives them a shared gendered identity. Diamond and Hartsock (1981) claimed that it was not so much the division of tasks inside the private sphere that gave women distinctive perspectives on questions of general concern but rather the gendered division of productive labour within society (Diamond and Hartsock 1981: 194–196). In this vein, women's domain is associated with the so called "soft" issues that concern social care and responsibility – children and the elderly, social welfare of the poor and needy, education and health care (Reingold 2000).

Later scholars of gender and politics distanced themselves from the essentialist view of women's interests and highlighted the different life experiences of women and men that led them to have a certain set of distinct interests (Jonasdóttir 1988; Mansbridge 1999; Carroll 1994, cited in Reingold 2000; Phillips 1995). An important scholar in this debate is Anne Phillips (1995), who opposes the idea of universal women's interests as such, but acknowledged women's distinct interests "in relation to child-bearing/.../exposure to sexual harassment and violence,/.../unequal position in the division of paid and unpaid labour and their exclusion from most arenas of economic or political power" (Phillips 1995, 67-68). In comparison with earlier conceptions of women's interests, these scholars attempt to define women's issues more "objectively", as issues that they believe are particularly salient to women. Susan Carroll (1994: 15, cited in Reingold 2000) describes women's issues as those "where policy consequences are likely to have a more immediate and direct impact on significantly larger number of women than of men". Anna Jonasdóttir (1991: 156) believes that it should be possible to maintain "some sort of minimal common denomination: the interest in not allowing oneself to be oppressed as a woman, or, in fighting patriarchy". In

such a manner, newly-defined women's issues focus primarily on women's self-interests: they are in the first place about women's own lives and only in second order about their role as provider of care: about children, families, health, welfare and poverty.

Inspired by these discussions, feminist scholars have attempted to bring these different conceptualizations of women's interests together on the same floor. For example Maxime Molyneux (1985) was one of the first scholars who draw a distinction between women's traditional issues and feminist issues. Molyneux defines the former as women's practical interests "arising from the concrete conditions of women's positioning within the gender divisions of labour" (1985: 233). Traditional women's issues are those that are either related to the private sphere - women's bodies, sexuality, and the possibility of giving birth - , or refer to the position of women in the public domain - women in labour force and the modern welfare state. According to Molyneux, women's issues might also have a feminist agenda, which aims to contest discrimination and inequality, both in the private and the public sphere. The latter is being defined by Molyneux as women's strategic interests which derive "from the analysis of women's subordination" (Ibid.: 232). Departing from this distinction, Michelle Saint-Germain (1989) defines women's issues as those which refer to both feminist and women's traditional interests, associating the first with topics of feminist activism, such as pay equity, reproductive rights and violence against women; and women's traditional interests with issues such as healthcare, education, family and children issues and social welfare.

## **2.2. Empirical studies**

### 2.2.1. Women's style of doing politics

Because women and men are perceived to have different life experiences and interests, many scholars have expected that female representatives practise politics in a different way than men do. Women are said to "introduce a kinder, gentler politics", one that is "characterised by co-operation rather than conflict, collaboration rather than hierarchy,

honesty rather than sleaze” (Norris 1996: 93). Or as Mansbridge (1996: 123) has put it: “The process of persuasion may be related to a more consultative, participatory style that seems to characterize women more than men”.

Many of the previous studies tend to support these expectations. Based on the 1992 British Candidate Study, Pippa Norris and Joni Lovenduski (1995: 135) found that women politicians were seen by themselves as more “caring, approachable, practical, honest and principled”. In the same vein, Sarah Childs (2004: 14) found that according to Labour women, female politicians have a different style of politics: they are “less combative and aggressive, more collaborative and speak in a different language compared to men”. Studies, focusing on the relationship between women's representation and conflict report that countries with greater number of female politicians in legislatures are less likely to use military violence to settle disputes, demonstrating the impact of gender on foreign policy (Caprioli 2000; Regan and Paskeviciute 2003). Moreover, studies have shown strong correlation between establishing sustainable peace and women's involvement in peace agreements, post-conflict reconstruction and governance (e.g. Chinkin 2003).

### 2.2.2. Women representing women's interests

Studies of gender and politics have not only acknowledged a difference between women's and men's style of doing politics but found support to expectations concerning gender differences in legislators policy preferences. A large majority of existing literature on the behaviour of women in legislative bodies indicates that in their legislative work, compared to their male colleagues, female legislators are indeed more likely to focus specifically on both, women's traditional policy concerns and issues that are more gender-specific (see below).

One of the most frequently used method for studying gendered policy priorities has been roll-call voting. Many works on voting in Congress have demonstrated women's tendency to express support for issues that have a disproportionate impact upon female constituents

(Lucas 2006). Women tend to be more likely to vote in favour of issues that concern family and children, and support bills that deal with women's reproductive rights (e.g. Saint-Germain 1989; Swers 1998; Thomas and Welch 1991). When examining the voting behaviour in the House of Commons, Susan Welch (1985) found that women consistently voted in a more liberal direction compared to their male colleagues (Welch 1985: 129). The notion that women are more sympathetic to liberal concerns was confirmed by Norris and Lovenduski (1989) in their survey of candidates to the British Parliament in the 1987 elections. In her analysis of gender gaps in socio-political attitudes, Eagly and her co-authors (2004) find that between the 1970s and 1990s, women were more likely to support policies that were socially compassionate and aimed to foster equal rights for women and for gays and lesbians.

Another commonly used measure for examining gender differences among legislative activities is the (co-)sponsorship of bills. After all, bills are the most concrete and important outcomes of legislative activity and therefore influence the lives of female citizens most directly. Various studies have found support to the expectation regarding women's efforts in introducing and sponsoring issues that address women's concerns (e.g. Swers 2005; Piscopo 2010; Volden, Wiseman, and Wittmer 2013). In his work on private member's bills in Estonian and Finnish parliaments, Solvak (2011) found that gender played a notable role in bill sponsorship in the *Riigikogu*. According to Solvak, men in Estonian parliament were on average four times less likely to sponsor bills that dealt with social affairs compared to their female colleagues. Yet, as Solvak pointed out, it is rather difficult to determine who is the actual driving force behind a certain bill.

In contrast, several works have not recorded any relationship between female representatives and their representation of women. Barnello (1999), for instance, finds that New York's female state legislators were no more supportive of women's issues, such as health care access, sexual harassment, and child support in roll-call votes. According to Reingold (2000), women MPs do not vote more for women than men. Women do not introduce more women's bills concerning families, children and women's rights (Htun and



Jones, 2002). Additionally, in these cases where gender differences in legislative behaviour have been evident, these differences cannot always be explained solely by the gender of the representative.

Firstly, roll-call voting and sponsorship of bills do not necessarily indicate how deeply the member of the legislative body is committed to a given issue (Hall 1996). Regarding the topic under consideration, these two forms of legislative action require relatively little of the particular expertise and awareness. Number of studies focusing on roll-call voting have also revealed the constraints imposed by party cohesion and party loyalty on MPs on their political activities in the legislatures (Skjeie 1991; Clifford and Gabel 1999; Ayşe and Tütüncü 2008; Franceschet and Piscopo 2008). Legislative votes can be poor indicator of MPs' policy preferences particularly in European parliamentary democracies featuring strong party discipline.

As case studies focusing on formal types of legislative actions have pointed on the constraints imposed by party discipline on the possibilities for legislators to express their true policy preferences, other more informal forms of actions, such as parliamentary questions, motions and speeches have been used by scholars to investigate gender differences of legislators' policy priorities. Legislators can choose either to speak or not to speak on certain topics and when speaking, introduce or stress certain aspects about the matters under discussion, without going against the party position. For instance Labour women proved to be more likely than Labour men to sign “women’s” and especially feminist “women’s” Early Day Motions in the 1997 British Parliament (Childs and Withey 2004). Erzeel (2012) documented that the majority of claims made by female legislators during the Question Time in Belgian Chamber of Representatives were feminist oriented while the majority of questions raised by male legislators contained a neutral claim. Bird (2005) found that female MPs’ questions to ministers in the British House of Commons mentioned the words “gender” and “women” more frequently than their male colleagues; and posed questions about women’s political representation, health, employment and women's protection against violence more frequently than male MPs.

Gender differences have also proved to rise to the surface in legislators' participation in women's policy debates. When analysing feminist speeches in the U.S. 101st Congress, Tamerius (1995) found that female legislators gave on average six times more speeches on feminist issues per person than congressmen. In a similar vain, Tremblay (1998) analysed speech content in Canada's 35<sup>th</sup> Parliament and found that female MPs spoke on women's traditional, and women's rights issues on average twice as often as male MPs. Some years later, Bird (2008) reported a wide gender gap in concern for women's issues during legislative debates between visible minority men and women in 39<sup>th</sup> Canadian House of Commons.

### **2.3. Hypotheses**

Based on the previous works, two hypotheses are presented in this study to explore whether Estonian women MPs legislate differently than their male colleagues; whether they are more likely to focus on the so called “soft” issues of politics, and if yes, whether these issues relate to more traditional understanding of women's concerns or do they have a feminist bearing. First, if the findings of these studies are generalizable, it is expected that:

H1: Compared to their male colleagues, female MPs focus significantly more in their legislative work on progressive women's issues, and to topics that concern social welfare, education, family and health care.

Evidence to that would suggest that descriptive representation can indeed contribute to substantive representation. Furthermore, if the analysis show that male and female MPs legislate in substantively different ways, regardless of whether or not these acts contribute to advancing the interests of women as a social group, this evidence can serve to prove the

need for gender diversity in Estonian parliament, and in legislatures in general, in order to best democratically represent the many diverse perspectives and interests of the electorate.

Finding that there are no gender differences across any policy areas, or they are just marginal would suggest that many traditional stereotypes concerning women and politics do not hold or are at least no longer appropriate. Yet, this study does not place strong expectations to all policy areas. It can be assumed that as most of the policy issues are strongly related to economic prospects and policies (Taylor- Robinson and Heath 2003), or have simply less of a theoretical relationship with gender roles (Osborn and Mendez 2010), women show no stronger preference to these topics compared to their male colleagues. Therefore, the second hypothesis states that:

H2. With the exception of areas like social welfare, education, family and healthcare, there are no significant differences between male and female MPs' policy interests in the *Riigikogu*.

### 3. Data and methods

#### 3.1. Methodology

This paper explores gender patterns in legislative behaviour of individual MPs in Estonia using legislative debates as data source. Because MPs' activity during plenary sessions is one of the most important and visible parts of their legislative work, the policy priorities of the *Riigikogu*'s members were examined by analysing the speech acts of individual MPs' during the parliamentary debates.

Members of the *Riigikogu* receive speaking rights in several situations during the readings of draft legislations. Firstly, the MP may have participated in the draft's redaction, and her or his commentaries are aimed to offer expert knowledge on it. In such a case, the MP may act as a presenter of draft legislation or a leading committee's rapporteur. Members of the *Riigikogu* may also individually pose oral question to the presenter of the draft legislation or the leading committee's rapporteur. Lastly, if the MP feels particularly strongly about the proposal, he or she may also have requested floor time from the board to comment the issue as an individual MP, or as a faction or a committee representative. As members' issue preferences are fixed when speaking on behalf of a committee, these parliamentary speech acts were excluded from the analysis. Therefore, MPs' speech acts were grouped into two articulation types – speeches, given as a representative of a faction or as an individual legislator; and questions.

The reason for separating the interventions made in the *Riigikogu* during the readings of draft acts is to distinguish the roles in which MPs act. MPs' questions largely mirror legislator's individual political competence and political activism in general and speaking as a representative of a faction reflects the role of an MP within the faction. Both of these two parliamentary acts illustrate legislators' issue preferences, but from a different angle. This

combination makes it possible to compare legislators actions which may be subject to certain behavioural constraints from the party leadership with data that is more likely to record their individual policy interests. In such a manner, this method should yield a more comprehensive evidence than single-sample studies, as it reveals whether and in which circumstances gender differentiated patterns of legislative behaviour emerge.

### 3.1.1. Floor speeches

The first axis of analysis concerns parliamentary speeches. Through speeches, MPs can advertise and take positions on certain issues, highlight their constituents' concerns, demonstrate their policy expertise and communicate issue-specific knowledge to other members of the parliament (Pearson and Dancey 2010: 2). Certainly not less importantly, debates on important legislations often enter the public arena, which is why speech-making is a way MPs seek to increase their visibility in the eyes of their electorate. On these basis, floor speeches have proved to be an effective tool for MPs' to address women's policy concerns (see Osborn and Mendez 2010). Speaking for women during legislative debates can be considered as representation in itself, but it is also important in setting the ground for legislations that are important to women by making certain topics or positions more visible.

However, the extent to which women MPs can or wish to use speeches in this manner is unclear, given the possibly strong party discipline. According to Proksch and Slapin (2012), parties in a parliamentary systems that use a closed-list PR electoral system are likely to give high priority to party cohesion, as voters rely mostly on party "labels". Thus, party rules often allow party leaders to control whom they allow on the floor. Party leaders may choose to delegate floor time to certain members for strategic reasons: they may wish to provide MPs with the opportunity to perform as an expert and as an advocate of specific issues (Ibid.: 523). In such case, it can be expected that if women's issues are an important matter within party's platform, party leaders will encourage MPs' to introduce women's perspectives and address women's issues in the parliament. But also, if women's issues are

seen as particularistic and irrelevant, party discipline can keep legislators from speaking on such matters or simply delegate them to few members. These factors make debate on legislation distinct from more informal questions. Both of these types of speech acts are included to ensure that the results do not hinge on the types of speech acts under investigation.

### 3.1.2. Questions from the floor

The study of debates is complimented with analysis of questions to the speech-makers because of important differences between these types of speech acts. Questions are important to include to the study for two reasons. Firstly, as noted above, it is relatively hard to determine MPs' policy interests by simply analysing their speech acts in the *Riigikogu* due to potential party constraints. It is with respect to this parliamentary activity that party discipline is more flexible and offers MPs certain freedom to address and promote issues they consider to be important. Secondly, and related to the former concern, when members pose questions to the presenter, they can choose the issues on which they will do that. MPs often pose questions to the draft act's presenter to defend or critique it's rationale and its benefits and consequences to society. Thus, legislators questions that are posed during plenary speeches demonstrate their vested interests in the proposal. As such, questions on one or another policy areas should serve as a good indicator of MPs' specific individual policy interests.

## **3.2. Data**

To analyse gender patterns in legislative behaviour, the study used data archived by Estonian parliament's database available at the *Riigikogu*'s webpage (see, [www.riigikogu.ee](http://www.riigikogu.ee)). As it seemed to be important to take into account the changes in society and the role that particular members can play in the *Riigikogu*, it was decided to extend the sample to three distinct legislative terms, started in 2003, 2007 and 2011. But as the time

frame selected was too wide to allow scrutiny of all debates and questions in the *Riigikogu*, the focus was only on the first year of the 10th, 11th and 12th *Riigikogu*.

Interventions made by the MPs during the floor debates were excluded from the sample if they were given solely for procedural purposes. They were excluded simply because there was no substantive content important for this analysis - these types of interventions would not say anything about a member's preferences or opinions about a given topic. Also, speeches or questions that were broken up or interrupted only briefly were coded as a single speech.

### 3.2.1. Dependent and independent variables

In order to test the expectations regarding the gender patterns of MPs' legislative interests, the number and the content of speech acts held by an MP was captured. As such, the dependent variable of this analysis was the number of speeches and questions by MPs during the first year of three legislative terms in one of the pre-determined policy categories and the independent variable was gender, coded as 1 for women. In determining into which policy category the debate belonged to, an adapted version of the UK Policy Agendas Project coding scheme was used (see, <http://www.comparativeagendas.info>). Appendix A contains a listing of the 22 main categories that were used in coding.

The method of coding aimed to capture two distinct aspects of the speech acts: the general policy area and whether there was a women's gender-specific interest dimension. The first step of coding revealed in which grand policy categories female, as well as male MPs' focused. The allocation into the policy categories was done mainly on the basis of the titles of the debates they were part of. In order to test the hypothesis, the policy areas were also divided into traditional women's policy issue areas, such as healthcare, education, family issues and social welfare and non-women's policy issue areas, that included all the rest of the policy categories.

Next, the content of the oral acts, made by legislators was explored more closely and from a feminist perspective. The speech acts were coded by whether (1, if yes) or not (0, if otherwise) they addressed issues as first and foremost important to women. For doing that, a definition proposed by Carroll (1994, cited in Reingold 2000: 169) was used, which stated that women's issues are those matters *that have a more immediate and direct impact on significantly larger number of women than men*. For example, references to women as employees, inequality in pay between men and women, women's roles as caregivers or women's health were considered as “feminist” interests. Coding speech act by whether they favoured or opposed women's concerns proved to be unnecessary because there were actually no interventions that were clearly against promoting those interests.

Unlike most of the approaches used by scholars examining women's legislative activity, this specific way of coding allowed to draw larger conclusion about gender differences in legislative bodies. By focusing on all the members of the parliament, contrary to most of the previous studies that have examined the behaviour of merely female representatives, this coding allowed to compare the priorities of female members with priorities of their male colleagues.

Secondly, this model enabled to investigate MPs policy priorities across a whole range of policy categories. Great number of former studies has concentrated on the policy areas that women MPs' are expected to be interested in (Jones 1997; Taylor- Robinson and Heath 2003; Xydias 2007) or simply compared a set of women's interests' areas with these of male's interests areas. Yet, this coding scheme takes into account the possibility that women's interests may lay in various policy areas.

Lastly, assessing MPs' interest in women's gender-specific issues allowed to compare the definition with the definitions other researchers have used. As already mentioned, recent literature suggests a distinction in what constitutes women's issues, depending on whether these issues are defined through women's traditional gender roles, or whether they refer to



concerns that affect specifically women's own well - being. As both of these sets of issues have a theoretical relationship to women and their representation, it was decided to capture this divide and examine the possibility of MPs interests in both of these areas. In such a manner, this paper aims to add to the debate on what women's issues actually are, and how narrowly exactly should they be defined.

## 4. Analyses

The dataset of this study samples three years of three distinct legislative terms of the *Riigikogu*: 2003-2004, 2007-2008 and 2011-2012, i.e. the first years of the 10th, 11th and 12th Riigikogu. The dataset consists of 4327 speech acts, including 3106 questions and 1221 speeches. Of the total of 322 MPs that were in the *Riigikogu* during these three years, 262 (81%) were men and 60 (19%) were women. Table 3 describes these figures in more detail.

**Table 3. Characteristics of speech acts in the *Riigikogu***

Term	Men				Women				Total
	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	All	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	All	
<b>Legislators</b>	91	84	87	262 (81)	18	22	20	60 (19)	322 (100)
<b>Questions</b>	1138	608	777	2523 (81)	233	174	179	583 (19)	3106 (100)
<b>Speeches</b>	521	278	204	993 (81)	107	75	46	228 (19)	1221 (100)
<b>Total speech acts</b>	1659	886	981	3516 (81)	340	249	225	811 (19)	4327 (100)

Source: Authors' calculations based on the collected data

As it can be seen from the table above, in general, male and female members of the *Riigikogu* were presenting their questions and speeches in accordance to their share in the parliament. Although not in the main interest of this particular study, it must be noted that this trend goes against the expectations and empirical studies of many scholars who have claimed that women are in general less likely to speak in group settings when outnumbered by men (e.g. Karpowitz, Mendelberg and Shaker 2012). But what exactly is the content of these speech acts, and how the content of these floor activities differs among male and female MPs is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Number and share of speech acts by policy area in the *Riigikogu***

Policy category	Participation count (%)			Areas of
	Total	Men	Women	Women's Intrests
1. Macroeconomics	819 (100)	659 (80)	160 (20)	
2. Minority Issues, Civil Rights and Liberties	264 (100)	212 (80)	52 (20)	
3. Health	99 (100)	74 (75)	25 (25)	x
4. Agriculture	90 (100)	84 (93)	7 (7)	
5. Labour and Employment	264 (100)	194 (73)	70 (27)	
6. Education	491 (100)	367 (75)	124 (25)	x
7. Environment	127 (100)	121 (95)	6 (5)	
8. Energy	77 (100)	66 (86)	11 (14)	
10. Transportation	168 (100)	152 (90)	16 (10)	
11. Family Issues	69 (100)	48 (70)	21 (30)	x
12. Law and Crime	333 (100)	289 (87)	44 (13)	
13. Social Welfare	337 (100)	226 (67)	111 (33)	x
14. Community Development and Housing	214 (100)	175 (82)	39 (18)	
15. Banking, Finance and Domestic Commerce	200 (100)	166 (83)	34 (17)	
16. Defence	77 (100)	62 (81)	15 (19)	
17. Science, Technology and Communications	30 (100)	25 (83)	5 (17)	
18. Foreign Trade	27 (100)	24 (89)	3 (11)	
19. International Affairs and Foreign Aid	93 (100)	83 (89)	10 (11)	
20. Government Operations	479 (100)	429 (90)	50 (10)	

Source: Authors' calculations based on the collected data

Table 4 presents Estonian legislators' participation by summarising all the speech contributions of members of the *Riigikogu* during the three periods under investigation. The first set of columns shows the proportions of the total male and female legislators' contributions to the debates. The second set of columns points out the traditional female areas of interest as they were presented in the first hypothesis.

Before looking at the results, a simple test of proportions was conducted to determine in which policy categories female MPs spoke more often than would be expected based on their presence in the *Riigikogu*. When assuming that all legislators would place the same emphasis on all of the policy categories, female MPs would be predicted to make 19% of speech acts in every policy area since female MPs made up 19% of the 362 legislators that were in the *Riigikogu* during these periods that this study is focused on. As seen from the table, female MPs devoted their time significantly more (and hence, male members

proportionally less) then predicted to discussions on social welfare, family issues, labour matters, education and health care. These results strongly support hypothesis 1, in that female MPs do participate actively in debates concerning the so called “soft” issues of politics. Yet, although to a lesser extent, it should not be ignored that female MPs also show high interest in labour and employment issues, and matters falling under categories “Macroeconomics” and “Minority Issues, Civil Rights and Liberties”. Also, the noticeable gap in interest in many other policy issues, such as public lands and water management, environment, agriculture and government operations does not lend any support to the second hypothesis. These sharp differences suggest that women's issues are not the only gendered policy areas in the *Riigikogu*.

Next, in order to test the two hypotheses together, it was decided to calculate the share of female/male speakers given the total number of female/male MPs in the *Riigikogu* during the three periods in the sample. This creates the possibility to compare not just the proportional difference in legislators' interests in several policy areas, but the extent to which members prioritized them in terms of their presence in the *Riigikogu*, i.e. the intensity of commitment to these issues. Table 5 gives the results of this comparison.

**Table 5. The intensity of speech acts by policy area in the *Riigikogu***

Policy category	Participation/ Presence in parliament (%)		
	Men	Women	Difference
1. Macroeconomics	2.5	2.7	0.2
2. Minority Issues, Civil Rights and Liberties	0.8	0.9	0.1
3. Health	0.3	0.4	0.1
4. Agriculture	0.3	0.1	-0.2
5. Labour and Employment	0.7	1.2	0.5
6. Education	1.4	2.1	0.7
7. Environment	0.5	0.1	-0.4
8. Energy	0.3	0.2	-0.1
10. Transportation	0.6	0.3	-0.3
11. Family Issues	0.2	0.35	0.15
12. Law and Crime	1.1	0.7	-0.4
13. Social Welfare	0.9	1.9	1
14. Community Development and Housing	0.7	0.7	0
15. Banking, Finance and Domestic Commerce	0.6	0.6	0
16. Defence	0.2	0.3	0.1
17. Science, Technology and Communications	0.1	0.1	0
18. Foreign Trade	0.1	0.1	0
19. International Affairs and Foreign Aid	0.3	0.2	-0.1
20. Government Operations	1.6	0.8	-0.8
21. Public Lands and Water Management	0.1	< 0.1	-0.1
24. State and local Government administration	< 0.1	< 0.1	0
28. Arts, Culture and History	0.1	0.1	0
99. Other, Miscellaneous and Uncodable	< 0.1	0.1	0.1

Source: Authors' calculations based on the collected data

The first noticeable trend that Table 5 reveals is that although on average female and male legislators contributed equally in parliamentary debates, legislator's gender had a significant effect on the number of speech acts done in different debates of the *Riigikogu*. Firstly, in contrast to their male colleagues, women took the floor mainly when issues, such as social welfare and education were under discussion. As the first analysis already allowed to predict, female MPs' were also exceedingly more active during the debates that dealt with labor and employment issues. Most obvious gender difference, however, is that in terms of their total seat-share in Estonian parliament, female MPs were notably passive when state and governmental issues were discussed. Men also proved to be markedly more active in discussing environmental questions and draft-acts that concerned law and crime. The obviously greater interest in women's issues in general, and the two topics that were most frequently addressed by women – social welfare and education – in particular again supports the first hypothesis. On the other hand, no support was obtained for the second

hypothesis. As there proves to exist a set of issues clearly more preferred by female legislators, some other policy areas rather seem to belong to men's domain.

Subsequently, it was decided to analyse whether these trends reflect female MPs true policy interests, or rather only indicate that women in Estonian parliament are marginalised into certain “soft” policy areas by the party leadership. If the latter was true, women would not speak out so often on other, non-women's issues through speeches because of the presumably larger role of the party leadership in determining who is allowed to take the floor, and in which topic. Rather, women would demonstrate their specific concern on women's issues via questions to the speech makers, as in doing that, legislators are expected to be more free in their choice of participating or not in the debates. If these assumptions don't hold, there would not be any significant difference of issue preferences in questions and speeches. In terms of policy areas, women would address their main areas of interests (see Tables 4 and 5) equally in their questions and their speeches. The results of such a comparison are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6. Number and share of female MPs' questions and speeches in the *Riigikogu***

Policy category	Questions			Speeches		
	Total	Women	Women (%)	Total	Women	Women (%)
1. Macroeconomics	575	124	22	244	36	15
2. Civil Rights, Liberties and Minority Issues	180	34	19	84	18	21
3. Health	84	21	25	15	4	27
4. Agriculture	71	6	8	19	0	0
5. Labour and Employment	186	40	22	78	30	38
6. Education	348	94	27	143	30	21
7. Environment	105	6	6	22	0	0
8. Energy	71	10	14	6	1	17
10. Transportation	134	13	10	34	3	9
11. Family Issues	53	15	28	16	6	38
12. Law and Crime	256	37	14	77	7	9
13. Social Welfare	212	66	31	125	45	36
14. Community Development and Housing Issues	149	29	19	65	10	15
15. Banking, Finance, and Domestic Commerce	142	25	18	58	9	16
16. Defence	52	11	21	25	4	16
17. Science, Technology and Communications	24	2	8	6	3	50
18. Foreign Trade	22	2	9	5	1	20
19. International Affairs and Foreign Aid	72	8	11	21	2	10
20. Government Operations	323	32	10	156	18	12

Source: Authors' calculations based on the collected data

Table 6 presents the number and percentage of female MPs' questions and speeches in every policy category. The most significant difference is in the area of labor and employment, in which women were notably active in giving speeches in general and also compared to their tendency to pose questions concerning these matters. Yet, conclusions shouldn't be made too hastily about party's influence as the share of women's questions in this area still exceeds the share of questions in most other policy areas. Overall, the results do not seem to vary much with the expected role played by party discipline and do not support the notion that the party sends their members to the floor to give legislative speeches in certain topics or restricts them in doing so. Based on these results, it can be said that although there were differences between the frequency of giving speeches and posing questions within the policy subjects, female MPs in the *Riigikogu* addressed women's issues in the legislative agenda more than men irrespective of the type of the speech act. Although in slightly different sequence, family issues, social welfare and health stand out in both types of speech acts as the second and third most popular subjects among female MPs. The clearest gap between participation in asking questions and speech-making in category "Science, Technology and Communications" can probably be ascribed to statistically insignificant number of speech acts done in this field.

The second dependent variable in the focus of this study is the number of speech acts with feminist agendas. During a careful reading of the debates, those individual speech acts that addressed *matters that have a more immediate and direct impact on significantly larger number of women than men* were grouped into six categories based on their type and content. These six women's gender-specific issue categories that developed from open coding are: State Action for Gender Equality, Women's Health, Government Benefits/Support, Marital and Divorce Issues, Gender Equality in Education and Employment, and Violence Against Women. Perhaps closer explanation is needed for the content of first two categories, of which the former includes primarily inquiries about and speeches on the creation and funding of the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner's office and the latter one questions and speeches addressing mostly child care and childbirth allowances. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7. Women's gender-specific policy categories**

Women's Policy Category	Women			Men			Total (%)
	Questions	Speeches	Total (%)	Questions	Speeches	Total (%)	
State Action for Gender Equality	4	11	15 (42)	15	6	21 (58)	36 (100)
Gender Equality in Education and Employment	5	4	9 (45)	9	2	11 (55)	20 (100)
Government Benefits/Support	20	17	37 (37)	45	18	63 (63)	100 (100)
Marital and Divorce Issues	6	2	8 (32)	15	2	17 (68)	25 (100)
Violence Against Women	0	0	0 (0)	4	1	5 (100)	5 (100)
Women's Health	4	0	4 (29)	8	2	10 (71)	14 (100)
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>73 (36,5)</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>127 (64,5)</b>	<b>200 (100)</b>

Source: Authors' calculations based on the collected data

Taken together, from all the 4327 speech acts made during the period under investigation, the analysis captured 200 speech acts, which content had to do with the well-being of women or addressed an area of women's rights. From these 200 questions and speeches, 36,5% were done by female and 63,5% by male legislators. Hence, in relation to their share in Estonian parliament (19%), female MPs were nearly two times more active in posing questions or giving speeches concerning issues important in women's lives compared to their male colleagues. It is also noteworthy, that in four of these six categories women made a higher percentage of speech acts than in any other general policy area (see Table 4), including in issues that were classified as traditional women's interests. Only in one category, that is "Violence Against Women" were women totally silent. Perhaps this can be explained with the topic's close relatedness with law and crime matters, which women demonstrated to show low interest in (see Tables 4 and 5). The finding that male legislators will undertake women's substantive representation most likely in areas like women's health and violence against women, but show low concern in gender equality matters is also worth pointing out. All in all, collected data clearly supports the first hypothesis in demonstrating that female legislators are more likely than men to put women's issues on the agenda, and by doing that, represent the interests of women as a social group.



## Conclusions

This present study examined whether the *Riigikogu*'s female members exhibit different patterns of legislative activity than do men. Namely, the analyses aimed to find out, if female MPs substantively represent women by discussing and emphasizing policies and concerns on the floor on issues important to women. The paper posed two interrelated hypotheses: one claiming that women in Estonian parliament substantively represent the interests of women by focusing both, on progressive women's issues, and to topics that are often considered as traditional women's issues (i.e. social welfare, education, family issues and healthcare); and the other claiming that there are no significant gender patterns of activity in other policy areas.

Firstly, it became evident that Estonian female legislators do behave differently than their male colleagues in demonstrating greater involvement in the traditional women's issues. This phenomenon was most evident when social welfare and education issues were discussed on the floor. However, the findings did not fully support the second hypothesis of this study, in that women also spoke in labour, economical, minority and civil rights matters in proportionately larger numbers than male MPs, given their total seat share in the *Riigikogu*. Significant gender differences also became evident in areas like governmental operations and law and crime, in which male MPs demonstrated notably greater interest. In this context, it can be said that the typology of gendered and non-gendered issues that was used in this study at times proved itself and at other times less so.

Second, this thesis examined whether women address the so called "soft" issues of politics more often than men because these issues are in a way ghettoized by the parties they belong to. The results of this analysis demonstrate that this is not the case. Women focused on traditional women's issues not only in their floor speeches, in which party leaders may control who they allow on the floor, but also in their questions from the floor, in which

instance legislators are expected to be more free in choosing whether or not to express themselves on a given topic.

Finally, MPs' activity in raising and discussing progressive women's issues was examined. The difference between these issues and the issues examined in the first analysis was that this subset of issues contained only those matters that influence women's lives directly, rather than those that connect to women's traditional social roles. The study found support to the hypothesis, according to which female legislators speak more frequently when discussing policies that benefit women. As such, the results of this analysis confirm that progressive women's interests are better represented by women. Furthermore, women showed greater interest in these issues than to issues that are defined as women's issues because of a traditional understanding of women's domains.

Consistent with existing literature in the field, the data presented in this paper show considerable support for the unfolding of women's substantive representation. Estonian female MPs speak on women's issues in proportionately larger numbers than male MPs, regardless of the type of the speech act or the nature of the women's concern. In such a manner, the findings of this study allow to suggest that the election of more women into the *Riigikogu* can have an effect on the nature of Estonian politics. By knowing that women attach more importance to women's issues than men, it may be predicted that an increase in the number of women in the *Riigikogu* would achieve greater representation of women's interests in Estonian politics. Of course, it can be assumed that within female legislators, approaches to these issues and views on how to deal with different women's concerns differ from each other depending on the socio-economical background, political experience or party membership of the MP. These hypotheses, however, should be addressed in future research.

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## **Appendix**

Policy categories:

1. Macroeconomics
2. Civil Rights, Liberties and Minority Issues
3. Health
4. Agriculture
5. Labour and Employment
6. Education
7. Environment
8. Energy
10. Transportation
11. Family Issues
12. Law and Crime
13. Social Welfare
14. Community Development and Housing Issues
15. Banking, Finance, and Domestic Commerce
16. Defense
- 17 Science, Technology and Communications
18. Foreign Trade
19. International Affairs and Foreign Aid
20. Government Operations
21. Public Lands and Water Management
24. State and local Government administration
28. Arts, Culture, History and National Identity
99. Other, Miscellaneous and Uncodable

## Naiste teemad Riigikogu saalis – kas naised esindavad naisi?

Marie Allikmaa

### Resümee

Suur hulk parlamendiuuringuid on tõestanud naissoost parlamendisaadikute tähtsust naiste huvide sisulisel esindamisel (ingl. k. termin *substantive representation*) seadusandlikes kogudes (nt. Saint-Germain 1989; Thomas and Welch 1991; Tremblay 1998; Piscopo 2010). Selline suundumus on oluline argument naiste numbrilise esindatuse suurendamiseks poliitilisel tasandil. Sellest teadmiseist lähtuvalt on antud bakalaureusetöö keskseks eesmärgiks selgitada, kas Eesti parlamendipoliitikas kohtab teemasid, mille tõstatamisel on määravaks eeskõneleja sugu. Kitsamalt on fookusesse võetud “naiste teemad”, defineerituna nii naiste ühiskondlikest soorollidest tulenevate kui soospetsiifiliste huvidena.

Eelnevatele vastavasisulistele töödele tuginedes on püstitatud kaks hüpoteesi. Esimene hüpotees väidab, et riigikogu naisliikmed pühendavad meeskolleegidest proportsionaalselt enam tähelepanu kitsalt naiste heaolu mõjutavatele poliitikatele, ning teemadele, mis puudutavad naiste traditsioonilisi huvisid, nii-öelda pehmeid valdkondi: sotsiaalne heaolu, tervishoid, perekond ja haridus. Teise hüpoteesi kohaselt on nimetatud valdkonnad ainsad, mille puhul meeste ja naiste poliitiline aktiivsus märkimisväärselt erineb. Teisisõnu, eeldatakse näha kitsapiirilist “naiste teemade” eristumist muudest poliitikavaldkondadest.

Bakalaureusetöö analüüsimeetodiks on riigikogu stenogrammide kontentanalüüs. Kogutud empiiriline materjal hõlmab kolme järjestikuse riigikogu koosseisu – XI, XI ja XII – esimest tööaastat. Töö analüüsiühikuks on kõneakt – riigikogu liikme poolt seaduseelnõu arutlemise ajal esitatud küsimus või kõne. Analüüsi teostamiseks on kõik kõneaktid Comparative Agendas Projecti raames arendatud kodeerimisjuhendi alusel jaotatud 22

kategooriasse. Naisi otseselt puudutavad kõneaktid on nende sisu põhjal teise kodeerimisringi käigus jaotatud eelnevalt defineerimata kategooriatesse.

Töö koosneb neljast peatükist. Esimeses peatükis tutvustatakse lühidalt analüüsi konteksti ehk naiste osalust Eesti parlamendi töös taasiseseisvumisele järgnenud perioodil. Töö teises osas antakse ülevaade töö empiirilistest ja teoreetilistest lähtekohtadest, millele järgnevalt püstitatakse hüpoteesid. Peatükis 3 tutvustatakse töös kasutatavat andmestikku ning analüüsi läbiviimise metoodikat. Töö viimases osas esitatakse uurimistulemused ning tuuakse välja töö järeldused.

Analüüsist selgub, et naiste osalus parlamendi töös mõjutab tähelepanu jaotumist ühele või teisele poliitikavaldkonnale. Kinnitusena esimesele hüpoteesile ilmneb, et riigikogu naisliikmed pöörasid vaatluse all oleva kolme aasta jooksul meeskolleegidega võrreldes oluliselt enam tähelepanu seaduseelnõudele, mis puudutavad sotsiaalvaldkonda, tervishoidu, pere ja haridust. Kooskõlas esimese hüpoteesiga olid naissaadikud ka tähelepanuväärselt aktiivsemad osalejad kitsalt naiste huve puudutavates diskussioonides. Need järeldused lubavad oletada, et naiste osakaalu suurenemine riigikogus tõstab ka nende teemade osatähtsust parlamendipoliitikas, milles naistel on otsesed või kaudsed huvid.

Töö teine hüpotees ei leidnud kinnitust. Riigikogus ilmnevad tähelepanuväärsed soolised erinevused ka nende poliitikavaldkondade käsitlemisel, mida eelnevalt pole defineeritud naiste teemadena. Võttes arvesse naiste osakaalu riigikogus, ilmutasid naised meestest suuremat huvi esmajoonel tööturгу, aga ka majandust ning kodanikuõigusi- ja vabadusi reguleerivate seaduseelnõude vastu. Parlamendi meesliikmed suunasid seejuures enam tähelepanu riigivalitsemist puudutavatele teemadele, samuti olid mehed aktiivsemad küsimuste küsijad ja kõnede pidajad, kui looduskeskkond ning seadusandlus ja kuritegevus arutluse alla tulid. Nõnda võib antud tööle tuginedes rääkida “naiste teemade” kõrval ka riigikogus esinevatest “meeste teemadest”.