

**WHY ARE WOMEN UNDER-REPRESENTED IN THE BRITISH HOUSE OF
COMMONS AND THE SEJM OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND?**

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the
University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy by

Dorota Urszula Opyd

03 August 2015

ABSTRACT

This study explores the reasons for gender inequality in the lower chambers of the British and Polish Parliaments. The barriers to women's political advance are investigated through elite interviews with women MPs with the aim of identifying and exploring the socio-cultural, socio-economic and structural factors which account for gender imbalance in national parliaments.

The research examines these factors from the perspectives of those most involved: the women MPs. Through qualitative, semi-structured interviews, I examine the similarities and differences in the views of women politicians from countries with different electoral systems, contrasting models of equality guarantees and different historical and democratic cultures.

The findings from the study illustrate the impact of cultural stereotypes on women who seek to join the political arena, the influence that media bias in the representation of women's political activity has on female politicians and the extent of the restrictions associated with a male dominated environment. This research also addresses structural difficulties such as electoral systems and different types of equality provisions introduced in each country to help women parliamentary candidates. In addition, this study provides some indication of the way forward for the achievement of gender parity.

The results provide clear support for the argument that gender balance cannot be achieved without challenging stereotypes and, most of all, without introducing

measures to educate young girls on political careers. Within the same context, the biases of the media in promoting gender stereotypes and the untouchable power of social media have been identified. The findings also suggest a need to re-think the use of gender quotas, supporting these as a short-term solution but resisting the involvement of governments in gender equality issues, indicating that this should be dealt with by the political parties. The thesis also offers insights into the importance of behavioural patterns that men and women in power have learned through their socialisation, an issue largely missed in the existing literature.

DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation describes original work that has not previously been presented for the award of any other degree of any institution. Where other sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.

Signed,

Dorota Opyd

Dorota Urszula Opyd

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

'You can't imagine, even from you have read and what I've told you, the things I shall have to see and do. It's friendship work, Carter, and I doubt if any man without ironclad sensibilities could ever see it through and came up alive and sane' (Rugg, and Petre, 2004: 1).

Firstly, and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisors Dr Stuart Wilks-Heeg, Professor Karen Ross and Professor Ken Roberts, whose continual supportive enthusiasm for this thesis never failed to compensate for my own lack of confidence. Their knowledgeable and critical guidance was absolutely crucial to the completion of this project.

Secondly, I would truly like to express my gratefulness to my mentor and friend, Professor Ken Roberts, for constant encouragement and for being kind enough to spend many hours reading drafts and guiding me on their improvement. Professor Roberts, your support was invaluable in starting, continuing and completing my PhD journey, thank you.

Thirdly, I would like to thank my father Tadeusz Opyd for endless technical help around my home and for being able to be available at any time I needed him, despite living 2000 km away. You are a star, dad.

I would also like to thank my friends Philip Pastouna, Sarah Rowland, Katie Homer and Wanda Lukanko for their advocacy during my research. Phil's confidence in my ability and his support helped me to start the enjoyable academic voyage and made me believe that I was capable of reaching the end. Thank you Sarah and Katie for all help with my horses and patience, when I relentlessly talked about my research and thank you Wanda for being a 'second mother' to me after losing my mum.

At last, I would like to thank my dearest friend Michal Chodak, for his understanding when I was spending endless time in front of my computer during the writing up of my thesis. Thank you Michal for taking care of me, my health and spoiling me with delicious cooking.

I dedicate this thesis to my mum who is not here today to celebrate my achievements but I believe she is watching over me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Declaration	iii
Acknowledgment	iv
Table of Content	v
List of Figures	vii
List of Tables	viii
List of Pictures	ix
Abbreviations	x
Appendices	xi
Chapter I: Introduction	1
Chapter II: Review of Relevant Literature	11
Introduction	11
Difficulties that challenge women politician’s in their journey to the Parliament: Global overview	19
Measures taken to help women to join the political elite	46
Impact of electoral systems on gender imbalance in politics	65
Statistical emphasis on the United Kingdom and the Republic of Poland	74
Conclusion	79
Chapter III: Research design	86
Introduction	86
Background to the research: Why the House of Commons and the Sejm of the Republic of Poland?	89
Some concerns regarding cross international research	91
Interviews: qualitative approach to primary data collection	94
Ethical considerations during different stages of the research	100
Reflection on data analysis	103
Limitations of the methodology chosen for this research	104
Interviewing the elites: my pleading journey	107
Conclusion	115
Chapter IV: Data analysis and findings emerging from interviews with British women MPs	117
Introduction	117
Gender similarities and differences	119
Family	127
Distortions	136
Structural pros and cons	146

Ways to gender equality	158
Conclusion	163
Chapter V: Data analysis and findings emerging from interviews with Polish women MPs	166
Introduction	166
Gender similarities and differences	168
Family	174
Distortions	181
Structural pros and cons	192
Ways to gender equality	199
Conclusion	206
Chapter VI: Similarities and differences: British and Polish women MPs	209
Introduction	209
Similarities emerging from British and Polish women MPs'	211
Up-and-coming differences between British and Polish women MPs'	217
Conclusion	230
Chapter VII: Final conclusions and practical recommendations for further research	238
Empirical findings	241
The cross-national comparison of the empirical findings	252
Theoretical implications	254
Limitations of the study	258
Recommendations for future research	259
References	262
Appendices	288

List of Figures

Figure 1: Average percentage of women in Parliaments Worldwide in 2015	20
Figure 2: Percentage of parliamentary seats in single or lower chambers occupied by women in 2015 (member states of OECD)	21
Figure 3: The ladder of political recruitment	72
Figure 4: Representation of men and women in the House of Commons and the Sejm of the Republic of Poland in 2015	74
Figure 5: Progress in gender balance in the House of Commons: 1950-2015	75
Figure 6: Progress in gender balance in the Sejm of the Republic of Poland: 1952-2011	76
Figure 7: The increase of women in parliaments: UK, Poland and Worldwide between 2010 and 2015	77
Figure 8: The increase of women on boards: FTSE 250 and FTSE 100 between 2010/2011 and 2015	78
Figure 9: Differences in percentages between men and women, and their interest in British politics	297
Figure 10: Differences in percentages between men and women, and their interest in Polish politics.	297

List of Tables

Table 1: Equality promotion strategies	54
Table 2: Worldwide quotas by region	60
Table 3: Percentage of countries with gender quotas by type of electoral rules	61
Table 4: Categories: UK	292
Table 5: Categories: Poland	293
Table 6: Gender similarities/differences	294
Table 7: Family	294
Table 8: Distortions	295
Table 9: Structural pros and cons	295
Table 10: Ways to gender equality	296
Table 11: Information about the British interviewees	298
Table 12: Information about the Polish interviewees	299

List of Pictures

Picture 1: 'Blair's Babes'	288
Picture 2: Success of women during 2015 UK's General Election	289
Picture 3: Creation of sub-categories and categories	290
Picture 4: Creation of master categories: UK	291
Picture 5: Creation of master categories: PL	291

Abbreviations

BPFA: Platform for Action

CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

EIGE: European Institute for Gender Equality

FPTP: First-Past-The-Post

LEQ: Legislative Electoral Quotas

MMP: Mixed Members Proportional

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PCI: Partito Comunista Italiano (Italian Communist Party)

PFA: UN Beijing Platform For Action

PGK: Parlamentarna Grupa Kobiet (Parliamentary Women's Union)

PR: Proportional Representation

PSOE: Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers Party)

RV: Reserve seats

SMD: Single Member District

STV: Single Transferable Vote

VPQ: Voluntary Party Quotas

Appendices

Appendix 1	288
Picture 1	288
Picture 2	289
Picture 3	290
Picture 4	291
Picture 5	291
Appendix 2	292
Table 4	292
Table 5	293
Appendix 3	294
Table 6	294
Table 7	294
Table 8	295
Table 9	295
Table 10	296
Appendix 4	297
Figure 9	297
Figure 10	297
Appendix 5	298
Table 11	298
Table 12	299

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, together women ought to be able to turn it right side up again (Sojourner Truth 1797-1883 in Genius, 2015: np)

In the past fifty years, more interest in political gender equality has been shown globally and some progress in this domain has been made. Nevertheless, the degree of women's presence in any position of power still remains low. Despite the efforts of the United Nations in promoting women's rights during their four World Conferences on Women (in 1975, 1980, 1985, and 1995) and various feminist movements (Sadia, 2013), the reality is that women's position in the modern world still suffers from a significant lack of gender parity. One of the sectors where this has very often been taken for granted is the under-representation of women in politics. Moreover, when compared to the world's movement on gender equality in other professions, the rise of the number of women in parliaments clearly hallmarks the struggle women still face to reach the political elite.

Many scholars have attempted to identify the reasons why the number of women MPs in national parliaments is consistently low. Despite various regulatory and constitutional guarantees used by political parties, gender parity in national parliaments is far from being within close reach. In many democratic countries the proportion of women in the lower chambers of the parliaments never gets beyond 30 per cent (excluding the Nordic countries, which are the exceptions). Therefore it is important to question what affects women's candidacy and how parliamentary

gender balance could be achieved. What's more, there are significant similarities and differences in the views of those most involved in parliamentary work, the women MPs, on the difficulties women face on their way to parliament. However, they also differ when talking about the possible ways forward to increase the number of women MPs and when reflecting on equality promotion strategies.

Limitations of previous work: the knowledge gap

To date there has been little agreement on the foundations of the impediments to women's political advance and on a realistic way forward to tackle gender parliamentary imbalance. Therefore, the role of this thesis is to explore the complexity of the barriers that women face on their way to the political top by collecting women MPs' own narratives around the key issues. Recent literature offers variety of assessments on difficulties that women are facing in their political career such as socio-cultural factors (Paxton and Kunovich, 2003; Kunovich, 2003; Welzel et al., 2003; Shedova, 2005; Ruedin, 2012; Krook, 2010). Also a large number of scholars highlight the impact of socio-economic influences when examining the absence of women in the male dominated political environment (Adamski, 1984; Velzel et al., 2003; Shedova, 2005; Inglehart and Velzel, 2005). Similarly, debate continues about the best strategies to increase the number of women in parliaments, some arguing for the use of equality guarantees (Ballington and Karam, 2005; Childs et al., 2005; Dahlerup, 2005; Larserud and Taphorn, 2007; Kelly and White, 2009; Dahlerup and

Freidenvall, 2011; Zukowski, 2011). But at the same time, others question the fairness of these equality promotion policies (Drake, 2001; Squires, 2007; Zukowski, 2011). History has shown that some of the political practices prove controversial; with claims made that they are discriminatory against the other gender. This especially applies to the all-women-shortlists, an affirmative action used by the Labour Party in the British Parliament. However, there have been fewer studies which have investigated the views of the women, who are most involved in parliamentary work, the women MPs.

Further, while most research reveals some reasons for the lack of women's participation in parliaments, few indicate clear and structured ways to tackle gender parliamentary disparity. One of the few exceptions is a book published by the OSCE Officer for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (2015), which gives some guidance on promoting women's participation in politics. This publication indicates possible ways to influence the gatekeepers to promote more women in politics and demonstrates many advantages of having more women in the political environment. However, while this book emphasises why there should be more women in politics and indicates some working strategies to achieve this, at the same time it fails to take account of how important some of the issues are to women politicians themselves. The voices of female MPs on what is least and most important to them is still missing from the overall picture, especially when they can be based in different countries with different electoral procedures and different views on democracy.

The argument in brief

Scholarly advocates of gender equality indicate that the disparity between men and women compromises democracy in any country. Women's under-representation in parliaments not only undermines the metaphorical and tangible symbol of democracy, but affects the female population as whole. This is due to lack of voice for women's issues and failure to promote women as equal in the society. Therefore, despite attempts already made by scholars and academics to explain gender parliamentary imbalance, I argue that new suggestions explaining the political exclusion of women and indications of new developments in this field are still necessary. As women's presence in parliaments is advancing very slowly when compared to other professions, I have aimed in this research not only to explore the reasons for women's parliamentary imbalance, but at the same time to illuminate the relative importance of the electoral processes and the role of political parties in promoting or obstructing women's entrance into politics. Moreover, this research reviews the divergent views of women MPs on the difficulties of being a woman parliamentarian and their opinions about the best way forward to decrease gender gaps in national parliaments. The study critically evaluates the backgrounds and foundations of the difficulties that women face in joining the political elite and while being in office. This thesis presents research conducted in two countries, the UK and Poland, and obtains the views of forty seven women MPs from the House of Commons and the Polish Sejm on the restrictions women face when joining the political arena.

As this research was conducted into the perceptions of individual women MPs, the study is not only able to test the effects of gender disparity on the individual, but also to illustrate the similarities and differences in their views on how important certain issues are in this debate. I have also assumed that the answers to questions on what affects women's electoral chances will depend on the length of women MPs' parliamentary experience, their personal circumstances and their political views. By applying an open-ended approach to the questions asked to each individual and by building the necessary level of trust with my interviewees (which was based partly on my own political work as a councillor) I managed to obtain a variety of extended answers about their difficulties when standing for election and their experiences of being women and MPs.

Furthermore, this thesis pays attention to the impact of the different electoral systems in the two countries on women's candidacy. In the existing literature, the Proportional Representation (PR) system is claimed by some scholars to be more favourable to women than the First-Past-The-Post (FPTP), single member constituency (see for example Ruedin, 2012). However in opposition some academics state that there are no clear differences between them (illustrated by Brooks et al., 1990). For example, Kosa-Kovacs (2004) claims that in Eastern and Central Europe, electoral system does not have an impact on women's political participation. I will therefore demonstrate in this thesis that PR does not make a significant impact on the number of women MPs in the lower chamber of the Polish parliament when compared to the UK's FPTP. Moreover, I expand on the role of political parties' involvement in helping women during elections and provide an answer to the

question as to whether the government should take a more active approach in promoting women's entry to parliamentary office.

Another issue that I explore in this thesis is the impact of the male dominated political environment on women MPs. I demonstrate the impact of sexism on women's desire to enter politics and also, what is largely missed in previous research, I identify the physical and behavioural similarities and differences between men and women and their impact on women's political activity. In this context, I likewise illustrate the impact of a critical mass on the (relative) feminisation of the parliament. I also identify the impact of media coverage on women MPs, expanding on their lack of control over their representation by broadcast social media, something that is again often missed in the existing literature. Finally, I indicate the fundamental role of family responsibilities and illustrate its impact on women's political involvement. I illustrate this by expanding on the culture of each country which has a predominant impact on the family support that is necessary for the demanding parliamentary profession. I also indicate the differences between the parliamentary career and careers in other professions. Specifically, women MPs are not only exposed to extensive travelling, but to living in two locations throughout their parliamentary involvement.

Overall, the main aim of this project is to underline and encapsulate the main barriers that women face on their way to political elites with evidence obtained directly from those most involved in the struggle, the women MPs. My priority was not to forage into a sociological interpretation of the results, but to be accessible by wider

audiences such as policy-makers and to propose strategies that will really assist women in their journeys to their countries' parliaments.

Case selection: the UK's House of Commons and the Polish Sejm

What makes this research unique is the comparison between two countries: the United Kingdom and Poland. At the time of the fieldwork both countries had similar numbers of females in the lower chambers of their parliaments (UK 23 per cent, Poland: 24 per cent), but at the same time maintained different electoral systems (UK: FPTP, Poland: PR) and had experimented with different types of gender equality promotion strategies (in the UK: all-women-shortlists and A-lists: in Poland: a 35% quota). The countries also differ in their development as democracies; the UK's established democracy contrasting with Poland's relatively new democratic status. Therefore, the opinions of British and Polish MPs provide an excellent testing ground for uncovering any common difficulties women face on their way to parliament, and then in gaining top cabinet positions once elected. This comparison equally enables me to study the similarities and differences in the perceptions of women MPs on gender inequality and their views on possible ways to improve the gender balance within national parliaments. It also allows me to examine in more depth the use of equality guarantees and analyse their influence on the individual and their impact on the parliamentary gender balance. Overall, the aim of the thesis is to provide detailed

accounts of what feels like to be a woman MP in the UK's House of Commons and in the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, in terms of day to day practices.

Thesis overview

In the following chapters I illustrate women's lack of parity in the two national parliaments (the UK and Poland) despite different socio-cultural and socio-economic variables. The thesis is presented in five main chapters: review of related literature (Chapter II), research design (Chapter III), data analysis and findings emerging from interviews with women MPs from the UK and Poland (Chapters IV and V), and similarities and differences in the views of British and Polish women MPs on gender inequality (Chapter VI).

The review of related literature chapter draws on the opinions and findings of scholars and researchers on the difficulties that women face when choosing a political career. It gives a global overview of the problem followed by introducing the measures taken to help women to enter parliaments. It also considers the impact of electoral systems on gender parliamentary imbalance through the selection, promotion and election processes.

The research design chapter sketches the background to this study by introducing both countries electorally and culturally, emphasising the similarities and differences between the UK and Poland and their parliaments. This chapter also illustrates the

difficulties that arise when carrying out international research and justifies the methods used to conduct the data collection. I highlight the difficulties involved in interviewing the political elites and the complications of gathering data in two different languages. I also outline the ethical considerations involved in my research and introduce my approach to empirical data analysis. Finally, I identify the limitations of the methodology chosen for this research.

The following chapters present the empirical evidence from carrying out interviews with women MPs in both countries. These chapters classify the variables associated with gender parliamentary imbalance into five main categories: (i) gender similarities and differences, (ii) family, (iii) distortions, (iv) structural pros and cons, and (v) ways to gender equality. Chapters IV and Chapter V provide empirical evidence on the backgrounds of the British and Polish MPs, and the difficulties they faced on their way to the political top. I also examine the challenges they face once reaching a position of power. The extent of women's struggle to join the political elite is emphasised, as well as their experiences during their parliamentary work. I also present the opinions of women MPs on how to improve the gender balance in politics and discuss how important gender related issues are to the interviewees. The results chapter (chapter VI) assesses the similarities and differences in the women MPs' views about parliamentary gender disparity. The intention in this chapter is to highlight contrasts and connections in the opinions of women in power in the two countries. This chapter's aim is also to illustrate what aspects are the most and least

important to British and Polish women MPs, when discussing gender imbalance in the House of Commons and the Sejm of the Republic of Poland.

Finally, chapter VII provides an overall conclusion to my research by summarising this study through illustrations of my data analysis and findings. This chapter identifies the theoretical implications of this study, and emphasises the importance of the research topic and indicates issues for future research. It also indicates some limitations in carrying out cross-national research and dealing with political elites.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

Past research offers a variety of examples and explanations of women's under-representation in politics and expresses women's determination to join the political establishment. Moreover, researchers and scholars have identified numerous difficulties explaining why women are not equally successful to men in joining parliamentary life. The simple fact that Nelson and Chowdhury (1994:3) are able to note that 'in no country do women have political status, access, or influence equal to men' underlines the significance of this topic. Furthermore, as a result of this under-representation, men still dominate the political arena and the image of parliamentarians definitely shows a man's face (Zukowski, 2011; IPU, 2012). This chapter focuses on the variety of rationales across the literature accounting for women's under-representation in parliamentary bodies, such as socio-cultural and socio-economic factors; the media's portrayal of women politicians; women's issues and male domination of the parliamentary environment. Furthermore, the structural and representational obstacles to women's political careers, such as different electoral systems and orientation of political party are explored through the selection, promotion and election processes. In addition, this chapter reviews key debates among scholars about strategies introduced by political parties in order to increase the number of women in politics. Additionally, this chapter also explains the

difficulties that arise when attempts are made to implement these equality promotion policies. This is due to the claims made by many scholars that gender guarantees are controversial and there is an on-going dispute about their impact on the other gender (Squires, 2007; Warowski, 2007; Zukowski, 2011). However, there is still little understanding on the true balance between the use of these equality promotions, their short and long term effectiveness and their impact on various barriers that are responsible for the lack of gender parity in parliaments. Thus, equally the purpose of this chapter is to identify the limitations of current studies in this domain and emphasize the apparent effectiveness of gender quotas.

Women's organisations and political movements are also discussed in this chapter as they make a significant impact on the increase in public awareness about political gender inequality and so this chapter explores and examines these findings from the existing literature on women's under-representation in national politics across new and established democracies. Finally, the chapter gives an introduction to the research that has been carried out for this thesis by providing some statistical data on the United Kingdom and Poland and summarises the limitations of current studies in this domain.

Outline of the problem

There are very few jobs that actually require a penis or vagina. All other jobs should be open to everybody (Florynce Kennedy¹ (1916-2000) cited in Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006: 8).

Multiple sources in the current literature on women's political under-representation refer to a variety of women's movements in highlighting wider path of this phenomenon. According to Krolokke and Sorensen (2006), women's struggles for civil and political rights have their roots in 1848, when the first women's movement originated in the US. However, the historian Ellen Carol DuBois (1999) claims that women have actively taken part in various protests about their civil and political rights before 1848. But, the importance of women's role in legislative bodies has been intensely acknowledged since the beginning of the 20th century (Lovenduski and Karam, 2002; King, 2005). From the 1970s, women's marginal presence in parliaments around the world emerged as an important social and political issue (Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Wawrowski, 2007; Ballington 2009). What's more, Bradley (2007) claims that in the 70's, the issue of gender become important to study by scholars and academics. A range of global public surveys carried out between 1995 and 2005 suggested that public awareness of gender inequality in the political sphere has risen significantly (Knapik, 2009). Further, feminist theorists have incorporated gender under-representation and power by interlinking them with aspects of political, sociological, cultural and structural factors. These factors include gender

¹ Florynce Rae 'Flo' Kennedy (February 11, 1916 – December 22, 2000), was an American lawyer, activist, civil rights advocate, and feminist.

differences regarding the law, policies, education and occupation (Dalton and Klingemann, 2007).

As statistical data suggests, the proportion of women in the population around varies marginally, but remains around 50 per cent (Krook, 2010; Adams, 2011; BIS, 2011; Dave, 2011; Ruedin, 2012; UNSD, 2012), therefore the importance of equal access to decision making for women cannot be ignored (Ballington and Karam, 2005; Haffert et al., 2010). I will therefore start my discussion with Abdela's (2010:18) argument that 'democracy is not democracy when over half of the population are not fully represented' and 'the achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society' (IPU, 1997:2). Furthermore, many scholars claim that equal gender representation is a necessity for a democratic society (Norris, 1996; Dahlerup and Freidenvall, 2008; Kampichler and Machovcova, 2008; Abdela, 2010; Pawlowski and Kierulf-Dubrow, 2011; Gwiazda, 2014). Moreover, Gwiazda (2014: 3) claims that in the contemporary democracy, 'representative government has become the norm' and representation represents 'the making present in some sense of something which is nevertheless not present literally in fact' (Pitkin, 1967: 8-9).

There is also an increasing body of literature on the representation of women in legislative life that explores whether women legislators behave differently from men, questioning whether women have different priorities and style, and whether they act in a more liberal or radical way than men (Phillips, 1995). For instance, some studies have indicated that gender differences between men and women have an impact on

political priorities and leadership styles (Norris, 2006a; Thomas and Welch, 2008). Likewise, having more women in parliament has an effect in prioritising legislative procedures such as issues of childcare, family matters and health care systems (Phillips, 1995). Female MPs' priorities are considered to be more human-oriented and are often abandoned by male politicians, as it is perceived their main interest lies in other aspects of public need (Norris, 2006a). In contrast, a survey carried out in the Norwegian Parliament revealed that there was categorically no overlap reported in men's and women's interests. In this sense the interviews express clear gender stereotyping – a stereotyping which reveals how a majority of the 'Norwegian political elite, men and women alike, have internalized conceptualizations of male and female areas of political concern' (Skjeie, 2002: 2).

Additionally some politicians such as Mitchell² claim that: 'more female MPs would make the Commons less exciting and more preoccupied with family issues and small problems rather than big ideas'. He went on to say that the 'feminisation of the Labour Party has meant older men are being replaced by more amenable and leadable women who are unable to focus on international issues' (Mitchell cited in Baxter, 2014: np). Mitchell's strong opinion initiated a powerful responses from women such as for example Johanna Baxter³ who strongly responded that Mitchell had 'brought shame' to Parliamentary Labour Party with his 'bucket of bile' (Baxter, 2014: np). She also stated that Mitchell was 'ageist and sexist-in the extreme' and

² Austin Vernon Mitchell: a British Labour Party politician who was the Member of Parliament for Great Grimsby from a 1977 by-election to 2015.

³ Johanna Baxter has been a CLP Representative on Labour's NEC since November 2010 and is also currently CLP secretary for Camberwell & Peckham constituency, a position she has held for 10 years. She is also chair of the Southwark Labour Campaigns Forum.

that he 'confirmed every disengaged voter's fear about the politicians-that they're only in for themselves-and showed us exactly why we need all-women-shortlists and why politics needs to change' (Baxter, 2014: np). Mitchell's quote demonstrates how deep the masculine culture of the parliament still pre-exists and exemplifies the need of changes in gender political equality. Furthermore as Baxter (2014) indicates, Mitchell's opinion also demonstrates that the implementation of legal regulations is necessary to help the advancement of women's presence in parliaments.

Fighting structural and representational obstacles

As a starting point for the complex discussion of how women exert their desire to join the political elite, and the ways in which this struggle is pursued, it is worth putting forward Kittilson's (2006) claim that women's under-representation in parliaments cannot be explained by legal barriers or their lack of political interest and involvement. The above claim however, have been challenged by other scholars, demonstrating that the impact of more significant factors such as electoral systems has to be taken into consideration when establishing the reasons for gender imbalance in parliaments (Norris, 2006b). In addition, Ruedin (2012) illustrates that a change in attitudes towards women politicians could be very effective in introducing equal gender proportions in parliaments, as more women would come forward, allowing them to be acknowledged by the parties and the voters. However it is important to question whether the number of elected women relates to attitudes rather than voting patterns.

It is worth considering also the question of who prevents the exertion of women's desire to join the political elite, for example the media representation of women political leaders has to be discussed. Media can make or break reputation of female politicians (Marszalek-Kawa, 2010, Zukowski, 2011; Ross and Comrie, 2012). Many researchers illustrate that the balance of media coverage relating to the image of women politicians versus male politicians has been significantly unequal, presenting women in a distorted manner (Marszalek-Kawa, 2010, Zukowski, 2011).

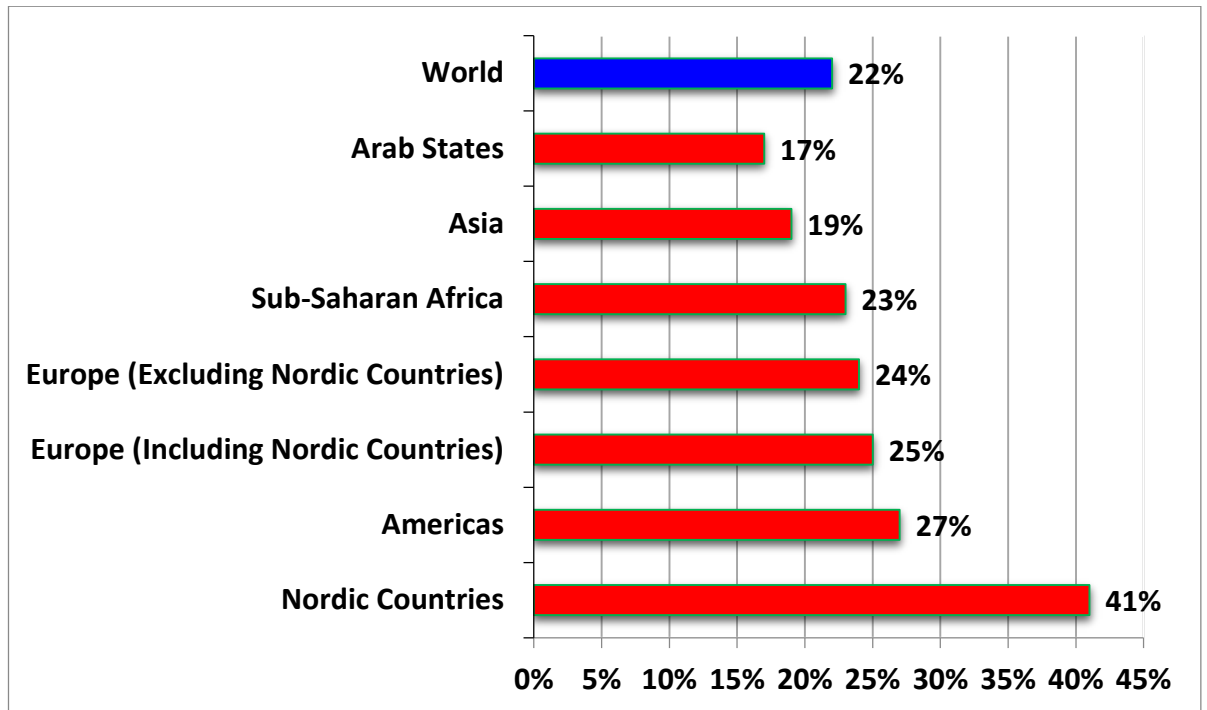
As this thesis aims to go beyond the difficulties that women have to overcome regarding structural and representational obstacles, I also illustrate some legal and voluntary strategies that have been utilised, which have not only helped to facilitate political activities, but also helped to reduce the constraints to women's political involvement. For example, in the UK one of the bases for the movements towards gender equality was the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. According to this act and in subsequent interpretation in the wider contest, discrimination applies when women are disadvantaged when compared to men and it is a general duty of public authorities to promote equality and eradicate unlawful prejudice. Also this act indicates the importance of the elimination of harassment and sexual aggravation. Additionally, amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 have been applied. These include the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002, which allows political parties to use all-women-shortlists to select candidates for parliamentary elections, elections to the European Parliament, elections to the Scottish Parliament, elections to the National Assembly for Wales, and most local government elections. This amendment was a result of a claim made against Labour's all-women-shortlists

prior to the 1997 British general election by two members of the Labour Party who claimed that this provision 'constituted unlawful discrimination' (Russell, 2001:5) and breaches the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. Subsequently all these acts were consolidated in the Equality Act 2010. Additionally, various international commitments have been made in order to help women to overcome gender inequality issues, such as the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the adoption of the 1995 UN Beijing Platform for Action (PFA) (Walby, 2004; Norris, 2006a; Sawer, 2010). These measures and the establishment of some women's organisations has proven successful in increasing female participation in politics as women are able to support each other and build political awareness about the problem of gender inequality (IPU, 1999; EGM/BPFA/MD-MDG, 2005; ICRW, 2010). The literature review section also emphasises the introduction of some measures such as voluntary/ statutory gender quotas as a framework to regulate gender equality (Norris, 2006a; Sawer, 2010).

Overall statistical data

Past research offers evidence on women's parliamentary involvement and various statistical data regarding this issue has been established by researchers through national and international studies. According to Stockemer (2007), in 1950 women's parliamentary representation across 27 European Countries was on average 5.4 per cent and this continued until the 1960s. The only differences could be noticed in Nordic countries, where women's representation in the 1950s was higher than 10 per cent, establishing its roots as the highest in Europe over the last 30 years (Dahlerup and Freidenvall, 2008). However, further statistical evidence reveals that after the 1960s there was a slight increase in women's representation globally (Ballington and Karam, 2005). Ruedin's (2012) analysis of the Inter-Parliamentary Union's (2006) data found that in countries with smaller populations and parliaments, women's representation was lower. This could be due to a limited number of seats available in small chambers, where a single seat can be as much as 7 per cent of all seats (IPU, 2006a; Ruedin, 2012). Also, the low number in women's parliamentary representation is influenced by different causes such as social and political changes, increases in economic growth (Walby, 2004) and formulation of party quotas (IPU, 2006a; IPU, 2006b). Currently women's representation in European countries comprises on average around 20 per cent (Stockemer, 2007; IPU, 2011) as presented in Figures 1 and 2.

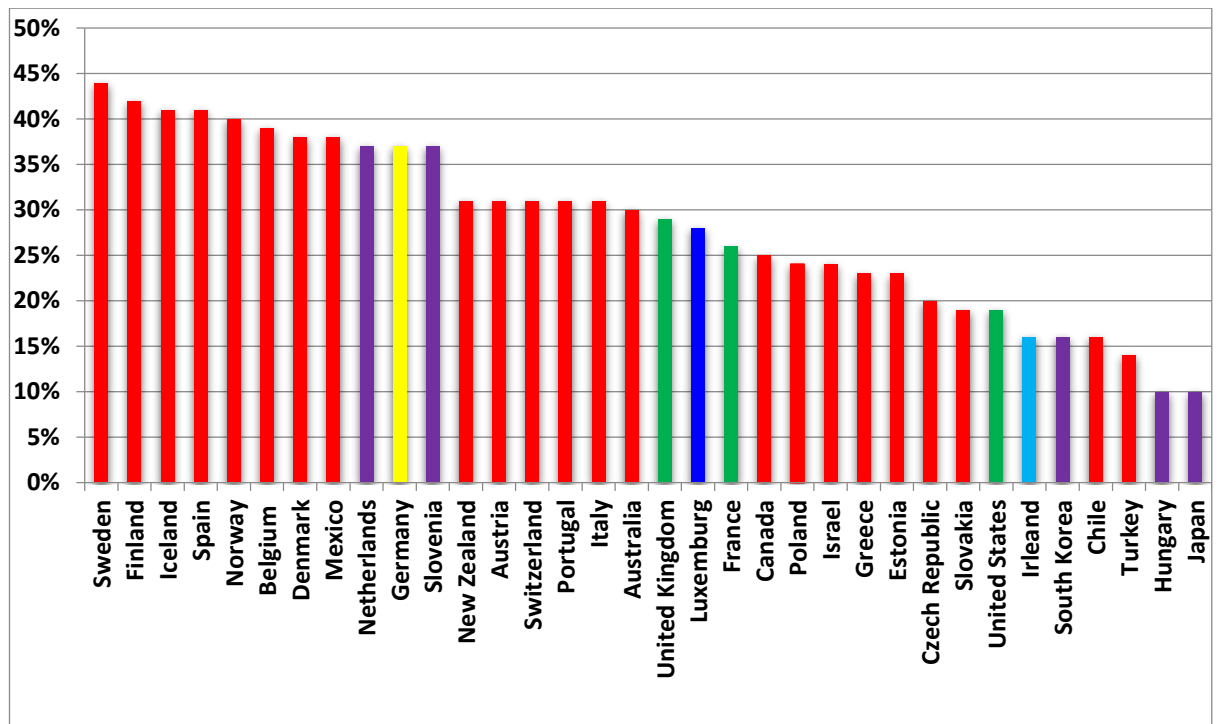
Figure 1: Average percentage of women in Parliaments Worldwide in 2015



Source: Amended from: IPU (2015a)

As shown in Figure 1 above, the average of number of women in parliament globally in 2015 is still low. Although there are variations between different global regions due to factors such as political and electoral systems, cultural challenges or the introduction of equality promotion strategies, overall women are still greatly underrepresented, averaging around a figure of 22 per cent of world parliaments. The only exceptions are Nordic countries achieving women's representation in the parliaments of over 40 per cent due to various factors which are discussed in the next part of this chapter.

Figure 2: Percentage of parliamentary seats in single or lower chambers occupied by women in 2015 (member states of OECD⁴⁵)



Source: Amended from: (Cracknell, 2015; IPU, 2015b)

* Colour coding for Figure 2: different types of electoral systems

- Proportional Representation (PR)
- First-Past-The-Post (FPTP)
- Mixed Members Proportional (MMP)
- Parallel
- Two Round
- Single Transferrable Votes (STV)

Figure 2 illustrates the percentages of women in parliaments in countries belonging to OECD. It is visible that majority of the countries hold the PR electoral system. It also is noticeable that the leaders on the chart indicating the biggest percentage of women MPs belong to the countries with the so-called women’s friendly PR

⁵ OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development- an international economic organisation founded in 1961. Comprises of countries committed to democracy and the market economy, providing a platform to compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practices, and co-ordinate domestic and international policies of its members.

electoral system. However, it is also visible that countries with other types of electoral systems are still placed in a higher position on this figure.

Socio-cultural factors and the need to change stereotypes

The caring responsibilities that most women carry in relation to the young, the sick and the old - not to mention the able-bodied men - act as a powerful barrier to their political involvement; while the cultural constructions of politics are primarily a matter for the men [*sic*] work to disadvantage those women who still put themselves forward (Phillips, 1992: 71).

According to more recent studies the above statement is still viable, therefore it can be argued that the current literature explaining gender parliamentary equality still indicates socio-cultural aspects as a barrier to women's political advancement (Norris and Inglehart, 2008; Rosenbluth et al., 2015). As Bleir (1986:2) observed in the past, 'our culture is deeply and fundamentally structured socially, politically, ideologically, and conceptually by gender as well as by race, class, and sexuality'. These primary structures are grounded on the ideology of political theory and whether we take into consideration the feminist political theory or liberal democratic theory, the concept of gender in this context leads to reflection on modern society, and its relationship to equality issues. Numerous studies have concentrated on aspects of social and cultural relationships regarding gender imbalance in the political sphere. Scholars suggest that some aspects of women's parliamentary disparity are related to socio-cultural factors (Shvedova, 2005; Debski, 2006; Lovenduski, 2012). This category covers matters such as acceptance of women in politics, their representation in media coverage, religion, traditional family values (Norris and Inglehart, 2001; Ruedin, 2012) and performance of different roles in society (Vallance, 1979; Sawer,

2000; Siemienska, 2000). Where socio-cultural barriers are concerned, women candidates are discouraged from taking part in public life (Ruedin, 2012). For example in the past, some women MPs have felt that being an MP classifies them as 'not being a woman' (Vallance, 1979: 49) and being immortalised as aliens rather than respected members of the parliament (Puwar, 1997). Additionally, Czesnik (2007) argues that girls are already excluded from being involved politically at a young age due to the belief that politics is mainly for boys and overall 'women who hold political power are the abnormality rather than being the norm' (Sroda, 2009: 11). Furthermore, according to former British MP Ms Anderson⁶:

A first-class woman will compete with first-class men. A second-class woman will lose to a second-class man. A woman, to succeed, has to be better than her male counterpart (Vallance, 1979: 95).

This perspective is echoed by Maureen Reagan's⁷ claim: 'I will feel equality has arrived when we can elect to office women who are as incompetent as some of the men who are already there' (Regan cited in Shiers, 2008: 214). In comparison, young boys are inculcated with the status of leadership, helping to activate their political interest from an early stage of their life (Vallance, 1979; Czesnik, 2007). This leads to another trend which is an association of women with a 'sex-role' belonging to the 'woman's place' (Ross, 2002:17; Marszalek-Kawa, 2010) where the woman's kingdom is her home (Marszalek-Kawa, 2010). Moreover, a considerable amount of literature has been published on cultural beliefs regarding family responsibilities

⁶ Miss Harvie Anderson: Former British Conservative MP for Renfrewshire East

⁷ Maureen Reagan: daughter of the US President Ronald Regan

(Vallance, 1979; Adamski, 1984; IPU, 1999; Fuszara and Tomaszewska, 2002; Platek, 2004; Childs et al., 2005; UNICEF, 2007; Abdela, 2010; Pankow and Post, 2010; Zukowski, 2011). The literature dealing with cultural stereotypes reports that in general politics was for men and that a woman's role was to care for family (Sloat, 2004). For instance, there is a different cultural perspective of the woman who rises early to carry out cleaning duties and is perceived as being a 'heroine', whereas the cultural perspective for women politicians who work similar hours, appears to be that of being 'unnatural women and mothers' (Glenda Jackson⁸, cited in Ross, 2003:105). To add to the debate, women politicians have been perceived by the society as 'criminally selfish' and accused of causing 'damage to (their) child's emotional development' (Vallance, 1979:13). Overall, family responsibilities are considered as 'insuperable barriers' to women's political advancement (Sawer, 2000:10) as they have to accomplish the double role of 'incorporated wife' and 'representative of the public' (Sawer, 2000:11).

To determine the effects of these cultural judgements, Adamski (1984:299) argues that 'according to accepted common models, a good husband should earn money for the household and a good wife should look after the house and bring up the children'. Also Bradley (2007: 181) claims that 'patriarchal family relations mean that women are treated as the possessions and servants of men'. In the above purviews the question would be raised about whether women's politics would be influenced by their male associates on whom they are believed to be dependent on such as

⁸ Glenda May Jackson: British Labour Party MP and former actress.

husbands, fathers or brothers (Blau et al., 2002; Pankow and Post, 2010; Zukowski, 2011). Thus the main 'route to equality' according to Friedrich Engels (cited in Bradley, 2007:36) was to 'wage labour' as through this direction the progression in gender balance could be achievable due to women freeing themselves from being dependent on their fathers and husbands.

However, in the post-industrial era, where modernisation has taken place, more women have taken on employment, respectively reducing their family responsibilities by lowering the number of children (Wawrowski, 2007). Furthermore, according to du Vall (2009), women who have no family, no children, are divorced or retired could devote 100 per cent of their time to politics. To add to this debate, Bing and Bergvall (1996 cited in Walsh, 2001) point out that gender can be distinguished as a 'ready-made identity marker' (Bing and Bergvall, 1996 cited in Walsh, 2001: 15) and also state that 'assertive women may be nudged back into their approved roles by being labelled aggressive bitches' (Bing and Bergvall, 1996:6-7 cited in Walsh, 2001: 14).

In contrast, Krolokke and Sorensen (2006: 21) give an example of a Bitch Magazine debate about a descriptive insult to women:

When it's being used as an insult, bitch is most often hurled at women who speak their minds, who have opinions and don't shy away from expressing them. If being an outspoken woman is being a bitch, we'll take that as a compliment, thanks.

Rosenbluth et al. (2015) go even further by linking the age of women with their political career. A recent survey of 84 countries around the world uncovered that the

average age of politically elected women lies between 45 and 50 (Rosenbluth et al., 2015). One reason this could be due to is that women are considered to be responsible for raising their children and therefore waiting till their youngest reaching school-age. Rosenbluth et al. (2015:17) indicate this trend as an 'evidence of the disproportionate burden on family work on women'. This aspect is demonstrated for example by one female MP from the United Kingdom, who states that 'being an older woman has been the biggest obstacle towards my advancement in politics', followed by a female MP from Iceland who admits: 'I can never take a leadership position before my kids are older' (Rosenbluth et al., 2015: 18,19).

Additionally, some of the current literature identifies religion as an important player in women's political under-representation. In some countries with strong Catholic practices, women's participation in political life is restricted due to cultural beliefs of a woman's traditional role as mother and wife (Inglehart, 1981; Habowski, 2002; Sloat, 2002; Heinen and Portet, 2009; Cienski, 2010; Krook, 2010; Ruedin, 2012). For example in Poland the image of a woman was labelled by the church as 'Polish-mother' who was at the same time the God's and People's mother (Heinen and Portet, 2009: 2). Catholic oppression on women's rights in politics is in fact so strong that even today one of the few countries where women are not allowed to vote is Vatican City (Phillips and Gritzner, 2009). In comparison, studies have reported that in protestant countries women have taken more interest in politics (Inglehart, 1981; Adams, 2011) and their involvement in politics is higher (Kaiser, 2001; Wide, 2006 cited in Wangnerud, 2009; Ruedin, 2012). Although the Catholic faith encourages its believers to be involved in political life, the opinion of the Vatican on women's

involvement in politics differs (Sozanska, 2009). However recent research on gender political balance by Adams (2011) uncovered that in order to establish the impact of religion on women's presence in politics, more important is to establish the intensity of certain faith in the country.

Another important contribution to gender inequality in parliaments is the cultural attitude towards women politicians (Kunovich, 2003; Paxton and Kunovich, 2003; Krook, 2010). For example, due to traditional values in the Czech Republic during the communist period, women's involvement in politics was regarded as inappropriate (Nelson and Chowdhury, 1994). Another example would be Poland between 1945 and 1990 where the oppression of communism was very visible (Sakwa and Crouch, 1978). Under that control, a woman's role was associated with family responsibilities and that role was to 'give birth to, nurture and teach children—the future generation of communist citizens' (Armstrong, 2001: 2). In Poland the right to gender equality for women was associated with Western feminists and their aversion to men. For example Polish women were presented driving tractors dressed in dungarees, job associated with men's role (Fushara, 1991). This approach to gender equality involved the myth of Western women who demonstrated their independence by burning their bras (Sloat, 2004; Lee, 2014). However, since the 1990s as communism came to an end, liberal views have been enhanced giving women more freedom to speak and act in the political sphere (Nelson and Chowdhury, 1994). To the contrary, other academics claimed that:

It turned out that the regime change did not entail a change with respect of gender relations. And when women understood and acknowledged this, they

withdrew from these spheres. So democracy does not come automatically...Only the toughest personalities were able to maintain their position...the rest of the women were serving coffee (Galligan et al., 2007).

What's more, in post-industrial and post-communist countries cultural barriers disappear among the younger generation, therefore their implications are not visible any longer (Norris and Inglehart, 2008).

Although there is a need for change in attitudes to allow men and women to undertake collective work (Abdela, 2010), this has to be closely related to discourse changes in political language and in perceptions of women politicians not only among politicians but also the public (Wawrowski, 2007). For example, the World Values Survey carried out between 1997 and 2000 illustrated that in Poland 40 per cent of participants agreed with the statement that 'On the whole men make better political leaders than women do' (Stevens, 2007). Additionally, various researches illustrate that voters have less trust in women politicians (Marmola and Olszanecka cited in Turska-Kawa et al., 2012), are more hostile towards women candidates (Siemienska, 2000; du Vall , 2009) and overall they prefer male candidates (Gorecki and Kukulowicz, 2014). In comparison, when the same statement: 'On the whole men make better political leaders than women do' was presented to the British public in 2005, only 15 per cent agreed with the declaration (Norris and Inglehart, 2008). Furthermore, Polish post-election studies regarding women's representation in politics have shown that the above belief has decreased (Siemienska, 2005). However, Teigen and Wangnerud (2009) argue that although cultural aspects play an important role in women's political advancement, transformation in gender culture

would be able to facilitate only some changes in women's political representation (Teigen and Wangnerud, 2009).

Media: friends or enemies of women politicians?

Media are considered as 'key players' to women's political activity as they expose their personal images (Opyd, 2014a: 138). Many scholars exemplify that the balance of images presented by the media in respect of male and female politicians has been significantly unequal. As scholars and researchers illustrate, media 'trivialise their [women's] political contributions, undermine their political authority and, more generally, render them invisible' (Ross, 2003:1; Bergstrom, 2013; OSCE, 2014). The evidence of women's invisibility by the media is shown in a study comparing media coverage of Northern Irish candidates for the 1997 British General Election where women political candidates were significantly under-reported across 22 newspapers (Whittaker, 1999 cited in Ross, 2002). Additionally, for example, the research on media coverage of candidates during the 2011 general election in Poland confirmed significant gender bias in the representation of women politicians versus men politicians (Druciarek et al., 2012).

Also, if women politicians are allocated broadcasting time, female's speeches are not only shortened in election campaigns (Siemienska, 2005; Marszalek-Kawa, 2010; Zukowski, 2011; Ross and Comrie, 2012) but rarely exceed 15 seconds (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995). Further, after the 1997 election, the New Labour women MPs

were promoted by the media as 'lobby-fodder' (Lovenduski, 2001; Perkins and Ward, 2001). The evidence of misleading presentation of women politicians by the media can be clearly seen in the case of 1997 British general election where British press described all newly elected women MPs as 'Blair's Babes' (Campbell and Childs, 2014). Please refer to Picture 1 in the Appendix 1. 'Blair's Babes' was a disparaging and offensive description of women by the British press after successful 1997 election (Bradley and Healy, 2008), where the number of females in the House of Commons doubled overnight (Kittilson, 2006). What's more, even nearly 20 years on, the media are still ambiguous towards women's politicians for example representing them as 'Cameron's Cuties' (London and Styles, 2014).

Another argument raised by scholars related to media's involvement in the coverage of women parliamentarians is that women's political images are very often based on gender stereotypes (Walsh, 2001; Kroom and Ekstrom, 2008; Druciarek et al., 2012). Sturken and Cartwright's (2001: 106) suggestion would be a good point of departure for this debate. Their interpretation of human images shows that:

Images . . . provide a complex field in which power relations are exercised and looks are exchanged. As both spectators and subjects of images, we engage in and are subject to complex practices of looking and being looked at.

For instance, images of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition during the signing of the Northern Ireland peace settlement (4 April 1998), show women politicians crying and hugging each other. Similar examples could be seen in the United Kingdom after the 2015 general election, where the article on the success of women MPs in *The Independent*, equally represents women hugging each other. Please refer to Picture

2 in the Appendix 1. This representation of women's weakness and emotionality differed from the representation of men, who were characterised as strong, rational and strategic (Walsh, 2001). A case represented by Swedish politician: Gudrun Schyman⁹ justifies the above argument. She argued that media highlighted her femininity by:

1. Highlighting physical aspects of her femininity that go in line with the conventional gender stereotype
2. Inviting the reader into her mental and emotional world
3. Defining her 'crime' as going against typical feminine behaviour and traits
4. Relating her public persona to the feminine story-telling character of a princess (Kroom and Ekstrom, 2008:895)

Also according to Szczepanska¹⁰ (cited in Marszalek-Kawa, 2010:183-184) journalists often make comments such as 'women don't know about politics'. Danuta Waniek, Chairperson of Polish National TV and Radio Council, argues that women are always represented as 'unthinkable idiots' who are only capable of buying a soap powder (Biuro Studiow i Ekspertyz Kancelarii Sejmu, 2003:56). Similarly, a Polish TV commentator Anna Brzozowska exposes some comments by Polish TV presenter Andrzej Kwiatkowski during the political programme called *Prime Time* whose standard statement was: 'such stupid women, but what clever things they are saying' (Biuro Studiow i Ekspertyz Kancelarii Sejmu, 2003: 77).

⁹ Gudrun Schyman: former leader of the Swedish Left Wing Party

¹⁰ Sonia Szczepanska, author of the article 'Women: political animal'

The portrayals of females in politics by media affect their reputations as political leaders. One of the examples is British MP Margaret Beckett (Labour Party), who has been constantly scrutinised by the media. For instance, during her election campaign in 1994 she was described as 'post-menopausal', 'too emotional', 'too female' and the one who had 'stolen another woman's husband' (Ross, 2002:1). A further example would be an article in the *Guardian* where British journalist Simon Hattenstone described the former UK Shadow Home Secretary, Ann Widdecombe, as 'out of this world':

Her head is tiny, trapped inside the jet-black basin cut, her legs non-existent and she walks on a giant bosom. Her face is somehow not human. Not inhuman, just not human. She looks as if she could have been created by Stephen Spielberg as a companion for ET... I'm beginning to think Ann Widdecombe is from Planet Pod (Hattenstone, 1999: np.; Walsh, 2001: 46).

Something of the nature of the media's feminine bias is also acknowledged internationally. For example the former Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard was described in the media as 'a liar and policy charlatan, and lampooned for her hair, clothes, accent, arse, even the way she walks and talks. If ever the deck was stacked against someone' (Walsh, 2013, xiii). A further example is the description of Sarah Palin, the 2008 candidate for the US presidency. The objectification of Palin went so far as the:

Creation of a blow-up doll complete with bursting cleavage and sexy business suit that included instructions to blow her up and show her how you are going to vote. Let her pound your gavel over and over... This blow-up sex doll could really satisfy all those swing voters (Wheatley, 2008: 1–4 cited in Carlin and Winfrey, 2009: 330).

Furthermore, another candidate for the US presidency Hilary Clinton has been haunted by media which were claiming that:

At Christmas, Hillary Clinton nutcrackers were quite the snapped-up item (Williams, 2008: 10). The device [was] a pantsuit-clad Clinton doll [who] opens her legs to reveal stainless steel thighs that, well, bust nuts (Cocco, 2008: np).

A further case of media misrepresentation was the coverage of policies formed by female politicians regarding the timetable in the Scottish Parliament. The family-friendly changes included the change of parliament sittings to normal working hours rather than evenings and parliamentary recesses to be harmonised with school holidays. These changes have however been presented by the media as women MPs' holiday extensions, completely ignoring the fact that most of the time has been used for constituency work (Walsh, 2001).

Another distinctive factor that is dominating the media's image of women politicians is their sexual representation (Ross, 2002; Marszalek-Kawa, 2010). For example Cheryl Kernot (former Australian MP) and Pauline Hanson (Australian Labour MP) have been portrayed in the media using cartoon images of them in erotic situations with their male colleagues (Ross, 2002). Sexism within the male governed political sphere has been a debate by scholars for many years (Lovenduski and Karam, 2002; Lovenduski, 2005; Karam and Lovenduski, 2005; Fushara, 2006) as the media always pay too much attention to women's appearances (Devitt, 2002; Fushara, 2006; Abdela, 2010). For instance, Glenda Jackson (British Labour MP) complained that a 'woman's appearance, her age, her style of dress is always commented on' which

sadly does not happen to male politicians (Ross, 2002:90). Besides, according to Graff (cited in Marszalek-Kawa, 2010), an attractive woman politician is unlucky as her image does not fit with the function she is carrying out. Dawn Primarolo (British Labour MP) illustrates:

Women are never the right age. We're too young, we're too old. We're too thin, we're too fat. We wear too much make-up, we don't wear enough. We're too flashy in our dress, we don't take enough care. There isn't a thing we can do that's right. (Ross, 2003: 103).

Conversely, according to some researchers, on many occasions journalists do not favour male politicians (Devitt, 2002; Kroom and Ekstrom, 2008; Smith, 2010). For example, in Sweden a male politician who was interviewed by a researcher stated: 'I would like to emphasise that a male politician is also subject to an enormous amount of reviews about his appearance' (Kroom and Ekstrom, 2008: 907). While it may be true that men are also stereotyped by the media, 'masculinity is often associated with machismo, independence, competition, emotional detachment, aggression and violence' (OSCE, 2014: 160). However, the examples of media portraying men politicians in this way are very uncommon and the main argument by politicians is that whereas men may experience a coverage, women do not get any media's attention (Spence, 2012; Bergstrom, 2013). A prime example could be the media coverage of presidential campaign between Hilary Clinton and Barack Obama. In media representations of both candidates, Clinton's emotions were always highlighted, whereas for Obama it was the emotion he was able to evoke in others that was the focus of the media's coverage (Netta, 2009).

The evidence suggests that in many instances the media coverage of women results in a negative impact on the reputation of women politicians due to the visible disparity between the media's coverage of men and women officials (Druciarek et al., 2012; Opyd, 2014b). While scholars emphasise the link between media involvement in women's political life and their under-representation in politics, they also argue that this could be tackled by educating women on handling the media in an appropriate way and to their advantage (UN, 2005; Tremblay, 2010; Opyd, 2014b).

Socio-economic factors

Numerous studies have also attempted to explain the relationship between socio-economic factors and women's under-representation in public and political life. For example, Shedova (2005), Krook (2010) and Ruedin (2012) reflect on socio-economic barriers in a wider sphere, identifying the lack of financial resources leading to limitation in education needed by women to progress in their political careers. Historically, women's struggle to gain a good education did affect their political rights (Ballington and Karam, 2005; Karam and Lovenduski, 2005; UNICEF, 2007) and some scholars argue that this is still the case (Platek, 2004; Paxton and Kunovich, 2003 cited in Stevens, 2007; Wawrowski, 2007; Abdela, 2010). In contrast, analysis undertaken by Suska in 2000 (cited in Siemienska, 2005) illustrates that the level of education did not have an impact on the choice between men and women parliamentary candidates for example in Polish politics. However, the link between level of education and women's confidence in applying for parliamentary seats has been

subject to many debates by social scientists (Platek, 2004 ; Paxton and Kunovich, 2003 cited in Stevens, 2007) and there is a tendency for women with higher education to be more politically active (Siemienska, 2005; Wawrowski, 2007; Ruedin, 2012). While scholars emphasise the link between education and women's presence in parliament, political scientists also draw on the issue of the lack of education of young women who are not aware of a political career path. Young women therefore are not prepared for political profession, and are unaware of other political opportunities (Campbell and Childs, 2014).

It is also very difficult to get away from the reality indicated by some scholars that women's status is only measured by the position of the husband (Blau et al., 2002; Zukowski, 2011) and that they possess fewer financial resources than men (Childs et al., 2005; Czesnik, 2007). For example, former MP Louise Mensch (Conservative Party, UK) argued that historically women were dependent on men's financial support (Blau et al., 2002; Hinsliff, 2012) and for this reason they were not able to support their electoral campaigns (Siemienska, 2000; Childs et al., 2005; Czesnik, 2007). Overall, funding is highlighted by researchers as a significant factor in gender political imbalance (IPU, 1999; Sloat, 2002; Wawrowski, 2007). As a response to those difficulties, political parties in some countries such as the Progressive Party of the Working People in Cyprus, the Christian Democratic Union in Czech Republic and the People's Party in Estonia have already established financial support for female political candidates (IPU, 1999). In addition, in the United States, Japan, Australia and Great Britain, funds have been established to finance and support women's

campaigns, called 'Emily's List'¹¹ (IPU, 1999; Ross, 2002; Emily's list, 2012) or 'Maggie's List'¹² (Hobin, 2012). Such support includes training women politicians and financing their campaigns (IPU, 1999; Emily's list, 2012; Hobin, 2012). Correspondingly, the importance of appropriate training has been established by many scholars (Brooks et.al. 1990; Lovenduski and Karam, 2002; Kittilson, 2006) who argue that women not only must learn the rules of the House in terms of internal practices and learn to understand how those legislatures work, but also should include learning about speaking and debating techniques (Lovenduski and Karam, 2002). Conversely, some speaking approaches have taken a condescending turn, as for example in the German Bundestag; women who raise their hands in order to speak are automatically moved above male speakers (Lovenduski and Karam, 2002).

Overall, the connection between the social and financial status of women has been placed as the second biggest factor affecting the number of women in legislative bodies (Shvedowa, 2005), hence family support is projected to play a considerable role in women's political careers (Childs et al., 2005; Czesnik, 2007; Stevens, 2007; Marszalek-Kawa, 2010). It can therefore be assumed that encouraging parliament to endorse some alterations such as changes for suitable 'human working hours' could be a way forward towards the improvement of gender equality in politics (Stevens, 2007: 118). However, accordingly to sociologist Adamski (1984), women's involvement in political activities has two opposite results: on one hand it gives

¹¹ Emily List: acronym for 'Early Money Is Like Yeast'. Organisation depending on donations used for supporting women candidates with their political campaigns. (Ross, 2002:20)

¹² Maggie's List: a community dedicated to electing fiscally conservative women who promote the values of less government, more personal responsibility and strong national security. Provides financial support to candidates who meet these criteria, enabling them to run successful campaigns at the federal level.

women professional prestige and financial independence, but on the other hand, due to political workload, women struggle with other activities such as cultural or educational development. Furthermore, the example of family friendly policies introduced by the Scottish Parliament could be a vital point in this debate. Research undertaken on these policies among women MSPs indicates that although the policies helped women in their choice to proceed in a political career, they had a minimal effect on the working practices in the Scottish Parliament (Tobin, 2002).

Male domination of the political arena

In a society where some groups are privileged while others are oppressed, insisting that as citizens persons should leave behind their particular affiliations and experiences to adopt a general point of view serves only to reinforce that privilege; for the perspectives and interests of the privileged will tend to dominate that unified public, marginalising or silencing those of other groups (Young cited in Ross, 2002:13)

The risk of women's inability to cope with the male-dominated 'heat of the parliamentary kitchen' appeared to be a big concern in society' (Childs et al., 2005: 69). Men's dominance of the political arena has been reflected on by many scholars and is proven to be one of the major difficulties that discourage women from joining the political sphere (IPU, 1999; UNICEF, 2007; Dave, 2011). For example, The Panhellenic Socialist Movement in Greece speaks of a 'lack of interest due to the hostile climate and strong competition from men' (IPU, 1999). Furthermore, Ballington and Karam (2005: 13) argue that public perceptions on gender roles suggest that 'the social contract is about the relationship between men and

government and not citizen and government'. It is ironic that for example England was actually called by John Bright¹³: 'the mother of parliaments', as Westminster has been largely occupied by males (BBC News, 1998; Childs et al., 2008:41). Furthermore, the British House of Commons is very often described as an 'old boys club' (Childs et al., 2005:68), as a 'Gentleman's Club' (Harman and Mattinson, 2000:20), or as a 'boys' school which has decided to take a few girls' (Vallance, 1979: 6). Also, the discussion on local elections in one of the leading Polish newspapers, *Rzeczpospolita*, was titled: 'The Republic of Men' (Platek, 2004: 20).

In addition, Coward (1999:212 cited in Walsh, 2001:19) distinguishes that one of the biggest problems for women being not able to hold power in a public domain are 'networking and men's narcissistic interest in each other'. One Polish woman MP from the SLD stated that women always lose with men who are obsessed with success and will do anything to get it, even if it takes 'walking over dead bodies' (Pankow and Post, 2010:22). Also, according to another Polish women MP (Samoobrona RP) 'even the stupidest man feels that he is cleverer than the cleverest woman' (Pankow and Post, 2010: 64). Therefore, in order to get into and survive the political competition women have to be better and try much harder than men (Fuszara, 2006; Warowski, 2007). Thus, it is tougher for women in public life, as they have to be feminine and masculine at the same time (du Vall, 2009). However, I would argue with du Vall (2009) as women's behaviour in politics can be associated

¹³ John Bright (16 November 1811 – 27 March 1889): Quaker, was a British Radical and Liberal statesman, associated with Richard Cobden in the formation of the Anti-Corn Law League. He was one of the greatest orators of his generation, and a strong critic of British foreign policy. He sat in the House of Commons from 1843 to 1889.

with psychological explanation of a deed of a person, called 'double-bind'¹⁴ whose different behaviours contradict each other. In other terms, when a woman politician shows masculinity, she is criticized for not being feminine enough. On the other hand if her behaviour is more feminine, it becomes questionable if she could fulfil all requirements, as she is measured as emotionally weaker. Some scholars claim that women only have an impact when they do not act the same way as men (Cowell-Meyers, 2001).

Georgina Hodge (Labour MP, UK) admits that one of the aspects of male domination in the House of Commons is their physical ability to shout over women as their voices are stronger (Hodge cited in Ross, 2002). In the past according to several British women MPs, some sessions across the Labour Party were organised to help women MPs to practise asking questions in open forums by 'not just asking them, but shouting them' (Vallance, 1979: 15). The natural aggressiveness of men could be associated with the 'male physique and hormones (testosterone) which made them naturally aggressive' (Bradley, 2007:17).

In order to build on the philosophy of men's resistance to women entering the parliamentary environment, I would indicate a 'critical mass' phenomenon which according to some scholars may not only distort the political scene (Pankow and Post, 2009; Zukowski, 2011) but make its environment unstable for men (Zukowski, 2011). According to its theorists, critical mass is established when 30 per cent of gender

¹⁴ Double-bind: a psychological predicament in which a person receives from a single source conflicting messages that allow no appropriate response to be made. The *double bind* faced by every politician: responding to scurrilous charges only gives them unwarranted publicity; not responding to such charges is often interpreted as an admission of guilt

representation (or 1/3) occupies the same institution or in some instances when a 60:40 ratio is achieved (Kanter, 1993 cited in Stevens, 2007; 2007; Squires, 2007; Zukowski, 2011; Sawyer, 2012). Scholars suggest that when women achieve the large minority identified as a critical mass (Lovenduski, 2001; Childs and Krook, 2008; Wangnerud, 2009; Campbell and Childs, 2014), the transformation in politics and its functioning will be considerable, not only for the institution (Kittilson, 2006; Pankow and Post, 2010; Zukowski, 2011) but also for public policy (Squires, 2007). As Bachelet (cited in Rosenbluth et al., 2015:4) claims: 'when one woman is a leader, it changes her. When more women are leaders, it changes politics and policies'. Additionally, some scholars claim that critical mass could promote feminist-orientated change on a larger scale (Siemienska, 2000; Ross, 2002; Stevens, 2007; Zukowski, 2011). This is the reason why the phenomena of 'cutting the wings' of successful women occurs, so they do not place a threat to the establishment of the political party (Fushara cited in Nizynska, 2012:5). However, the extension of the changes would still depend on how many women triumph and enter parliament (Lowenduski and Karam, 2002). Childs and Krook (2008) argue that women's effectiveness in their political representation encapsulates only when critical mass effect is reached within the political institution. Some changes with critical mass of women in parliament suggested by Dahlerup (1988:283-284) include:

- Changes in the reaction to women politicians
- Changes in the performance and efficiency of the women politicians
- Changes in the social climate of political life (the political culture)
- Changes in the political discourse
- Changes of policy (the political decisions)

- Increase in the power of women (the empowerment of women)

Also, it is inevitable that women's dominance in parliament would change the behaviour of men MPs (Lowenduski and Karam, 2002; Sroda, 2009). As an example, Norris (1996) illustrates that in some Scandinavian countries, the political structure has already become more feminine due to the critical mass phenomenon. This change also can be seen in the Polish Sejm where, out of 69 women MPs, 63 declared that their style of doing politics was different and more feminine (Pankow and Post, 2009).

An important issue in this debate is also women's sexual harassment by men MPs. As an example, a Polish female MP's (SLD) statement can be used here. She expressed her view that it was always irritating when men paid more attention to how women look rather than their abilities. She felt that men MPs were treating their women colleagues more like 'an attraction of the building or a nice bouquet on their table' (Pankow and Post, 2010: 31). There are also other sexual harassment claims in the Polish Sejm. One of the Polish women MPs, Joanna Mucha from the Civic Platform admitted that men MPs on a regular basis touch, tap on the bottom or vulgarly indicate meetings to women MPs (Molecki, 2009:np). Also sexism exists in the British House of Commons. Some reports by Labour and Conservative women MPs cite remarks made by their male colleagues about 'legs and breasts' and male MPs making sexual gestures such as 'putting their hands out in front of them as if they are weighing melons' during speeches by women MPs (Childs, 2004, Childs et al., 2005: 71; Campbell and Childs, 2014). Another good example of sex discrimination is presented by Shepherd-Robinson and Lovenduski (2002: 121 cited in Childs et al.,

2005: 23) where a woman candidate for the 2001 election was told by her male colleague: 'Well, you didn't do bad for a little woman, did you?' Similarly, another woman candidate for the same election was told: 'we do enjoy watching you speak; we always imagine what your knickers are like' (Lovenduski, 2005: 77). Moreover, Mary Riddell, *The Daily Telegraph's* political interviewer, illustrates:

The great mystery of the vanishing women MPs isn't because the hours are terrible (they're much more family-friendly than they used to be) or because the Commons is impossible for women with small children. I blame the macho, antediluvian culture that lingers long after its expiry date. Name me another workplace in the country where Lord Rennard would have flourished for so long or been allowed, by a chorus line of male cronies, to portray himself as a victim of the women who reported his behaviour (Sanghani, 2014: np).

Kate Maltby¹⁵ adds to this debate by claiming:

I think a lot of women still complain about sexual harassment in the Commons. It's not just Lib Dems, it's not just Rennard, and it's been going on for years. It's still about what a woman looks like and not what a politician looks like (Sanghani, 2014: np).

In opposition to my participant's views, Douglas Carswell, Conservative MP, states that he does not see Parliament as the 'Palace of Westminster' (Boren, 2014: np; Chopra, 2014: np). Moreover, *Channel 4* conducted 70 interviews among MPs from the House of Commons. Their investigation uncovered that young men were more likely to receive unwanted sexual advances than women, with 40 per cent of the men interviewed saying they already had received some unwanted sexual propositions

¹⁵ Kate Maltby: *on the board of the Bright Blue think tank and edits the Bright Blue magazine*. Bright Blue is an independent think tank and pressure group for liberal conservatism.

(Boren, 2014; Chopra, 2014). However, it can be questioned if this type of behaviour happens more extensively in the House of Commons than in other professions. The evidence also suggests that the change in the Westminster culture is recognised by researchers as a fundamental aspect of the parliamentary environment.

Women and women's issues

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

There is a large amount of literature describing women's motivations when entering politics. Some scholars argue that being women's representatives obligates them to deal with women's issues (Childs, 2004; Marmola and Olszanecka cited in Turska-Kawa et. al, 2012). Nevertheless, over the past few decades there has been a transformation in this phenomenon as for example, in the Netherlands in the 1970s and '80s, women parliamentarians became involved in defence and foreign affairs (Nelson and Chowdhury, 1994). Critics have argued that although women in high political positions could make more accessible opportunities to other women (Lowenduski and Karam, 2002) the ability of women MPs to represent other women is questionable (Dave, 2011). Past studies carried out by IPU (1999) uncovered that in some parties such as the Christian Democratic Union and the Liberal Democratic Party of Germany, the Social Democratic Party in the Czech Republic and the

Democratic Constitutional Rally in Tunisia, women in positions of authority discouraged other women from coming forward, due to fear of competition. As exemplified by one Polish woman MP (SLD), the lack of solidarity and lack of fighting for each other affects gender equality in politics. The strongest illustration is given by another Polish woman MP (SLD), who said that, 'the truth is that [...] the biggest enemy of a woman is another woman' (Pankow and Post, 2010: 35). Furthermore, in many instances women MPs have seen the 'harsher and crueller' side of their female colleagues (Vallance, 1979; Ross, 2002:43) who as politicians are nastier and more extreme in their demands (Pankow and Post, 2010). On the other hand, there are also some examples of women's solidarity helping to establish various agendas and organisations helping younger women in their political careers. These examples are presented in the next section of this chapter.

To continue the debate further, many scholars argue that women lack interest in politics, and this also creates barriers to their political advancement (Inglehart, 1981; Siemienka, 2000; du Vall, 2009). As an example please refer to Figure 9 and Figure 10 in the Appendix 4. For example, a common belief is that the lower the interest in politics, the lower participation in political life (Inglehart, 1981). In opposition Baldez (2001 in Campbell and Childs, 2014: 229) suggests that women's interest in politics does not differ from men's and there should be debate about 'gender overlap' rather than 'gender gap'. Yet, the majority of scholars argue that women are less interested in politics and political participation (Atkeson and Rapoport, 2003; Baum and Espirito-Santo, 2007; Campbell and Winters, 2008). Still, Siemienka (2000) argues that this is a more complex phenomenon and depends on the significance of the

interest and how we measure political involvement as it depends on the sociological environment in which individual operates. However, Sieminska (2000) also argues that there is not enough evidence to decide whether this model is relevant. Overall, gender equality is still struggling in the political domain and more changes are needed in this field (Hewitt and Mattinson, 1989).

MEASURES TAKEN TO HELP WOMEN TO JOIN THE POLITICAL ELITE

Coming together

We allow our ignorance to prevail upon us and make us think we can survive alone, alone in patches, alone in groups, alone in races, even alone in genders (Maya Angelou cited in Silva, 1990:1; Maya Angelou cited in Ross, 2010:13).

According to research carried out by Sawer (2012:332), ‘parliamentary institutions can be an enabling factor for feminist interventions’. In 1954, for example, Poland signed a document prepared in New York (1953) called the ‘Convention on the Political Rights of Women’ (Platek, 2004 : 7) which established the rules of women’s political rights. The main provision of the Convention was to give women the right to participate in the government of the country and have equal rights to men in being involved in public office and carrying out public functions (Platek, 2004; Zarnowska, 2004). This document was supported by Article IX ¹⁶ of the Convention, which

¹⁶Article IX of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women: Any dispute which may arise between any two or more Contracting States concerning the interpretation or application of this Convention, which is not settled by negotiation, shall at

changed its meaning from obligation to a declaration (Platek, 2004). Nonetheless, the trigger for women's liberation on a wider scale is traced to United States, France, Britain, Germany and Italy in the late 1960s, Spain in the mid-1970s and in the Soviet Union in the late 1970s, where second-wave feminism, also known as the Women's Liberation Movement, occurred (Randall, 1987; Ballington and Karam, 2005; Kittilson, 2006; Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006). However, these movements resulted in very little increase in women's parliamentary representation (Krook, 2010) and the limited escalation was not due to the movement itself, but was attributed to continuous activity of women's pressure groups (Dahlerup, 2005; Kittilson, 2006), support groups and women's organizations, which existed within and outside political parties (Shvedowa, 2005; Kittilson, 2006). Some examples are the 1960s increase in Finland, where women comprised nearly 17 per cent of the Finnish Eduskunta (Kittilson, 2006) and Germany, where in the 1980s, women's organisations and pressure groups were successful in the increase of their representation in parliament (Nelson and Chowdhury, 1994; Kittilson, 2006). Conversely, when compared to other European women's organisations and pressure groups, in Finland larger and better financed groups appeared to be weaker in their demands for gender parliamentary equality (Kittilson, 2006).

Some of the aims of women's organisations were to educate potential candidates, support their electoral campaigns and help to change the political culture (Lovenduski and Karam, 2002; UNICEF, 2007). After 1989 women have fought many

the request of any one of the parties to the dispute be referred to the International Court of Justice for decision, unless they agree to another mode of settlement (Platek, 2004: 7).

political battles to help establish their rights. The cause of this was that these women saw the need for the formation of a group in order to help to establish their rights in the public domain (Waniek, 2010). Besides, women in Poland have been lobbying for fifteen years and the organisation of a conference 'Women in modern Poland- the chances and the difficulty', under the patronage of the Presidium of the Polish Sejm in 1990 resulted in forming a group in 1991 called Parlamentarna Grupa Kobiet (PGK). This group has been responsible for promoting equality concerning maternity, abortion, gender discrimination in the workforce, sexism and political representation. Furthermore, their lobbying has proven successful in establishing a gender equality law, which has been written into the Polish Republic Constitution. Women's politicisation involved raising awareness about women's inequality in politics, especially aiming to increase the number of women in the Lower and Higher houses of the Polish Parliament (Marszal, 2005; Kicinska, 2009).

Nevertheless, a big impact on equality promotion must be credited to the Beijing Platform for Action 1995¹⁷ (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1997; IPU, 1999; Lovenduski and Karam, 2002; UNICEF, 2007; Waniek, 2010; Roza et al., 2011). This Platform for Action was an 'agenda for women's empowerment' whose strategic objective was to: 'take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making' (Unesco, 1995: 6; Sawyer,

¹⁷ Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) reaffirms the fundamental principle set in the Vienna Declaration and programme action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights 14-25 June 1993. The principle stated that the human rights of women and of the girl child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights.

2010). One of the requirements of this strategic action was to force the Government and political parties to:

- Take measures, including where appropriate, in electoral systems that encourage political parties to integrate women in elective and non-elective public positions in the same proportion and levels as men
- Protect and promote the equal rights of women and men to engage in political activities and to freedom of association, including membership in political parties and trade unions
- Review the differential impact of electoral systems on the political representation of women in elected bodies and consider, where appropriate, the adjustment or reform of those systems
- Consider examining party structures and procedures to remove all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against the participation of women (Unesco, 1995: 75-76).

However, gender equality in politics promoted by the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) has not been straight-forward in new democracies, especially those like Poland, Czech Republic or Slovakia, as the increase in women's political participation was not on the political priority list (Grzybek and Rochon, 2008). This preference was even more reduced due to difficulties in cooperation between women politicians and women's organizations (Ballington and Karam, 2005) and the collapse of communism (Sawer, 2010).

Existing literature acknowledges other examples of women's organisations and schemes which fought for gender equality such as the European Union Medium-Term Action Plans on Equality between Women and Men or Work of Project Parity, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) established in 1996 (Lovenduski and Karam, 2006); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); 1952 Convention on the Political Rights of Women (IPU, 1999), New York Convention 1979 (Waniek, 2010) and Women2Win (Kelly and White, 2009; Childs and Webb, 2012). To add to the debate, scholars argue that networking and building links between women's organisations are still crucial for gaining support in the political environment (Lovenduski and Karam, 2002; UNICEF, 2007). Also participation in different forums such as the International Forum of Women Speakers of Parliament, allows women not only to exchange of ideas, to challenge codes of conduct and to change established cultural orthodoxies on women's role in society (Abdela, 2010), but also to increase awareness of gender imbalance in politics (Lovenduski and Karam, 2006:5; Kerry and White, 2009). Likewise, the latest research has indicated that women's organisations may influence women's presence in parliaments (Lilliefeldt, 2012), at the same time indicating the need for future research in this domain. Surprisingly however, a survey carried out by du Vall (2009), indicated that only 5 per cent of participants could name at least one women's organisation and 70 per cent of women participants felt that women's under-representation in politics was not important. This claim is also supported by Kittilson (2006), who argues that the impact of women's organisations on increasing their presence in parliament might not be significant due to the differences in strategies

used to promote women. Further, the occurrence of women coming together, commonly described as mentioned earlier critical mass, allows women to impose on the introduction of equality promotions such as quotas (Dahlerup, 1988; Dahlerup and Freidenwall, 2011; Campbell and Childs, 2014; Gwiazda, 2014). These equality promotion policies are discussed in the next part of this chapter.

Voluntary and legal provisions introduced to improve gender equality in parliaments

The most effective way to increase the percentage of women in parliament seems to be formal or informal gender quotas on candidate lists set by political parties (Council of the European Union, 1999 cited in Kittilson, 2006:50).

In the previous section I explained the importance of women's initiatives as a tool for encouraging women to reach the political top. This discussion can be extended to validate the formation of affirmative action policies¹⁸, created in order to help women to be equally involved in the political decision-making process (Lovenduski and Norris, 1993; Krook, 2007; Kittilson, 2006). Lovenduski and Norris (1993) identified 3 equality guarantee strategies created by political parties: rhetorical strategies, positive action and positive discrimination. Rhetorical strategies concerned political parties' affirmations regarding party rules and procedures, electoral programme, parliamentary resolutions and public statements by political

¹⁸ Affirmative action: refers to policies that take factors including 'race, colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or national origin 'into consideration in order to benefit an under-represented group 'in areas of employment, education, and business', usually justified as countering the effects of a history of discrimination.

leaders aimed at endorsing the increase of women in political arenas. Positive action strategies incorporated training of women candidates, financial contributions, establishment of specific organizational bodies and promotional campaigns to foster women's participation. Positive discrimination strategies established gender quotas for internal party structures or candidate lists (Lovenduski and Norris, 1993). Prior to 1990, only 20 countries had legislation aimed at the increase of women in politics, whereas by 2008 the number had risen to 100 (Sawer, 2010). The first forms of gender quotas for parliamentary candidates were introduced in Sweden in 1972 by the Liberal Party (Fuszara, 2009) followed by Norway in 1975 (Kittilson, 2006).

Taking the equality promotion debate further, valuable questions should be asked regarding positive action policies:

What privileges are afforded and to whom? Who benefits from the privileges? And who, if anyone, suffers as a result of the policy, and in what ways?' (Drake, 2001:135) as 'parity is not a priority (Cienski, 2010:1)

According to Zukowski (2011), positive action quotas invoke two separate terminologies: parity and election quotas. Parity (from the Latin: *paritas*) is understood as equal representation (50:50) of groups within an organisation. In the context of political elections, parity means equal representation of men and women who are selected for the parliamentary seats. Election quotas, on the other hand, are subject to parties' individual procedures, which are regulated by the party rules (Zukowski, 2011). Furthermore, there are three types of quota implementation: Legislative Electoral Quotas (LEQ), Voluntary Party Quotas (VPQ) and Reserve seats (RV) (Ballington and Karam, 2005; Dahlerup, 2006; Krook, 2007; Larsrud and

Taphorn, 2007; Wawrowski, 2007; Wangnerud, 2009,) and their type have to be taken into consideration when examining the increase of women in parliaments (Adams, 2011; Beveridge et al., 2015). The legal candidate quotas are compulsory within the electoral law or political party law, whereas the voluntary party quotas are taken on by political parties on an optional basis (Ballington and Karam, 2005; Krook, 2007). Additionally, apparatuses of quotas vary by the type of electoral system (Lovenduski and Karam, 2002; Krook, 2009) and some combinations of quotas and electoral systems are more successful than other in increasing the number of women in parliament (Norris, 2006b; Larserud and Taphorn, 2007).

Many scholars have noted that since the 1990s there has been a worldwide increase in the introduction and implementation of positive action quotas, such as 35% all – women shortlists (AWS), twinning, zipping and A-Priority List’s which are presented in Table 1 (Siemienska, 2004; Larserud and Taphorn, 2007; Evans, 2011b). Their aim was to overcome barriers that restrain women from joining the political elite (Larserud and Taphorn, 2007) and help to increase women’s representation in parliament (Phillips, 1995; Ballington and Karam, 2005; Childs et al., 2005; Tripp and Kang, 2008; Kelly and White, 2009; Zukowski, 2011). Equality guarantee’s fundamental role has been to eliminate gender differences, increase the number of women in parliamentary seats (Childs et al., 2005; Kelly and White, 2009; Zukowski, 2011) and allow women to participate in political decision-making (Marszalek-Kawa, 2010).

Table 1. Equality promotion strategies

Type of quota	Purpose of the quota
35%	Political gender quota introduced in Poland not allowing representation of women and men being less than 35 per cent on the election list
All-women shortlist (AWS)	Political practice intended to increase the proportion of female Members of Parliament (MPs) in the United Kingdom by allowing only women to stand in particular constituencies for a particular political party
Twinning	Members of two constituencies select candidates together and each individual votes for one man and one woman. The man and woman with the most votes are selected and an arrangement is reached as to who should have which seat.
Zippering	Applied within a party list system whereby women and men are placed alternatively on the party list of candidates
A-Priority List	Applied by the UK Conservative party where women were placed on a priority lists

Each type of equality promotion policy has its own structure and differs in length of time for its implementation. For example, in Poland, the process of introducing positive action quotas has taken considerable time to establish (Biuro Studiow i Ekspertyz Kancelarii Sejmu, 2003; Zukowski, 2011). It has taken five attempts (in 1996, 1998, 2001, 2002 and 2011) to successfully implement law on the 35% gender quota (Gwiazda, 2014). Although some agreed that gender inequality in Polish politics still exists, they only advised using existing electoral procedures to fill the gender gap, but without any specific recommendations about possible changes to

that system (Fuszara and Tomaszewska, 2002). Also on many occasions Polish women MPs stated that there is no discrimination in Poland and this problem was falsely raised (Marszalek-Kawa, 2010; Pankow and Post, 2010). Nevertheless, before the Polish parliamentary election in 1989, the pre-election female coalition *Przedwybocza Koalicja Kobiet* already tried to introduce positive discrimination quotas to no avail. Some scholars claim that positive action in the Polish Sejm have been mainly promoted by left wing parties, such as the SLD party (Zukowski, 2011; Marmola and Olszanecka cited in Turska-Kawa et al., 2012). But on the contrary, Gwiazda (2014) illustrates that the latest general election in 2011 indicated that recently the liberal conservative Civic Platform party is the leader in the promotion of gender equality. However, this intervention was severely criticised by the right-wing parties. In order to introduce equality promotion quotas, a more powerful female representation, the *Kongres Kobiet Polskich*, had to interfere. After gaining one hundred fifty thousand signatures in favour, the petition was submitted to the Sejm on the 21 December 2009, and the Sejm commission eventually agreed to implement a 35% quota. This policy has been criticised as breaching section 32 and 33 of the Polish Constitution Act¹⁹. However, it was announced as being a gender quota whose purpose was to equalise gender parliamentary representation (Marmola and Orszanecka cited in Turska-Kawa et.al, 2012). Furthermore, the policy has legalised in 2010 and forced political parties to fill their lists accordingly to these 35% rule (Zukowski, 2011). In contrast, global cross-national studies carried out by some scholars indicated a lack of relationship between the introduction of quotas

¹⁹ 32 and 33 Polish Constitutional Act: refers to the necessity of equal representation of both genders in a public and legislative life.

and higher representation of women in parliament (Reynolds, 1999; Kunovich and Paxton, 2005; Ruedin; 2012). As an example, in Iceland, although between the years 1995-2006 the number of parties using gender quotas fell, the number of women in parliament still increased (Ruedin, 2012). Another example would be the introduction of quotas in Poland where analysis carried out after the 2011 parliamentary election indicated an insignificant increase in the number of women in Polish Sejm (Gorecki and Kukolowicz, 2014; Marmola and Orszanecka cited in Turska-Kawa et al., 2012). Also, Birgitta Dahl²⁰ calls the use of quotas in Sweden ‘a secondary resource after the preparation of groundwork to facilitate women's entry into politics’ (Ballington and Karam, 2005: 143). However, I argue that the current studies which considered the data between the years 1991 and 1996, failed to acknowledge the latest implementation of quotas around the globe.

Another example of equality strategy, which has been permitted by the Westminster, the Welsh National Assembly and the Scottish Parliament, is the All-Women Shortlists (AWS). It was described as an equality promotion ‘where a certain proportion of women are required to be present on a shortlist’ (Kelly and White, 2009:11). This has significantly strengthened the representation of women in the British parliament. AWS meant that party members were still able to make a decision on which applicant would be accepted in their seat, but the short-lists in these electorates were limited only to women candidates (Childs et al., 2005; Kelly and White, 2009; Zukowski, 2011). Furthermore, the AWS quota introduced by the UK

²⁰ Rut *Birgitta Dahl* is a Swedish former politician of the Social Democratic Party

Labour Party has been tested at the 1997 UK general election where half of their 'strong challenger' seats, defined in the conference motion as Labour's 'most winnable' seats, were offered to females (Kelly and White, 2009:12). As a result, the volume of women MPs at Westminster doubled overnight, from 9.2 per cent to 18 per cent. This action, however, has been heavily criticised and women politicians were confronted by some men candidates. One Member of the Welsh Assembly gives example of this incident:

I was at the conference ... when they were talking about the all women shortlists for selection for the Assembly election and this younger-than-myself male asked me how long I'd been in the Party. I told him ten years. And he quite clearly said to me, 'it is people like you who make me sick, because you are going to support this, you've only been in the Party ten years. I've been a member all my life' and he was going for selection in a constituency where there would be an all-women shortlist. So, it was all my fault, all women's fault...there is an arrogance, he made it clear that he felt that he had a right to that seat and he wasn't going to stand aside (McAllister, 2006: 4).

Additionally, the scholars dealing with equality promotion strategies report that AWS has also been considered illegal under the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) (Bashevkin, 2000; Ross, 2002 Kittilson; 2006). This forced the party to implement another equality guarantee called 'twinning', with the intention to escape the legal obstacles (Squires and Wickham-Jones, 2001; Childs et al., 2005; Stevens, 2007) and seek a change in the law. Twinning was used by The Labour Party in the 1999 elections for the Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament and also in the 2001 election at Westminster. As a result of the strategy, women represented 40 per cent of the Welsh Assembly and 37 per cent of the Scottish Parliament in the first election. In 1999, the Labour Party adopted this strategy on a one off basis. However, twinning

was only effective when 'a fraction of a party's representatives were standing down' (Norris, 2000:6). This reflected on the continuity of the policy and parties decided not to adopt this positive action in the next election (Norris, 2000). A further example of policies helping female candidates in parliamentary seats is the introduction of zipping, especially in districts where an election is dependent on rank order (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995). Nevertheless, there was a shift in legal regulation regarding gender parliamentary imparity resulting in the birth of the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidate) Act 2010. This policy allowed political parties to re-introduce the use of already successful AWS.

Further, Campbell and Childs (2014) who also drew on the effectiveness of all-women-shortlists after studying the results of 1997 analysis on voting by Studlar and McAllister, came to a conclusion that the AWS policy, although being controversial, did not have any effects on voting behaviour of the British voters (Campbell and Childs, 2014). An important voice in the debate on AWS was raised by the British MP Joan Ruddock who stated: 'I am certain that my party will have to re-adopt all-woman-shortlists because no other measure - we have tried the others that I know - will work for Westminster selections and elections' (Childs, 2003:89). Overall, the implementation of gender quotas was considered by feminist scholars and Labour Party activists as the only tangible solution to tackle parliamentary gender inequality (Short, 1996), considering them as a 'fast track' to women's advancement in politics (Campbell and Childs, 2014: 22). It became evident that in order to select the right candidates, the party has to establish certain processes based on political principles and provide resources for women and the political interests of the candidates

(Kunovich, 2003). Also many findings about the effectiveness of gender quotas have fed back into the type of quota policies classifying them as legal gender quotas and party gender quotas. Research in this area has in many ways informed scholars that in comparison to legal gender quotas, the party gender quotas have weaker effects on the increase in women in parliament, (Sawer, 2010; Campbell and Childs, 2014). Furthermore, although the use of quotas has proved successful, voluntary quotas were less effective in improving gender equality in politics as there are no measures taken if parties fail to comply (Ruedin, 2012). Therefore scholars argue that penalties should be executed in that respect and the introduction of quotas should be statutory rather than voluntary (Norris, 2006). The success of the compulsory gender quotas can be especially acknowledged in the Nordic countries, where women are included on the parties' lists in large quantities (50/50 ratio) (Ballington and Karam, 2005; Norris, 2006a). Further studies on this topic also illustrate that, for example, in 2005 in Rwanda, due to constitutional quotas, the representation of women in the lower house reached 48.8 per cent (Shedova,2005). Since then the parliamentary representation of women in Rwanda continued to increase achieving 63.8 per cent in 2015 (IPU, 2015b), comparing favourably even with Nordic countries.

The above debate can be extended by illustrating that by 2005 more than 40 countries worldwide have implemented compulsory gender quotas and in more than 50 countries parties have implemented voluntary quotas (Dahlerup, 2005). A classic example could be France, where in the 1970s, the Socialist Party introduced legislative candidate quotas resulting in the increase of women parliamentarians from 10 per cent in 1974 to 20 per cent in 1979 and 30 per cent in 1990, although

the quota was declared unconstitutional by the French Constitutional Council (Nelson and Howdhury, 1994; Dahlerup and Freidenvall, 2008). In contrast, analysis of the use of voluntary quotas amongst 25 European Union countries between the years 1996-2000 indicated that women achieved only 4 per cent increase in their parliamentary representation (Wawrowski, 2007). By and large, the increase of the introduction of gender quotas around the world still continues to rise, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Worldwide quotas by region

Region	None	Legislative	Voluntary	Total
East Asia & Pacific	26	8	2	36
Europe & Central Asia	22	18	17	57
Latin America & Caribbean	22	17	2	41
Middle East & North Africa	10	9	2	21
North America	2	0	1	3
South Asia	3	5	0	8
Sub-Saharan Africa	16	26	6	48
Total	101	83	30	214

Source: Amended from Rosenbluth et al. (2015)

Table 2 provides an overview on legislative and voluntary gender quotas worldwide. It can be identified that European and Central Asian countries are far more advanced in the employment of voluntary gender quotas. However Sub-Saharan African countries are dominating in the use of legislative quotas. The least advanced in the

implementation of gender quotas are North American and South Asian countries, commencing as low as null of legislative quotas in North America.

In addition to the use of quotas, various scholars also argue that for these quotas to be successful, they must be well matched with the electoral systems (Dahlerup, 2005; Kittilson, 2006; Lovenduski cited in Nizynska, 2012; Ruedin, 2012). For example, gender quotas are proven to be more successful in PR electoral systems when compared with majoritarian electoral systems and are easier to implement in new political systems than in older ones (please see Table 3).

Table 3: Percentage of countries with gender quotas by type of electoral rules

	Countries	Quota	
		<i>Legislative</i>	<i>Voluntary</i>
Party	72	43	16
Mix	30	17	7
Candidate Centric	66	29	7
Total	168	79	30

Source: Amended from Rosenbluth et al. (2015)

Table 3 offers a snapshot of legislative and voluntary quotas accordingly to the type of electoral systems. It can be identified that countries with party electoral systems such as the PR significantly overshadow countries with mixed- member electoral rules by the use of legislative and voluntary gender quotas. However in the countries with mix or candidate centric electoral rules, the use of legislative gender quotas is considerably more common. Overall, out of 168 countries worldwide, 65 per cent of countries have already implemented gender equality measures.

With reference to the above, research on established democracies has uncovered that due to parliamentary seats being mostly occupied, there is a strong possibility of conflicts between new and old groups (Dahlerup, 2005; Kittilson, 2006; Norris, 2006). Scholars go even further by linking List Proportional Representation (List PR)²¹ with small or large districts combined with zipping quotas or Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)²² combined with reserved seats (Larserud and Taphorn, 2007) to indicate the correlation between electoral systems and the use of quotas. For example, the Swedish Social Democratic Party initiated this strategy in 1994 which resulted in the highest percentage of women politicians in the developed world (Brooks et al., 1990). Therefore the impact of electoral systems is discussed in more depth in the next part of this chapter. Overall, Dahlerup (2005) and Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2011) suggest that the introduction of legal and/or voluntary measures has to be considered by the political parties, as the success of gender quotas is noticeable not only by researchers, but also by politicians themselves. Furthermore, evidence from many studies suggests that ‘in the absence of legal mechanisms, levels of women’s political recruitment are likely to remain low’ (Eagle and Lovenduski cited in Childs, 2000: 64). However, Campbell and Childs (2014) argue that in the modern world political parties tend to streamline party image and tend to use quotas to encourage more women voters. Moreover, Matland and Studlar (1996) claim that political parties are more likely to introduce gender quotas when pressured by competitive parties. However at the same time the use of such equality promotion

²¹ List PR: under a List Proportional Representation system each party presents a list of candidates for a multi-member electoral district, the voter votes for a party, and parties receive seats in proportion to their overall share of the vote.

²² Mixed Member Proportional System (MMP): system in which the choices expressed by the voters are used to elect representatives through two different systems: one list PR system and (usually) one plurality/majority system, where list PR system compensates for the disproportionality in the results from the plurality/majority system

could create 'artificial demand' for women parliamentary candidates (Campbell and Childs, 2014: 172).

In contrast, feminist Agnieszka Graff (cited in Marszalek-Kawa, 2010) disputes the use of quotas, testifying that women are more than capable of holding the role of politicians without any interventions. Additionally, other scholars argue that quotas not only discourage women from reaching the top political echelons (Warowski, 2007; Marmola and Orszanecka cited in Turska-Kawa et.al, 2012) but cause resentment among men and do not give equal gender access to the electoral candidates (Squires, 2007). Equality guarantees are also hostile to citizens' rights, who feel that their choice of candidate should be based on individuals rather than gender (Squires, 2007; Zukowski, 2011). Dave (2011) argues that, for example, AWS are undemocratic and there are other groups which could possibly demand the use of shortlists such as ethnic minorities, the disabled or prisoners. On the other hand Dave (2011) also claims that use of quotas is not damaging for democracy as women still have to win the election, despite how they were promoted as candidates. Conversely, Beauchamp (1998 cited in Squires, 2007: 91-92) criticises affirmative action quotas, arguing that they:

Unjustifiably elevate the opportunities of members of targeted groups, discriminate against equally qualified or even more qualified members of majorities, and perpetuate racial and sexual paternalism.

There are many instances where equality promotion has faced disapproval and its effectiveness has been questioned. For example, the latest gender balance strategy, the Priority List (also commonly known as the A-list) introduced by David Cameron

(UK Conservative Party) has been criticised for having a negative effect on local associations which 'resent anyone being pushed in' (Evans, 2011b: 209). Moreover, some women politicians confessed that this policy cost them their friendships and even resulted in threats from the public. Additionally, gender quotas were interfering with voters' free choices (Warowski, 2007) who should be able to select any candidates without of being pressurised to choose a particular gender (Zukowski, 2011). They also not only created tension between central and regional political party structures (Warowski, 2007) but also accelerated conflicts among these parties (Zukowski, 2011). To the contrary, other academics argue that 'party leaders' reluctance to nominate equal numbers of female and male candidates limit voters' (both women and men) ability to vote for women (OSCE, 2014). Another problem is that quotas force electors to promote gender over qualifications and experience (Warowski, 2007). Moreover, recent research by Gorecki and Kukolowicz (2014) suggests that voters prefer candidates with specific backgrounds and political experience and, therefore, quotas may not be effective due to the shortage of women covering these demands. However, Zukowski (2011) is critical of the statement, arguing that in the male-orientated political system, women's qualifications are undermined and marginalised anyway.

Overall though, scholars emphasise positive effects of equality promotion strategies in parliamentary elections not only across European countries but globally (Dahlerup, 2005). Further, the socio-cultural beliefs about women's role were also challenged by the introduction of quotas by allowing changes in the status quo. Although some argue that equality promotion strategies might undermine the value of women's

achievements by promoting gender equality over other terms of equality, earlier examples in this section revealed that in order to divert the parliamentary masculinised environment, some measures need to be taken to help women to concentrate on their political careers. Lastly, the argument that quotas would breach equality laws can be undermined by reshaping the models from 'women's equality promotions' to 'gender equality measures', which could be implemented equally in favour of men as well as women (Demailly, 2005; Baldez, 2006; IDEA, 2010). However, returning to the debate on the success of quotas, according to the study undertaken by the Fabian Research Society (1990 cited in Brooks et al., 1990), in order to make a significant difference to the gender gap, the affirmative action quotas would have to reach up to 75 per cent. This is the reason why I also argue in this research that the effectiveness of quotas should be explored further.

IMPACT OF ELECTORAL SYSTEMS ON GENDER IMBALANCE IN POLITICS

Every country deserves to have the best possible leader and that means that women have to be given a chance to compete. If they're never allowed to compete in the electoral process then the countries are really robbing themselves of a great deal of talent (Madeleine K. Albright, NDI Chairman cited in NDI, 2013).

There is a large volume of published studies describing the role of electoral systems in women's parliamentary representation. Many scholars advocate that the nature of the electoral system has a significant impact on the difference in gender representation in politics (Darcy et al., 1994; Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Paxton,

1997; Galligan and Tremblay, 2005; Ruedin, 2012). For example, according to Wide's (2006 cited in Wangnerud, 2009) comparative research across 179 countries between the years 1950-2005, the type of electoral system was confirmed to be the most significant factor in women's political representation. In this chapter, I pay special attention to the electoral systems dominating the OECD countries: the Proportional Representation (PR) and the First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) as this sets the foundation for my comparative research. The main idea behind the PR electoral system is the agreement of a list of candidates by the party for each district, where voters choose one party on their ballot paper (Norris, 2006b; IDEA, 2010). In contrast under the FPTP electoral system, the party selects individual candidates and the electorate vote for only one candidate of their choice (LSE, 2012). It is harder under the FPTP to include a mixed group of candidates for the election, as the party is more interested to put forward nominees who will secure their seats (Ballington and Karam, 2005; Norris, 2006b; Sawer, 2010; Ruedin, 2012). Some academics argue that Proportional Representation electoral system is much more women friendly than the First-Past-The-Post system (Matland and Taylor, 1997; McAllister and Studlar, 2002; Matland, 2005; Larsrud and Taphorn, 2007; Wangnerud, 2009; Sawer, 2010; Ruedin, 2012). Moreover, many scholars agree that:

In essence, parties are able to use the lists to promote the advancement of women politicians and allow the space for voters to elect women candidates without limiting their ability to vote with a mind of other concerns (Matland & Taylor, 1997:204 cited in Ross, 2002:27)

On the other hand the reason for the political parties' resentment of promoting women under the FPTP system is due to a fear of wasted votes, if they place women on the electoral list where the 'winner-takes-all' (Duverger, 1955 in Kittilson, 2006). Therefore, consequently the comparison of the two electoral systems: PR and FPTP reveals that PR has greater impact on the proportion of women in parliament (IPU, 1999; McAllister and Studlar, 2002; Norris, 2006b; Larsrud and Taphorn, 2007; Sawyer 2010; Ruedin, 2012). However, according to Brooks et al. (1990), the PR electoral system employed by most East European countries is not proven to be more successful than the UK's FPTP system as, for example, in Poland women's representation in the lower house of the parliament is similar to the UK (Kunovich, 2003). This was also the case in the 1986 French parliamentary election, where the introduction of a PR electoral system saw the number of women candidates rise from 11.9 per cent to 24.7 per cent, but the actual number of women elected increased by only 5.9 per cent (Sineau, 2008). The claims for PR would appear to be over ambitious as the research tends to overlook the gender differences among parties within the single system. Furthermore, the authors overlook the importance of other factors such as establishment of democracies and ideologies of political parties (Brooks at al., 1990; Wangnerud, 2009). Besides, their studies suggest that in reality political parties have failed to put enough women forward (Kunovich, 2003) and women can still be discriminated against, unless in the election process they are transferred to winnable positions on the electoral lists (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Kunovich, 2003; Siemienska cited in Marszalek, 2005; Childs, 2006; Stevens, 2007). In contrast, some countries under majoritarian electoral systems have seen dramatic

increases in women's representation due to use of equality promotions (Russell et al., 2002; Dahlerup, 2006; McAllister, 2008) such as Australia, Canada and United Kingdom.

While scholars emphasise the link between the electoral systems and the number of women in parliament, they also pay attention to the orientation of the political parties on women's balance in politics. There is some evidence that 'leftist parties espouse more egalitarian beliefs than right-wing parties and are known for greater support for gender equality' (Kunovich, 2003; Stockemer, 2007:483; Warowski, 2007; Krook, 2010). To give an example of this, in countries with established democracies such as Italy, France or Spain, communist parties (the French Communist Party; the Italian Communist Party (PCI); the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE), have had positive results in promoting women and giving them electoral opportunities (Beckwith, 1989; McLeay, 1993; Sawer, 2010). Another example would be the UK's Labour Party which has taken a 'women-friendly' approach to become one of UK's leading Political parties which promotes women candidates for Parliament (Kittilson, 2006: 1). This phenomenon could be due to competition between the new and the old left parties (Caul, 1999). In contrast, right wing parties believe in more traditional roles of women in society, therefore their promotion of women in politics is much less than among leftists (Rule, 1987). For example, in Poland the right-wing political party, the Union of Real Politics (1989), promoted the idea that young women should be stripped of their right to stand for elections. In their view, young women did not have the ability to be involved in politics (Siemienska cited in Nelson and Chowdhury, 1994). A further example is Sweden where after the 1991 parliamentary election,

where the number of women decreased from 38 per cent to 33.5 per cent and in Norway where there was a decrease from 39 per cent to 36 per cent due to the change in parliament from a social-democratic to a coalition government formed by right-wing parties (Teigen and Wangenrud, 2009). The same phenomenon applies to central parties (Matland and Studlar, 1996) such as, for example, the Canadian Liberal Party which 'takes less vigorous action in support of women candidates' (IPU, 1999:46).

The generalizability of much published research in this area is problematic as according to other scholars the orientation of the political party has no relevance to women's political representation anymore (Darcy et al., 1994; Matland and Studlar, 1996; IPU, 1999). Nevertheless, the latest research carried out among 57 individual political parties from 11 West European countries indicated that the orientation of the party still plays a significant role in the representation of women in parliament (Lilliefeldt, 2012).

Besides, it could be suggested that the significance of the electoral system in women's political representation must be closely combined with the selection, promotion and election processes.

From selection to election

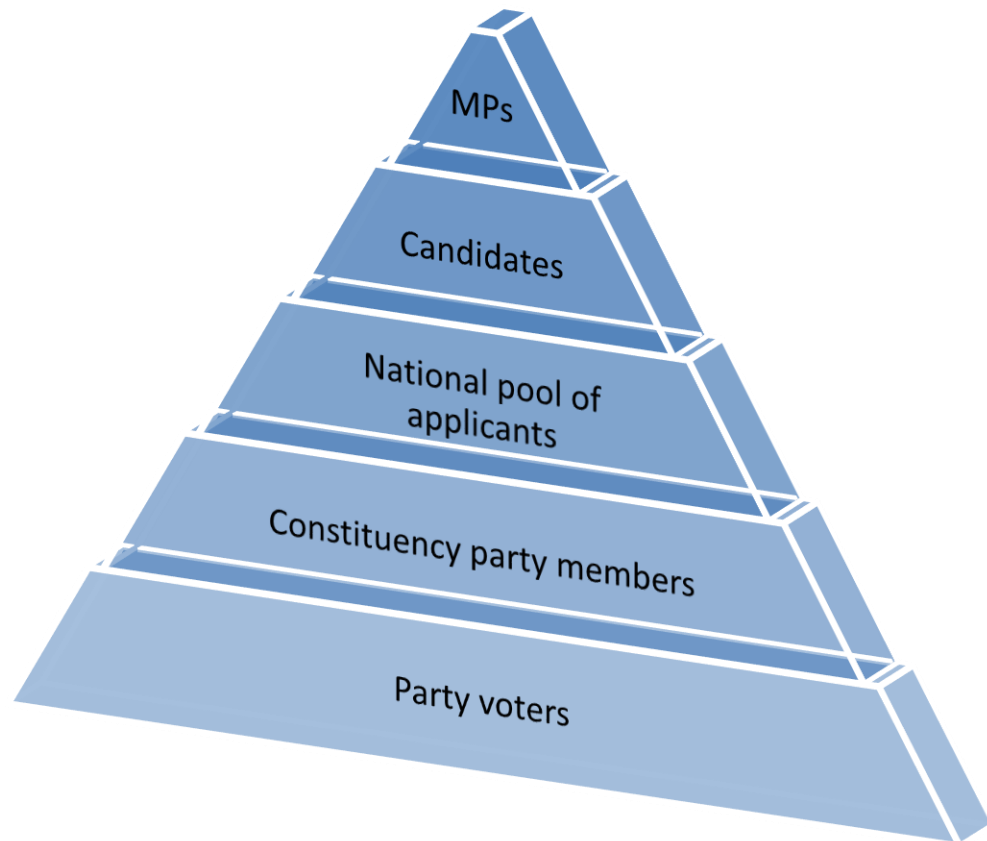
While a PR electoral system obviously makes the selection of women more likely, it is not the electoral system which does the selecting. The selectors are not the prisoners of the electoral system. The active role of the election process in determining how many women enter Parliament should not be overlooked (McLeay, 1993: 56)

Serious weaknesses in some of the main stages of women's political journey have been discussed by many scholars. Firstly, the selection practices carried out by political parties must be questioned (Ashley, 2008). Also male selectorates²³ favour candidates who are more likely to represent masculine characteristics; therefore consequently women face discrimination at the root of their political journey (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Sheperd-Robinson and Lovenduski, 2002, Warowski, 2007). Furthermore, Norris (2006b) and Kittilson (2006:27) claim that in the single member districts where the 'winner-take-it all', political parties are discouraged from selecting women due to fear of 'wasted votes'. The selectors might also ask gender discriminative questions based on women's roles and their availability to conduct the job as parliamentarians (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Kittilson, 2006). This results in lack of support for women at the selection stage (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Shepherd-Robinson and Lovenduski, 2002, Childs et al., 2005; Ruedin, 2012). For example in Britain the political selection process used to be called 'the secret garden of British politics', (please see Figure 3 below), as the process was performed within the political parties internally and away from the public eye (King and Soloman, 1973: 40). However the authors might have overlooked the fact that bigger political parties

²³ Selectorates: Individuals within the party who select candidates.

were more likely to include more women on their electoral lists than the smaller parties (Siemienska, 2000). Moreover, the selection processes have changed significantly since the 1950s (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995) as a response to women's pressure in increasing their representation in politics (Kittilson, 2006). For example, parties such as the German Green Party have restructured their selection process in order to allow more women into the parliament by alternating men and women on the lists, placing women in first position (Matland and Montgomery, 2003; Kittilson, 2006). For some of the major parties, the aims of the changes were to 'increase the formality of the process' and 'to shift power slightly away from the core constituency activists towards central leadership and the grassroots members' (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995: 8). Nevertheless, candidates must still apply for particular constituencies and go through interviews and short-listings stage (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995).

Figure 3: The ladder of political recruitment.



Source: Amended from Norris and Lovenduski (1995)

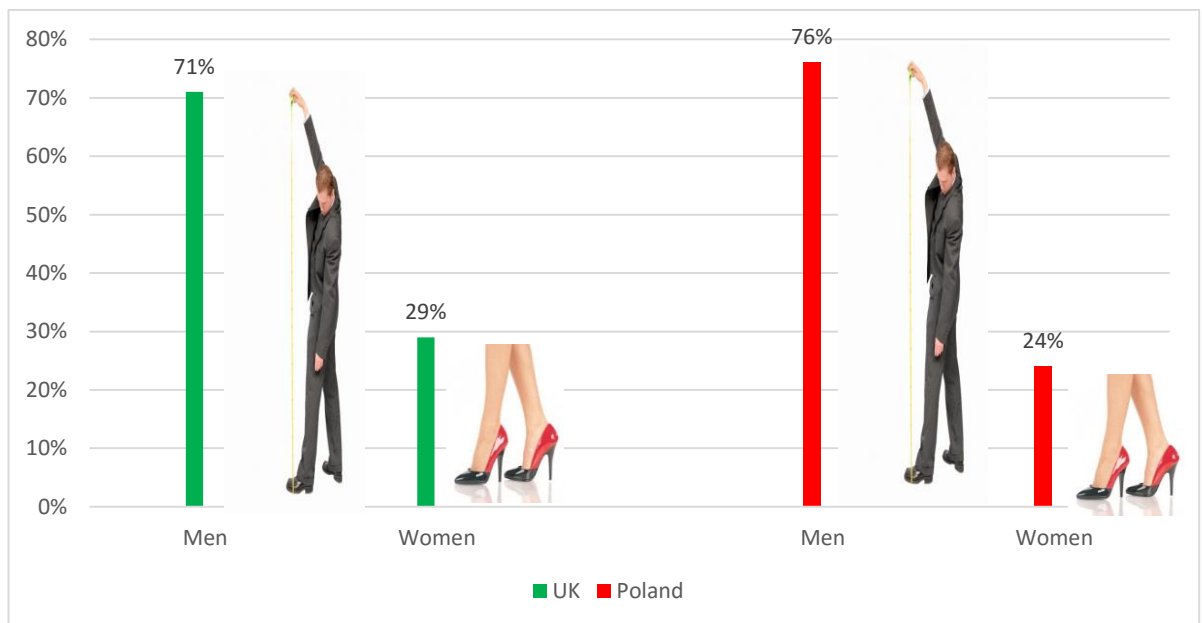
The above Figure illustrates a common way of reaching the political top. The process of climbing the 'gender ladder' according to Norris and Lovenduski (1995) starts with the political party gatekeepers who developed the greatest control over the candidates, therefore limiting the candidate options for the party voters. In the British Politics for example, as mentioned before, the decision on who would become MP lies in the selectorate's hands rather than in the hands of the electorates.

Within a similar context, although women should have a better opportunity to be promoted by parties' selection committees the issue of gender equality cannot be

tackled if parties fail to ensure that selected women candidates are placed on the list for winnable safe seats (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Childs et al., 2005). This is because the candidates placed in the winnable seat position is treated by the voters as a clear signal from the party that this is the best candidate, and which should be elected (Gorecki and Kukolowicz, 2014). Additionally, a survey carried out by IPU (1999) indicated that political parties are still concerned that voters might fail to vote for women. The Socialist Party in Hungary could be a good example of such failure, where the low percentage of women parliamentarians (9 per cent), places Hungary significantly below the European Union average in the number of women MPs (IPU, 1999; Fodor, 2011). Another significant example would be the attempt of the right wing Polish political party called Law and Justice to increase the number of women in parliament by launching the 'angels' campaign ahead of the 2011 General Election. This promotion however had very minimal effect on the party image and in the overall increase of the number of women in parliament (Cienski, 2010: 1). Further, the 1992 British Candidate Survey undertaken by Lovenduski and Norris clarified, that the failure of the political parties to select women for winnable seats, undercut the availability of suitable and highly trained women candidates (Campbell and Childs, 2014). To the contrary, some scholars argue that more important is the type of electoral system, as for example under the PR system women placed furthered on the lists can still be selected (Siemienska, 2000; Spurek, 2002; Gwiazda, 2014).

In this research I pay special attention to two particular countries: United Kingdom and Poland when conducting my comparison of gender unbalance in the lower chambers of the parliament. As presented in Figure 4, the number of women in both parliaments is significantly unequal when compared to men.

Figure 4: Representation of men and women in the House of Commons and the Sejm of the Republic of Poland in 2015

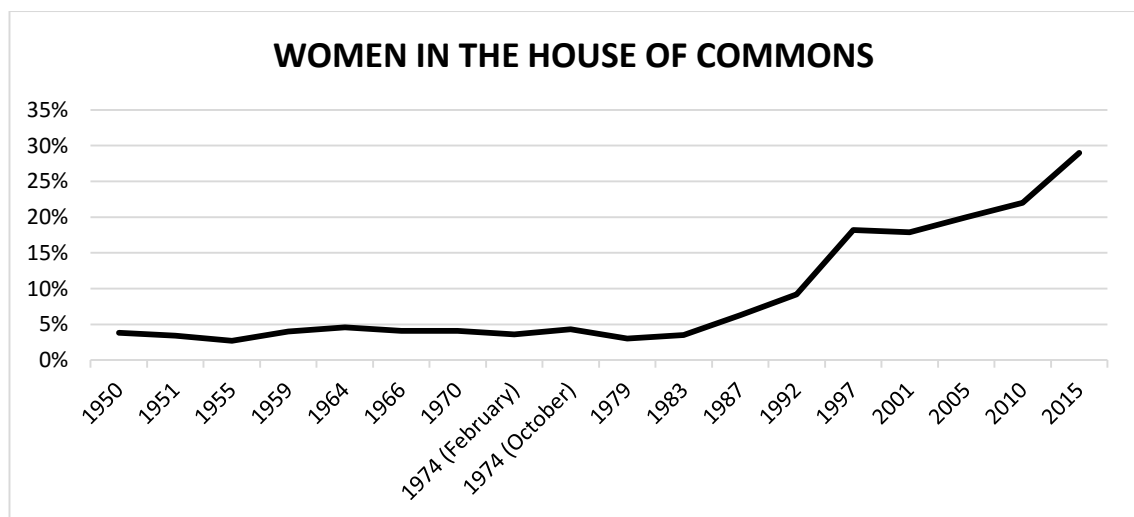


Source: Amended from IPU (2015a)

The above Figure illustrates recent percentage of men and women in the British House of Commons and the Sejm of the republic of Poland. It is visible that in both countries the number of women MPs is lesser than the number of men MPs.

Moreover, according to major demographic variables as presented in Figure 5 and Figure 6, the process on gender equality over the last 60 years between both countries (UK and Poland) still did not result in equal representation of women in the British House of Commons or the Sejm of the Republic of Poland. It has to be also noted that the implementation of party quotas in the United Kingdom in the 1997 general election resulted in significant increase of women’s presence in Parliament from 9 percent to 18 percent; however the rise after that year was not as advanced till 2015. In 2015 the House of Commons has seen the second largest increase of women in parliament increasing their number from 22 per cent in 2010 to 29 percent in 2015. This rapid increase moves the UK to the 36th place in the world rankings for female parliamentary representation.

Figure 5: Progress in gender balance in the House of Commons: 1950-2015

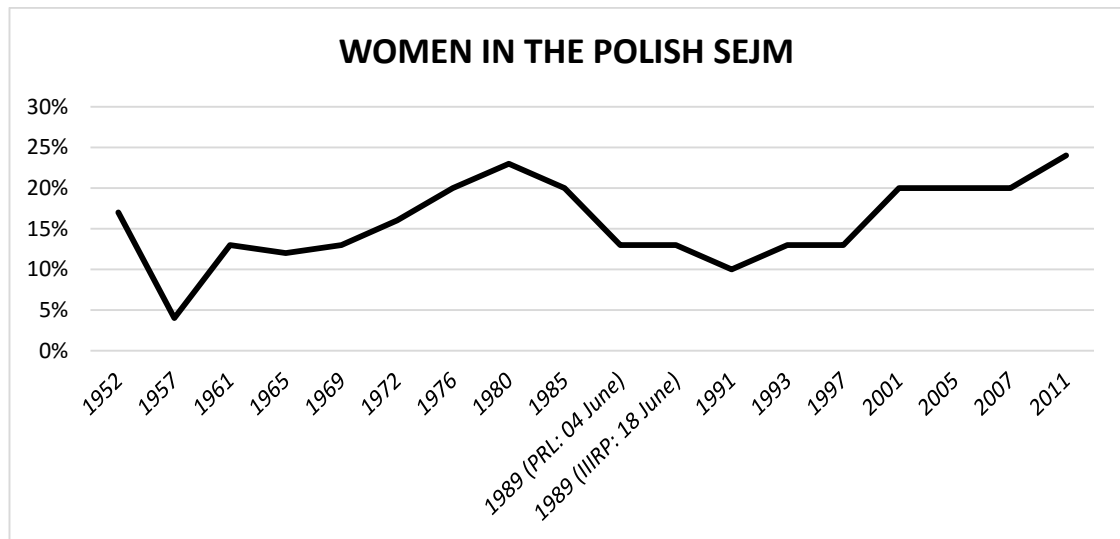


Source: Amended from Keen (2015)

The above Figure illustrates the percentage of women elected in each general election between the years 1950 and 2010. It indicates that the number of women elected between the years 1950 and 1992 has shown a steadily increasing trend,

which ignores fluctuation in some years. However it indicates considerable increase in the 1997 general election due to the use of equality guarantee: the all-women-shortlists.

Figure 6: Progress in gender balance in the Sejm of the Republic of Poland: 1952-2011



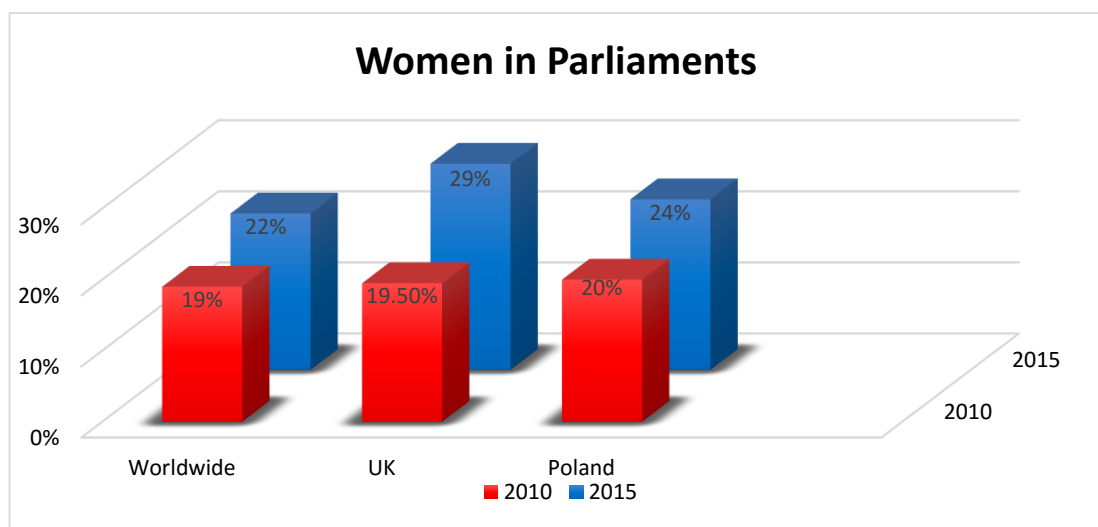
Source: Amended from Brodzinska-Mirowska (2009); Instytut Spraw Publicznych (2010)

The above Figure illustrates increases and decreases of women elected to the Sejm of the Republic of Poland between the years 1952 and 2011. There is a significant decrease in the number of women from 17 per cent in 1952 to 4 per cent in 1957 and 1989 from 20 per cent to 13 per cent. Both decreases were due to ‘political thaw’ where the Polish Parliament required a ‘real power’ and people in Poland anticipated to gain parliamentary democracy (Fuszara, 2000: 272; Brodzinska-Mirowska, 2009:37).

In this thesis I also aim to argue that the increase in women’s parliamentary advancement is still considerably lower than the increase in the presence of women

in other positions of power. Figure 7 indicates the latest statistical data on the increase in the percentage of women worldwide and across the UK and Polish lower chambers of the parliaments. Figure 8 illustrates the increase in the percentage of women on boards in FTSE 100 and FTSE 250.

Figure 7: The increase of women in parliaments: UK, Poland and Worldwide between 2010 and 2015

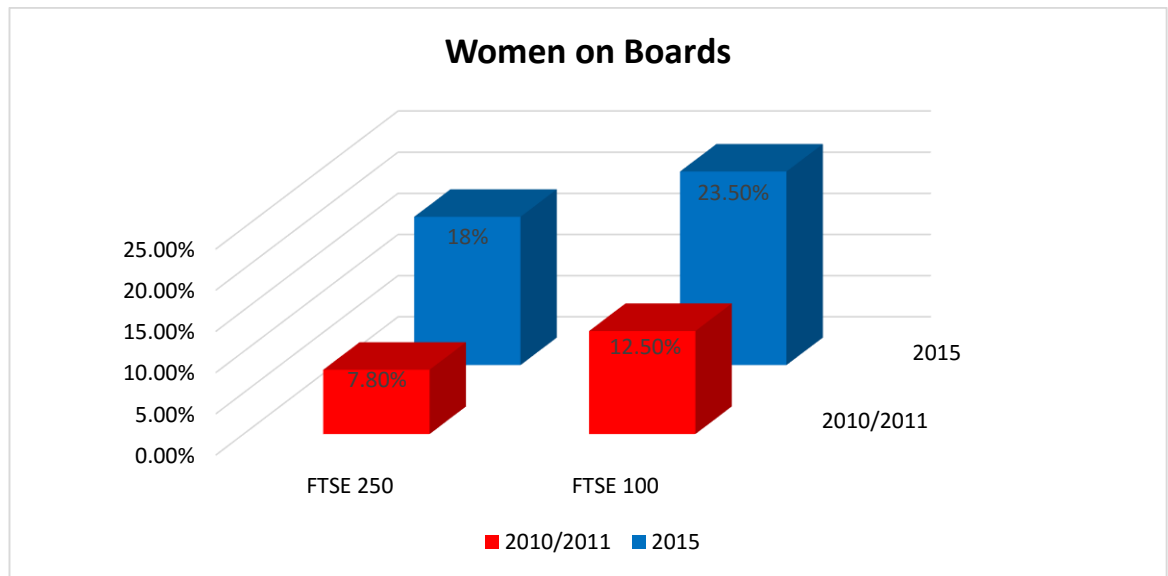


Source, IPU (2015)

Figure 7 above demonstrates the comparison in the percentage of women’s parliamentarians worldwide, in the British House of Commons and in the Sejm of the Republic of Poland between 2010 and 2015. This Figure clearly indicates that the increase of women in parliaments is considerably lower, with the increase of 3 per cent worldwide, 4 per cent in Poland and nine and a half per cent in the United Kingdom. The British increase is slightly more advanced due to the latest improvement in gender balance in the recent general election. Overall the increase

is still considerably lower than when compared to the increase of women on boards presented in the below Figure 8.

Figure 8: The increase of women on boards: FTSE 250 and FTSE 100 between 2010/2011 and 2015



Source: Lord Davies of Abersoch (2011) and Lord Davies of Abersoch (2015)

Figure 8 above demonstrates the advancement in the representation of women on boards of 101st to the 350th largest companies listed on the London Stock Exchange (FTSE 250) and on the 100 companies listed on the London Stock Exchange with the highest market capitalisation (FTSE 100). The Figure illustrates changes between the years 2010 and 2015. It is seen that the number of women on boards across FTSE 250 and FTSE 100 rises significantly reaching an increase of over 100 per cent in both instances.

From the above Figures 7 and 8 it is visible that the increase of women in parliaments between the years 2010 and 2015 has only risen on average 5.5 per cent whereas

the increase of women in the top companies listed on the London Stock Exchange in the same period has risen on average 16 per cent. This data indicates that the advancement of women in parliaments is still by far unequal to the advancement of women in other powerful positions. However the above Figures (7 and 8) also clarify that gender balance in different positions of power is still significantly unequal when compared to men.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter my aim has been to explain some reasons for gender imbalance in parliaments across new and established democracies across a number of countries mainly belonging to OECD. I have paid special attention to various difficulties that women face in their attempt to become politicians and have identified some equality promotion strategies that have been used to allow women to join the political elite. I have identified the impact of some socio- cultural aspects on women's under-representation in politics, and some prevailing aspects of cultural stereotypes. Given the traditional image of females who are perceived as family-raisers and dependent on their husbands I have illustrated that society is in need of challenging these social images as otherwise they are in danger of verifying the false stereotypical belief that women are not capable of standing in the role of politicians. The evidence from the literature also highlights religious aspects as one of the features playing some role in women's political representation. Various scholars identify Catholic traditionalism as an obstacle to women's political involvement due to the belief of the Catholic Church

that women have different, traditional roles. Other writers perpetuate the image of women as being 'weak and ineffectual' and who are not capable of dealing with the political environment. However, I would argue that primarily women have to prove to themselves that they are capable as leaders and they can be as good as men. Also a change in social perception on 'a woman's place' could be very significant in order to achieve gender balance in political elites. Then again, I agree with Ruedin (2012) who argues that further study is needed on the impact of cultural factors on women's representation in politics in order to uncover the deep-rooted nature of that problem.

Additionally, scholars share some common interest in the impact of media on women's political involvement. According to researchers the media not only under-represent women politicians, but distort their images by presenting them as gender stereotypes or/and sexual objects. The systematic tendencies towards these discourses on female politicians by journalists and reporters led to the conclusion that the media significantly contributes to women's difficulties in their political careers. Also media bias against female politicians plays a big role in influencing public opinion about women's abilities and capabilities as politicians. These misrepresented descriptions of females in politics often damage their reputations as leaders and in many instances create an impediment to their future political careers. Therefore, guidance for women politicians in public speaking through various forms of training and helping them to learn how to handle the media are some of many strategies recommended by scholars. Still this approach would have to acknowledge

the importance of discourse between men and women about the prominence of parity in legislative bodies.

Furthermore, the chapter has discussed socio-economic factors as very relevant obstacles to women's political involvement. Various studies across the literature have found that financial difficulties, lack of suitable education and lack of training provided to women politicians place them as secondary candidates for parliamentary positions. Therefore, strategies for equal opportunity offering women the same possibilities as men, helping in their election campaigns and suitable training are necessities suggested by researchers. However, controversially other scholars such as Abdela (2010) argue that although attention should be given to educating future women politicians, that endless training will not reform the lack of gender parity in politics. Therefore I agree with Ballington and Karam (2005) who suggest that it is important to make sure that women are supported not just at the beginning, but all the way through their political careers.

Male domination and the possible impact of critical mass on the parliamentary environment are also presented in this chapter in accordance with the impact of women MP's on women's issues. The literature identifies how feminisation and the promotion of women's interests influence the wider political environment. Also, on many occasions women do not come forward either due to fear that they will not be able to compete against men or the stereotypical idea that they should not take any interest in politics. Some research studies suggest that, if more women would put themselves forward politically, they not only would be recognised as potential

politicians but also they would be nominated. Also, the literature review identifies male involvement in women's political advancement. Men fear possible feminisation of politics and the changes it may create in the male dominated house. However I agree with Abdela (2010) who claims that when equal partnership between both genders is established, men's domination would be exchanged for positive relationships with women. In contrast, other scholars suggest that true equality between the sexes can only be achieved if both women and men pull together to break the 'age-old belief' that women and men have different roles to play (Ballington, 2008: 5).

Another significant finding emerging from the literature is the balance between legal provisions and women's pressure groups that were launched in order to increase the number of women in parliamentary seats. For example, women not only organise themselves inside political parties by forming professional groups aimed at supporting each other, but also introduce various plans to help women to reach their political target. Furthermore, women also demand clear rules for candidate selection within political parties and the introduction of equality promotion tools in the form of quotas, which have proven successful, although branded as the 'fast track' to gender balance in politics (Dahlerup, 2005:3; Schwindt-Bayer, 2009:5). However, it could be argued that quotas have to be treated in the context of electoral systems and take into consideration the differences between left, central and right-wing parties. While left-wing parties have promoted women by using different types of equality promotion quotas, the central or more right wing parties such as the conservatives have not followed the same routes stating that they are patronising to

women (Platell, 2009; Sawyer, 2010; Peacock, 2012; Marshall, 2013). Furthermore, it could be claimed that the difference between compulsory and voluntary quotas has been proven to have a major impact on their success. Additionally, more recent arguments against equality promotion measures have undergone some criticism from scholars who argue that quotas undermine the achievement of gender balance in politics. Moreover, although affirmative action quotas have had an impact on women's representation, as seen for example in the 1997 British general Election, their overall effect on women's representation is still difficult to measure precisely. However, in opposition it could be claimed that examining countries representing contradictory electorate systems, different stages in the development of democracy, and different approaches to equality promotion might indicate the impact of short and long lasting effects of quotas.

Correspondingly this chapter has noted a relationship between countries' political structures such as the type of electoral systems and the participation of women in politics. Although past research has shown that PR electoral systems in Western Europe do not favour or smooth women's election, studies carried out over the years have indicated that these systems have significantly improved the involvement of women in parliaments. Nevertheless, differences between PR and FPTP could be short-term solutions. Some scholars claim that there is no electoral system that will level the representation of women in parliaments as every system will have certain political side-effects. Also, while there is some relationship between the electoral system and the ideology of political parties, many scholars argue that the spectrum of the party has no significance in the overall proportion of women in parliament.

Moreover, the evidence suggests that the involvement of women in politics will not reach a well-balanced stage until parties encourage women to participate in political life and help them to establish a good work-life balance.

Furthermore, major structural processes have to be taken into consideration when discussing the ideologies of political parties such as procedures of selection, promotion and election. For example, in patronage-oriented selection, the rules about the processes of selecting the candidates are less clear than in bureaucratic selection where rules such as the use of quotas guarantee the selection of women. Second, other promotion channels to get women into the parliamentary environment remain equally significant. However, the success of women candidates depends on the positions in which they are placed on the electoral list. Therefore I agree with Schmidt (2009) who calls for pressure on political parties to put women on a list with winnable seats. In opposition to the above argument, some candidates claim that the place on the list is not important, as supporters vote for the party name and not for the candidate, ignoring his/her placement on the list.

Overall, the evidence demonstrates that although the first goal was simply to 'add women in' and 'extend the boundaries' (Squires, 1999 cited in Squires, 2007: 9), this is still not the case in the 21st century. An important practical implication is that positive changes in women's representation in parliaments have not occurred due to democratic advances alone, but have been the result of 'sustained mobilisation' and 'institutional engineering' (Ballington and Karam, 2005: 26). But, the presence of women in politics is undoubtedly too weak to have a major impact and the

achievement of equal representation of women in parliaments will very likely be on the agenda until the 22nd century when parity between men and women will, at the current rate of progress, finally be achieved. Predictions based on the trend between 1945 and 2005 indicate that gender representation in parliaments among European Union countries will achieve parity in 2068 (Siemienska, 2005; UNICEF, 2007; Warowski, 2007).

The above outcomes have led to some major questions, not only about whether cultural changes in women's role in society have led to their struggle towards political leadership, but more importantly, whether equality promotion strategies are the way forward in order to increase the number of women in parliaments. Moreover, it is important to measure to what extent the use of quotas affects women's candidacy by comparing countries with established versus new democracies with different electoral systems and different approaches towards introducing equality policies. For example, various authors in the latest literature claim that contradictory findings in the field of gender inequality in politics suggest a need for re-examination of that area due to unclear links between research and the 'real world' (Krook, 2010: 886). Therefore, I am conducting a further investigation in two countries, Britain and Poland, which are similar in parliamentary gender balance, but at the same time culturally, politically and structurally different. I aim to explore the roots and foundations of gender inequality in politics in the eyes of women MPs and most importantly, how these women themselves see the way forward to improve the gender balance. What's more, it is also important to uncover what we can learn from the successes of women who are achieving the top political jobs.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

A methodology is a collection of procedures, techniques, tools, and documentation aids which will help [the researchers] in their efforts to implement a new information system. A methodology will consist of phases; they consisting of sub-phases, which will guide [the researchers] in their choice of techniques that might be appropriate at each stage of the project and also help them plan, manage, control and evaluate information. It is usually based on some philosophical view; otherwise it is merely a method, like a recipe (Avison and Fitzgerald, 1988: 166).

This 'recipe' helps researchers to achieve their plans and goals not only in creating the foundation of the research, but gaining satisfactory data for future analysis (Harman, 2005; Willig, 2001). I achieved the consistency and right balance in my research through using appropriate theoretical tools which set the base for my data collection. A variety of methods are used by researchers to assess gender inequality such as individual interviews, focus groups, surveys and photography. Each has its advantages and drawbacks. However it is important to understand that the 'methodology used to investigate gender issues must involve assertive question shifting, redefinitions of issues, sharp attention to the power of dominant values, and vigilant monitoring of how questions are asked and how research is used' (Marshall and Young, 2006: 64). I decided that the best method to adopt for this investigation was interviewing as the goal of my study was to give voice to women MPs and to hear their perceptions on how they experienced gender inequality before and during their political involvement. This process lead to identifying technical aspects of

conducting my data analysis that would illustrate my findings factually and avoid bias. To analyse my findings I decided to use practical aspects of grounded theory by gathering data into substantive and theoretical categories, eventually forming core categories. My intention was not to grow theory but to utilise grounded theory methods in a unique way. This involved adopting its practical aspects such as the creation of sub, main and core categories. I intended to use this approach within an overall practical policy orientation where my methodological choice was to take the interviewees' narratives and expose them to the reader.

However, I had to apply a more sophisticated approach to coding, as according to Glaser (2005: 17) the coding 'must emerge and not be forced'. Some scholars argue that this type of method allows the researcher to carry out research without setting any predominant concepts and analyse the data according to the researcher's sense about the subject (Mills, et al., 2006). It is also necessary to clarify here that this approach relates to the researcher who is not an expert but 'defers to the experience of the participant, who has experience with the phenomenon of study' (Milliken and Schreiber, 2001:6). Milliken and Schreiber's (2001) views, however, are contradicted by one of the founders of the theory, Barney Glaser, who argues that there is no need for grounded theory to pulverise epistemology to rationalise its practice. Additionally Glaser (2005:6,7) confirms that grounded theory is based on hidden construction, using 'a concept indicator model' to which the researcher must stay open. I would, however, argue against Glaser's approach, as in my view knowledge supported by an appropriate structural and practical framework does not have to restrict the researcher's open-mindedness to the research phenomenon.

This chapter illustrates my journey from data collection to research analysis. It starts with the introduction of the research's principles with an emphasis on social theories and explores some issues raised by cross-cultural comparative research. It emphasises the importance of various aspects that have to be acknowledged when international comparative research is conducted and suggests appropriate tools that have to be used for successful investigation in such a study. Likewise, it also explains the ethical considerations that I had to confront when collecting secondary and primary data. Next, I demonstrate the type of materials used for gathering primary information and define my qualitative and quantitative approach to secondary findings. In this part I also validate the qualitative approach in my primary data collection. Equally, I draw an attention to the use of interviews and offer examples of tools I used in the selection of suitable interviewees. I also explain the roots for classification of the data for further investigation. Further, in this chapter I expand on my approach to data analysis and justify the method I used in obtaining my results. Finally, I indicate various limitations of this study and illustrate everyday difficulties when interviewing elites. This chapter also aims to expand on difficulties with the interpretation of the findings and the accuracy of some data when the time frame was a limitation. Correspondingly, my intention is to emphasise the importance of ongoing development in this kind of study.

BACKGROUND TO RESEARCH: WHY THE HOUSE OF COMMONS AND
THE SEJM OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND?

With gender representation in British and Polish parliaments I focussed on practical debates surrounding the difficulties responsible for gender imbalance in politics. I identified women's exclusion from the parliamentary elite in both countries as well as contextualised responses of those involved in the political environment. I created some degree of openness in positioning and developing my argument which was supported by theoretical and practical considerations by developing a classification for social phenomena that I have observed during my empirical work. I positioned my study of the cultural and political aspects of British and Polish society by primarily exploring women's representation in global parliaments as a context for data on the House of Commons and the Polish Sejm. While the number of women present in British and Polish Parliaments is slowly advancing, equal gender representation in both countries is still far from being satisfactory.

The disparity in gender parliamentary imbalance in both of my chosen countries is deeply illustrative of their cultural backgrounds and cultural norms. For instance these cultural phenomena are dominated by certain aspects of each country's political establishment such as the impact of Communism in Poland on gender political involvement (Sakwa and Crouch, 1978). According to some academics, the base for feminist research is women's awareness of the differences between men and women. Feminist researchers 'interact and collaborate with people they study' and see the social world as a web of humans who are linked together (Neuman,

2000:83). In other words, in relation to political theory I illustrate in my research how MPs explain, describe and evaluate political events, political culture, political systems and the involvement of their governments. Further, when taking into consideration the feminist political theory I concentrate on the ways which gender constructs politics and the approaches whereby gender issues such as women's inequality in parliaments are constructed in decision-making. When talking about liberal democratic theory, I also explore the government's involvement in democracy and how under the principles of liberalism the government protects equal opportunities and the rights of women. Within the same context, Cole (1993: 222) argues that:

Today's society is not simply either modern or postmodern and women, especially, occupy a variety of worlds, traditional (as wives and mothers), modern (as workers and citizens) and postmodern (as consumers and participants in contemporary culture), each with its own oppressions, opportunities and politics.

I argue in this thesis that women's oppression and political opportunity in modern or postmodern society as issues of equality or rather inequality are far from being comprehensible in these simple terms. I therefore endeavour through my research to gain a deeper understanding of the lack of women's equal involvement in politics.

It is also recognised by scholars and researchers that the fundamental aspect of democracy has also played a major role in the development in parliamentary gender equality (Paxton, 1997; Donno and Russett 2004). The phenomena of democracy played another role here deciding on cross international comparison between UK and Poland correspondingly comparing an established democracy (UK) with a relatively new democracy (Poland). My comparison however, argues with Paxton

(1997) and Donno and Russett (2004) as in Poland we can clearly see the decline in women's parliamentary participation which has been directly related to the attempts made to shift the regime from authoritarian to democracy. This finding supports also a view of other scholars, who claim that gender equality is not a consequence of democratisation but a part of wider context (Inglehart et al., 2004; Beer, 2009).

Another predicting key factor for my choice of comparison was the differences in the use of equality promotion in both countries. The use of voluntary party gender quotas in the UK compared to the compulsory 35% quota in Poland helped me to describe MPs' experiences with the impact of these affirmative actions on women and illustrate their opinion about the effectiveness of such equality guarantees.

Finally, the importance of the electoral systems on gender parliamentary balance has led to my choice of comparing Poland and UK. Commonly argued by scholars the PR being more women friendly and the British FPTP electoral system where winner takes it all, provided a good comparative measure on the impact of these different systems on gender parliamentary balance in the UK and Poland.

SOME CONCERNS REGARDING CROSS INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

Cross cultural research helps researchers to develop theories due to the expanded number and range of variables it facilitates (Brislin, 1976). Yet, Black and Champion (1976) argued that the development of cross-cultural research has not advanced

significantly enough. But, over the years a considerable literature has been published regarding cross-national research, and comparison has become not only essential as a scientific research method (Altbach and Gail, 1986), but is also considered as a 'central element of disciplined inquiry or scientific investigation' (Ginsburg, 2006). Furthermore, comparative research has its roots in the nineteenth century where it was already being used by well-known sociologists such as Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber (Neil, 1976).

This theoretical background allowed me to set my goals for the comparison of my chosen countries - UK and Poland. The countries illustrate similarities and differences in their structural, political and cultural characters. According to Burnham et al. (2004:60), 'The comparative method is about observing and comparing carefully selected cases on the basis of some stimulus being absent or present'. The stimulus in my study is related to similar under-representation of women in each of my studied environments: the House of Commons and the Polish Sejm. The cases are related to similar number of MPs interviewed, in both countries from the lower chambers of the national parliaments. Another requirement in comparative research is to choose dependent and/or independent attributes (Burnham et al., 2004). In my case the dependent attributes were the percentages of women MPs in both parliaments: 29 per cent in the House of Commons and similarly 24 per cent in the Polish Sejm. The independent attributes are the different electoral systems (UK: First-Past-The-Post; Poland: Proportional Representation). The other comparative elements were the equality promotion methods used in each country, the use of voluntary party quotas such as all-women- shortlists and the A-list in the UK versus

the 35% compulsory party quota used in Poland. They also include the socio-economic and cultural factors characterising each country and different main religious cultures (UK Anglican; Poland Catholic). Further, other comparative elements also involved the political culture of each parliament through the selection, promotion and election procedures and differences in the establishment of democracy (UK: established democracy; Poland: relatively new democracy).

Various scholars argue that some norms assigned to one culture may differ from the other, which causes difficulties due to false or misleading results (Black and Champion, 1976; Brislin, 1976). In opposition some scholars illustrate that as foreign researcher seems more interesting to the participants who are willing to share more detailed opinions and to indicate their own ideas to international audience (Herod, 1999; Mullings, 1999; Sabot, 1999; Richardson, 2014). To add to that debate, Black and Champion (1976: 45) argue that 'the cross-societal comparison tends to be implicit rather than explicit, and the real burden of systematic comparison is often left to the reader'. Furthermore, Cadogan (2010:602) argues that 'the use of small numbers of countries, however, does preclude generalisations, and so theory testing is not appropriate'. According to recent studies by Franke and Richey (2010: 1278), the size of the samples should be able to produce samples that are statistically significant, and 'selecting a wide range of countries is helpful when only a few can be studied, although increasing the number of countries to be studied is generally preferable'. Therefore, I decided to choose multiple countries for my secondary data in order to become aware of how gender inequality can be understood in the wider context. Thus my choice of the two main countries I wanted to compare in my

primary research derived from the global overview of gender equality concerns across many nations. The justification for my choice to compare the UK and Poland was grounded on similarities and differences arising from the comparable numbers of women MPs in the lower chambers of both Parliaments as well as political features such as democratic approaches, electoral systems, the use of equality promotion strategies and the socio-cultural differences between the two countries.

INTERVIEWS: QUALITATIVE APPROACH TO PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

Scholars argue that the key features common to all qualitative methods can be seen when they are contrasted with quantitative approaches as most quantitative data techniques are data condensers that summarise information in order to see the big picture (Hart, 1998; Flowerdrew and Martin, 2005). However I agree for example with Newman (2006) that qualitative methods, in contrast, are best understood as data enhancers, as when data is heightened it is possible to see the key aspects more clearly. Moreover, the main strength of qualitative research is to provide quality rather than quantity and it can be associated with interpreting actions of humans in everyday life (Maanen, 1983). Furthermore, according to some scholars, qualitative data is 'rich, full, earthy, holistic, and real' (Miles cited in Maanen, 1983:116). Hence I decided to use this method to commence my study. Also, I believed that this type of research would allow the subjects to expose their feelings and behaviour which would make my data stronger than collecting the information using a quantitative

approach. However, 'qualitative researchers do not search for data that will support or disprove their hypothesis' (Burns, 2000: 390). The base for their research is an open-minded investigation of phenomena that occur within the social scientific world where the researcher is perceived as an 'instrument' for gaining information. However, although variables are difficult to measure, the information provided by human participants allows a better view on the topic and is another way of understanding and visualising social problems (Padget, 1998; Burns, 2000). This attribute complied with my approach which I have justified above, as the expertise on the researched topic was shifted from me to my participants.

I have chosen one particular approach within the qualitative method: semi-structured interviews. Interviews can be defined as interchanges of information between the researcher and the participant (Ruane, 2005). This approach had a number of attractive features:

- Interviews are useful tools for gaining information 'about lived experience and its meanings' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003: 47) and is one of the most powerful methods in which another human being can be understood (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003).
- This type of method is described as 'the ideal investigative technique' (Gray et al., 2007:55) as it allows the gathering of deep responses to questions and obtaining detailed information about personal feelings, perceptions and opinions regarding the research area.

- This method facilitates learning about the interviewee's meaning in respect of issues that can differ from the researcher's and other writers' views (Gray et al., 2007; Ruane, 2005).
- This form of data collection also allows the researcher to take control over the line of questioning (Gray et al., 2007; Ruane, 2005).
- Another advantage of this method is that the interviewee is able to ask questions back, which enables him/her to validate the importance of the research area (Gray et al., 2007; Ruane, 2005) and clarify any uncertainty.
- The researcher is also able to engender a fairer and fuller representation of the participant's perspectives on certain issues (Gray et al., 2007; Ruane, 2005).

After establishing the method I wanted to use for my study, I faced numerous questions:

1. *Who do I want to interview and how can I identify them?*
2. *What questions should I ask in order to gain significant data for my study?*
3. *How do I want to contact potential participants?*
4. *On what basis should I establish my sub and main coding categories?*
5. *What would be my 'Plan B', if the results were unclear?*

First, I constructed a map in order to identify the populations, strata and other elements of the populations. According to Hart (1998), mapping is one of the prime tools for analysis in any research. Mapping allowed me to select the type of women for the interviews and decide on the number of interviewees. Participants were

chosen by a selection process depending on the political party or political organisation they belonged to, their political experiences and their electoral position.

Interviewees were mainly assessed on:

- Political career
- Social background
- Years of experience in a parliamentary office
- Use of affirmative action quotas during the election

The methodological tool that I decided to use for this research was purposive sampling, where participants were aligned with an interest in a specific issue of the research area such as the use of quotas during their election, their experiences with the media and the length of their political experience. The strategy of sampling is very important for any researcher as, according to Ruane (2005:43), this relates to 'the process whereby we study a 'few' in order to learn about the 'many' and provides knowledge that is useful in the evaluation of the hypothesis' (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003; Ruane, 2005). Moreover, according to Richardson (2014), commonly having access to interview the elite is restricted, therefore it would be advisable to choose the participants on a purpose which is directly associated with the research area. This process involved a selection from the populations of the UK House of Commons and the Polish Sejm. The stratum in the UK referred overwhelmingly to political parties such as the Conservative Party, the Labour Party, and the Liberal Democrats. The stratum in Poland referred primarily to political

parties such as the Civic Party, the Democratic Left Alliance Party, and the Law and Justice Party.

After establishing the sample size, I designed some questions for the interviews and contacted female MPs, selectively chosen for the research. Interviewees were contacted by letters, emails, telephone calls and personal visits to a variety of conferences and events they were involved in such as 'Question Time' in the UK. All invitations to participate in my interviews were accompanied by the consent form and a briefing explaining the nature of my research. Questions mainly arose from the previous chapter, the literature review, as my secondary findings indicated some main concerns regarding gender inequality in parliaments across different nations. My interviews had semi-structured formats and questions were crafted to suit respondents. Also, the use of semi-structured interviews allowed me to gather data accordingly to the theme and facilitated gaining the interviewees' perceptions on the researched topic. The intended sample consisted of 50 participants in total: 25 from the UK and 25 from Poland. However due to restrictions on the MPs' availability, 22 women MPs were interviewed in the UK and 25 women MPs were interviewed in Poland. This discrepancy did not have any impact on the research results as the information gained from each set of interviews was similar and an additional three UK interviews could not have changed the overall character of the findings.

Questions were about the women's general views on gender equality, their views on positive action strategies and their experiences regarding work/life balance as well as experiences with the media. Also the female MPs were asked if they faced any

difficulties during their election process and how they overcame these problems. Additionally, as the study involved Polish participants, I carried out all the translation for this thesis. All interviewees were asked, prior to the interview, if they could be recorded and if their personal details could be used in data analysis. I paid special attention to the recommendations of other scholars who claim that the main advantages of semi-structured interviews are that participants can introduce new topics which can be valuable for the research as (Axinn and Pearce, 2006; Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009). An important voice in the debate on deciding on the questions which would be asked to the participants is a reflection by Berry (2002) who quotes a Professor Robert Peabody from John Hopkins University about the quality of a good interviewer. Professor Peabody argues that 'the best interviewer is not the one who writes the best questions. Rather, excellent interviewers are excellent conversationalists' (Berry, 2002: 679).

Before contacting my participants I conducted a pilot study. Pilot studies can be very valuable for the researcher in helping to identify weaknesses among questions asked to participants and can lead to greater clarity in their understanding of the questions (Burnham et al., 2004). Some academics suggest that a pilot study should be conducted with the same type of population as planned in for the main study (Burnham et al., 2004). However, in planning my main data collection I would have found this difficult since it would have involved interviewing individuals from the elite, therefore I have carried out the pilot study among other individuals with political knowledge such as my local councillors.

Another important fact when carrying out interviews is the way the researcher secures the information given by the participants. As I was carrying out many interviews which constantly could be interrupted and in two different languages, I decided to ask permission from the participants to be recorded. Nevertheless, some scholars such as Pickard (2007) argue that recording during the interview might have a negative effect as the participants can be very conscious of what they are saying and in many instances recording can make the subjects uncomfortable. I did not have any problems in this respect as MPs are already in the public eye and familiar with radio or TV interviews on a regular basis. The advantage of recording my interviews was that I did not miss any details from the conversation and could refer to the interview at any later stage for clarification.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS DURING DIFFERENT STAGES OF THE RESEARCH

With the primary data collection I foresaw that the risk to the participants in the study was low. Moreover, I felt that participants might benefit by virtue of the relevance of the research findings to their work. Interviews were carried out in locations in which the respondents and myself were comfortable, most often in their places of work, thus minimising any risks concerning issues of personal protection. The interviews were carried out in the parliamentary offices or the interviewees' constituency offices. Also, in order to protect myself, a daily schedule of research activities and locations was provided to family members prior to the interviews. I completed monthly summaries of progress which was also available to my

supervisors. Also, according to Ruane (2005:25), 'researchers clearly have an obligation to take the steps necessary to support their promises of anonymity and/or confidentiality'. Academics also argue that when anonymity is not possible to achieve in some instances, the responsibility of the researcher to protect the subject's confidentiality is very crucial (Neuman, 2000). On the other hand, Richardson (2014) indicated that in his research carried out with the political elite in Russia, none of his interviewees requested anonymity. However he also argues that is the researcher's responsibility not to put any participant at risk when reporting the research outcomes. As some issues regarding discrimination or harassment were likely to arise during my interviews, I planned in principle, if this occurred, that any information that risked identifying the participant would be excluded from the thesis. The interviewees were assured at the end of the interview about absolute confidentiality and the exclusion of particular types of information. Prior to the interviews I was clear that if the participants felt uneasy at any time during their participation, the interview would be stopped and postponed until the participant felt that it could be continued. Also the participants had the right to stop the interview at any time and continue at their convenience. I ensured that participants were informed about the research via a study briefing and they were reassured that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time. I reassured the participants that their personal data would be kept securely and confidentially during and after the research. Also, in order to minimise the risks, the interviewees were told that all the data would be anonymised, thus, instead of their real names I used pseudonyms to protect their identity. Unless the respondents requested otherwise,

all information which could identify the interviewee was to be excluded from the thesis. What's more some women MPs specifically requested to be anonymised if their quotes were used in the thesis. By promising to do this I felt that they were more open with their responses and allowed me to strive for their opinions in more depth. Furthermore, if the reader of my research feels that their responses were given from a particular perspective such as the party the respondent belonged to or based on the lengths of their political experience, I indicate that in the Appendix 5, Table 11 and Table 12.

According to many scholars, working ethically means that the researchers should go beyond the code of conduct and carry out the research in a way that avoids affecting the participants and the society (O'Neil, 1989; O'Neil and Trickett, 1982; Robson, 2002, Ruane; 2005). Also it is important for the researcher to 'anticipate likely outcomes and to take steps that would mitigate the harm and maximize the benefits that might accrue to participants' (Ruane, 2005: 19). Therefore I carried out the research under the strict guidance of the University of Liverpool and the Ethics Committee's policies and with full ethical sensitivity. However, the fact that my participants as politicians were already in a public eye helped me to carry on with the data collection quite freely and openly.

Pickard (2007) suggests that transcription of the interview should be carried out as soon as possible after the interview. I would argue against this statement as due to time considerations, especially when travelling abroad, the researcher may have to interview as many participants as he/she is able in order to avoid unnecessary expenses. In my case, after all my interviews were successfully completed, I started the process of transcription and data analysis. I transcribed all interviews accordingly to the model illustrated by King and Horrocks (2010:145-146). This process of data analysis is described by Bryman (2004:401) as 'the key process in grounded theory, whereby data are broken down into component parts, which are given names'. After creating separate tables for each interview, I established sub- categories and main categories, accordingly to the matrix model in Fairclough (2003:133-141). First, I reviewed all the transcripts and abstracted and highlighted all material related to my research questions within the transcribed text and wrote a brief description of each item. I analysed and organised the findings according to the indicators which potentially would be relevant for the creation of the categories. At this point I endeavoured to use a traditional 'manual' approach to categorising my data (in contrast to using software such as NVivo) by cutting out each fragment of the interview which was relevant to my research and then laying them all on my table, floor and even placing them on the wall. This was a lengthy process and required the use a large space in my office due to handling such a large amount of data. Second, I broke down my collected data into individual fragments in order to group them into

particular concepts. Then I clustered similar items together, followed by coding them into sub-categories and categories. Third, I grouped them together into master categories, to which I gave short names and added brief descriptions of the preliminary findings. (Please refer to Pictures 3, 4 and 5 in Appendix 1 to visualise the process of creating categories.) A sample of my categorization from one of the interviews is provided in Appendix 2 in table 4 and table 5. What is more, I structured the data analysis chapters by organising them around the key issues that the participants gave me without any pre-analysis. My intention was to illustrate their responses using their own voices by exposing their narratives. Also, a reason for taking this approach was that I intended to address the main difficulties from the MPs' perspectives and indicate how similar and how different were views of the British women MPs when compared to the Polish women MPs.

At the data analysis stage I returned to the literature review and projected documents and any available data sets regarding parliamentary gender equality so that I could construct recommendations for measures which could promote a more equal political gender balance.

LIMITATIONS OF THE METHODOLOGY CHOSEN FOR THIS RESEARCH

In this investigation there were several potential sources of error. One difficulty during my secondary data collection was that I had to make sure that the translation

of publications written in another language was accurate and understandable for the English reader. It was a very lengthy process and I had to be aware of the fact that any publication which I accessed when travelling abroad would not be easy to retrieve due to the high cost of travelling. Therefore, the correctness of the themes within the publication and its references had to be precise as otherwise this could result in a costly trip back to the country of origin in order to clarify any uncertainty.

When assessing the validity of interviews, I had to be aware that the participants could deliver a dominant discourse in their responses. If this was the case, I was prepared to ask them for clarification of their thoughts in different words so that they could engage with me beyond the standards of current debates. Conversely, some scholars claim that semi-structured interviews allow the researcher unintentionally to lead the participant to provide a specific response (Haralambos and Holborn, 2008). In addition, some scholars criticise interviews as 'unnatural social situations' and argue that 'the context affects the behaviour of interviewees', thus making the data scientifically invalid (Hammersley, 2003). In order to avoid bias, I designed my questions very carefully, and as mentioned above, I conducted a pilot study with other individuals before my first formal interview. This allowed me to correct any questions which could potentially influence the participants' responses. Another poignant pitfall in the area of data collection was the difficulty with the accuracy of translating data. As Richardson (2014: 180) argues that conducting a research in a foreign language could be 'challenging, daunting and confusing' for the researcher. Many Polish interviewees used casual language in their speech, which was not easy

to understand by foreign speakers if translated literally. Their opinions had to be interpreted very carefully to avoid risk of any misrepresentation of their thoughts.

One of the disadvantages of personal interviews is also the high cost of travel expenses (Miller and Salkind, 2002; Mikecz, 2012). Also within this context some other limitations of comparative research relate to the number of cases the researcher is able to address (Burnham et al., 2004). As illustrated before, I decided to aim to interview 25 women MPs from each country, acknowledging that I could face some difficulties in gaining access to so many very busy individuals.

Another limitation of this study was the sampling used for this research. Due to the restriction on time and expenses I only adopted single key informants, as the interviews were carried among women MPs who are currently in the office. I have to acknowledge that information received from other groups such as men MPs and former men and women MPs could provide other views on political gender equality and in consequence, I was tempted to use the other groups of participants. However, I made a judgement to stand by my first choice in order to avoid the collection of dyadic data. Nevertheless, I have to acknowledge this as a limitation to this research. At last I need to mention that in both parliaments there is an evident party skew and the sample was not representative of women MPs as a group. This particular limitation was again due to the difficulties with the accessibility of interviewing the elite.

I was aware that my elite interviewing could be a lengthy and difficult process as their very busy lifestyles do not allow them to be involved with students and researchers. The elite interviewing technique is used commonly by political scientists on a regular basis (Berry, 2002; Kezar, 2003; Burnham et al., 2004; Richardson, 2014). Clifford (ny) and Mikecz (2012) claim that interviewing elites can be very valuable, as the source of information gained provides rich data for research. This thesis is a prime example of the richness of the information that women MPs provided during each interview and the importance that they attached to each topic. What is more, the opportunity to speak to those most involved in experiencing gender inequality in the UK and Polish parliaments allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the formal and informal rules that perpetuate gender political imbalance. However, the process of gaining access to those in power posed many challenges, yet to be recognised by other researchers.

Some scholars suggest that samples for qualitative research should be based on the merit of knowledge and expertise of the interviewees within the research context (Burnham et al., 2004). I felt that the elite groups of women MPs were the best samples for my research, as they would have first-hand experience of gender inequality based on their own journeys to parliamentary positions. Equally in my view, they had the best expertise in gender balance within the lower houses of the parliaments. Nevertheless, I had to constantly remembered the advice given by Berry

(2002: 680), who urged that 'interviewers must always keep in mind that it is not the obligation of a subject to be objective and to tell us the truth', therefore the researcher should not take everything at the 'face value' (Mikecz, 2012:483). However I also felt that once some of the MP decided to be interviewed, they tried to help with my research by giving considerably wide answers to my questions. Scholars also drew their attention to the difficulty that an interviewee wanders in their discussion of the research topic. What's more, on many occasions the elite may try to dominate the interview and change the researcher's view on the topic (Mikecz, 2012). Clifford (ny: 3) suggests that it is advisable to give the respondent room to 'wander in their discussion' while at the same time being ready to politely divert their conversation back to the topic being discussed as a response to each particular question. I was aware that fading off a topic might occur frequently as the MPs' personal achievements were so important to them that they liked to share these on a regular basis. Nevertheless my personal skills that I had learnt as a councillor and as a researcher, allowed me to bring each discussion back to the investigated topic.

Showing knowledge about the participants' background and personal interests has also proven to be valuable in what Clifford (ny: 3) describes as establishing 'comfort and rapport' with the interviewee. Moreover, feminist researchers believe that rapport leads to trust, which is a fundamental process in allowing the participant to open up during the interview (Kezar, 2003). Some scholars also assume that the knowledge of biographical background of the interviewee helps the researcher to verify points or statements immediately (Davies, 2001; Lilleker, 2003; Ho, 2008; Richardson, 2014). For each participant I prepared a separate sheet verifying their

educational level, their length of experience as a politician and in the parliamentary office, whether they were elected using an equality promotion strategy and their areas of political interest. I also established their personal characteristics such as marital status, number of children if any and their personal interests. This information helped me on many occasions to create a responsive atmosphere at the beginning of the interview, especially when talking about their personal interests. Moreover, on many occasions their pursuits corresponded with my private experiences and activities which helped me to present myself as a real expert in these fields. I found this really helpful in obtaining more personal, lengthy and more detailed responses to my research questions and willingness to extend the interview if necessary beyond the time originally allocated. Knowledge of their personal interests and again my position as a councillor also allowed me to overcome power relation barriers due to being 'one of the insiders'. Another essential element regarding the researcher's knowledge when interviewing politicians is the comprehension of information about the political affairs taking place during the time of the research. In many instances political changes affect the response of the interviewee as according to Richardson (2014: 184) 'a sudden shift in the contemporary political context can have consequences what is appropriate to discuss and what is not'; however in my case this phenomenon did not occur.

Some scholars argue that one of the advantages of face to face interviewing is that people are willing to cooperate, therefore the response rate in seeking this type of data is relatively high (Miller and Salkind, 2002; Clifford, ny). They also indicate that personal face to face interview provides more detailed responses (Miller and Salkind,

2002; Clifford, ny). I would argue with that statement as from my experience, when I carried out a few telephone interviews, I felt that the MPs were happy to contribute more time towards the interview, as usually they were carried out in the evenings or on their train journey to the Parliament. Another advantage of personal interviews is that 'the length of the interview does not affect refusal rates' (Miller and Salkind, 2002:311). However again I would argue with Miller and Salkind (2002), as in my case the cooperation was very restricted and it was also difficult to convince MPs that the limited time devoted could be valuably used for this study. Therefore, I had to use some very convincing arguments to get their attention and approval to carry out my interviews. The main convincing argument was the fact that I had been working in politics for over six years as a parish councillor. My personal position as a politician convinced the MPs that my research topic would not be deserted at the end of the study and would be used for further investigation and to formulate recommendations for policymakers. Evidence that my approach was convincing is that I have subsequently been approached by MPs from both countries to provide a hard copy of my thesis for their parliaments' libraries.

The step from asking the MPs to agreeing on the interview was also very lengthy. For example there are already some examples of research carried out with Russian politicians, where the researcher was required to make between 15 and 20 phone calls to secure an interview (Rivera et al., 2002; Roberts, 2013). I would agree that in order to facilitate an interview with the politician, the communication with their secretaries, representatives and other individuals involved with their diary arrangements is a lengthy process based on many communicational reiterations. I

had to contact the MPs by post to both of their offices (the constituency office and the parliamentary office) and personal email followed by telephone conversations with their representatives. Eventually, in order to achieve 25 interviews in each country I sent 286 letters addressed to women MPs in the UK and 224 letters addressed to Polish women MPs. The letters were sent to their parliamentary offices and an equal number was sent to their constituency offices. Then, I followed up with 510 emails and after receiving their potential interest in my research, I followed up with further emails and 90 phone calls from which I secured 22 interviews in the UK and 25 interviews in Poland. Each letter consisted of a brief description of the study, information about participants' rights to confidentiality and a list of some proposed questions. It was also important to include an original logo of the university on the envelope or introductory letter. This approach was also suggested by Richardson (2014), who illustrated that for example in research carried out in Russia, the value of an original university's stamp over a signature were often more important than the actual signature. To the contrary, Roberts (2013) and Richardson (2014) argue that approaching politicians through their secretaries and assistants has been proven to be time wasting, as all communication (letters, emails, faxes) is usually lost and phone messages which were left for potential participants, were not passed on. Both researchers suggested that a better way to gain access to political elites is to be recommended by academics, who were engaged with the participant before through their own research. And again, I would disagree with the above suggestion, as in my case letters, emails and phone arrangements were proven very successful and I managed to secure planned interviews. On the other hand I agree with Clifford (ny)

suggesting not to be afraid to use interviewees to gain access to other individuals. I feel that this recommendation is measurable in theory and practice as from my experiences when interviewing the MPs in Poland, the first participant helped me to secure another eleven interviews. It was a big time and expense saving as they were arranged either in the parliamentary corridor or in one of the offices of political party she belonged to. This approach however did not shadow the British MPs' views, who showed no interest in helping to gain access to their political colleagues.

Nevertheless at that point this journey from securing the interviews to carrying them out was equally difficult. Firstly, it was common for participants from the UK to cancel the interview at the last minute. To reschedule these interviews was complex due to lengthy travel and reliance on hotel facilities to accommodate my stay. And again, I found how difficult it was to convince the MPs to meet me at the originally set place and time, or to reschedule within the time when I was still at their location. And, in some instances, I realised that the participant agreed to the interview without of any intention to be available. According to scholars, this is also a common behaviour among political elite (Rivera et al., 2002; Roberts, 2013; Richardson, 2014). In this case after several changes in dates, I decided to move away from that potential interview and try to secure an interview with another MP. The most likely arguments used by the MPs were an attendance at some important events, extensive parliamentary obligations and lack of time due to travel between the parliament and the constituency.

Additionally, Clifford (ny) in his tip sheet for interviewing the elites suggests to be official and give the interviewee plenty of time when requesting their time for an interview. On the other hand Clifford (ny: 1) suggests that elite interviewees do not like to suggest a fixed time for the meeting and prefer for the interviewer to 'drop in'. I would argue against that statement as from my experience my participants' limited time would not allowed me to carry out any interviews without the setting of a precise date and time for the meeting. Also a second difficulty was to keep the time of the interview on schedule and within the planned time limit in order to be able to be on time for my next interview. This was not very easy as on many occasions the MP was interrupted and had to respond to other requirements or simply drifted off the subject, extending the time of the interview before she managed to respond to my questions. This was the more stressful in my experience, because being late for the next interview was not acceptable due to MPs extremely limited time and it would most likely result in the cancelation of the interview without any possibilities to re-schedule. It was very important to remember to confirm each interview one day before, as on many occasions the interview had been rescheduled with the MP's assistant intending to inform me about the changes only on the day of the meeting.

When talking about the technical aspects of interviewing, scholars also suggest the recording of each interview (Richardson, 2014). For example Clifford (ny) emphasises that recording the participants responses minimises the risk of losing information gained from the participants, but at the same time it might made the respondent feeling uneasy and uncomfortable. I would argue here with Clifford (ny) as elites are usually already in the public eye and are used to being recorded. As Richardson

(2014: 185) indicates, the willingness of the politicians to be recorded comes from the 'comfort in speaking in front of the media'. In my experience, all MPs which I interviewed had no objection to be recorded and if they mentioned any issues which they wished to be off the record, they requested not to use these in my written work. I would also add in here that it is very important to remember to prepare and try the Dictaphone prior to each interview, including having spare batteries. I have experienced a pitfall where batteries had run out on my recorder just before my next interview; luckily I had a backup in notepad and a pen. However again, I would argue with scholars suggesting that even when the interviewer is recording, she/he should take additional notes at the same time, as in my experience my interviewee stopped responding to a question and waited for me to finish writing. Sometimes this resulted in loss of the fluency of the conversation.

Finally I address an issue that I have tackled on in the ethical section of the thesis: anonymity. Some MPs told me that their answers were more open as they trust me as a researcher that I would not use their real name throughout the thesis. In some instances I experienced their concerns after being told some controversial statements, when they asked: 'no one would know that I said that?' or 'keep this off the record please'. Therefore all names used in this thesis are anonymised.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have explained the epistemological status to my research and I indicated the methodological and theoretical approach to this study. I also illustrated my choice of the key informants I have chosen for my data collection. After delivering some background to my research, I have identified the qualitative approaches used in this project and explained the importance of cross-national comparative research. I have given the reasons for comparing the United Kingdom and Poland by establishing the similarities and differences between these two countries. These included the similar number of women MPs in lower chambers in both parliament and comparable number of general elections. The differences in the chosen countries were attributed to factors such cultural differences, diverse advancements in democracy, divergent electoral processes and contrary use of equality guarantees.

With the reference to the framework of this research I have highlighted my qualitative approach to the data collection and I have explained the pros and cons of interviewing the elite. I have identified the semi-structured approach which helped me to establish the key topics for these interviews. Correspondingly I explained the sampling procedures and the design of my questions which I asked during the interviews. I illustrated my approach to the pilot study and I have stressed the difficulty of obtaining the number of interviewees. Within this context I explained why I have used lesser number of interviews in the UK than I originally planned and justified why I have not used multiple key informants.

Following this I gave a brief description of my approach to data analysis by explaining the use of grounded theory approach to create sub-categories, categories and main categories. The rationale for each category is expounded in more depth in the next chapter. Additionally, I illustrate that the ethical issues were promptly followed up during different stages of the study and I indicated some challenges I faced within that sphere. I have also identified limitations of the methodology used in this research and recognised limitations inherent in a cross-national project. Within this context I have given examples of the difficulty of translating and transcribing my data and illustrated the problems which I had to address in order to secure my interviews. Also I acknowledged that using single key informants is a limitation to this study. Lastly, I illuminated in this chapter the difficulties arising from conducting interviews with the political elite with emphasis on practical directions for carrying out such interviews by other researchers.

CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS EMERGING FROM INTERVIEWS WITH BRITISH WOMEN MPS

INTRODUCTION

As women parliamentarians, we need to share our experiences. This in itself will inspire women. We will not feel that we are alone in this game, and other women will not feel isolated from the process. At every opportunity, at every forum, each and every time we must share information, ideas, and knowledge. We must make sure that women are the most informed people within society (Georgina Dongo, former MP, Zimbabwe cited in Shedova, 2005:38)

My intention in this chapter is to illustrate opinions of British women MPs on the absent image of the female in the House of Commons. Referring to political representation where one gender group is suppressed by the other sex, masculine and feminine behaviours play a significant role in the overall of the picture of gender equality in the national parliament. From the interviews carried out among British women MPs, some recurrent factors emerged and some of the matters were so important that some women MPs referred to these issues on numerous occasions (please refer to Tables 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 in the Appendix 3). Below I discuss these topics arising from the interviews and give examples of some thoughts that the participants shared with me.

Firstly I illustrate the reluctance of women to join the political arena due to their lack of interest in politics, their unwillingness to come forward and lack of suitable

candidates for the parliamentary position. Within the same context I also demonstrate some differences between men and women and illuminate women parliamentarians' coping techniques to survive the pressure of being a woman and an MP. Then I shift my attention to family issues and exemplify the participant's concerns that family responsibilities play a significant role in their management to establish life/work balance. I also illustrate their view on how important it is to have family members who support them in their career. Moreover, social changes and social help have also been dealt with in this section. The next part of the chapter gives a particular access to the women MPs overview on cultural barriers including media involvement in restricting women to be equally represented in the House of Commons. Some progress in gender equality is also illustrated here. Furthermore, the exploration of the masculine atmosphere in the House and the disadvantages of the British electoral system is equally presented as the participants' concerns, when talking about gender inequality in the parliament. Correspondingly, I also endeavour to gain deeper understanding of positive actions which were introduced in order to help women to become parliamentarians. Within the context of the structural pros and cons I also present the MPs' view on the weaknesses of the electoral processes. I additionally explored the ways the interviewees suggest to improve on gender equality. Concerns such as education of the candidates, and the importance of them having political experiences were expressed very strongly by some women MPs, together with the importance of women's collective work. And surprisingly I illustrate a view indicated by a few women MPs who claim that there are no barriers to women's political advancement.

Reluctance

The main idea behind the category that I have named reluctance is to demonstrate the view of my participants on females' perception of a political career path. When examining the absence of women in politics, academics interlinked women's absence in parliament with political motivation of women and their unwillingness to come forward (Bochel and Denver, 1983; Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Luhiste, 2012). Similar arguments have been raised by other scholars who state that although political parties are willing to select more women, but there are not enough women coming forward (Sanbonmatsu; 2006; Evans, 2011b). Similarly, the most common cause of women's under-representation in politics which emerged from the interviews was that **women do not come forward** to position themselves as political candidates. Various reasons for this were widely expressed by the participants. One of their concerns was that women did not apply for political jobs and their rejection to this opportunity was a big worry to Georgina: '...when you look at the number of people who applied to become Conservative candidates, 25 per cent of them were women, so is it any surprise that we only have one in four?' The same participant followed up her concerns repetitively specifying: 'But it's very hard to tackle [gender inequality] particularly when only 25 per cent of the people applying to become Conservative MPs are women'. It is evident that women's fear of entering the political arena has created a setback for gender balance in the British Parliament 'because many people don't even put themselves forward' (Samantha). This

argument could be extended by claiming that 'it would be good if we genuinely want to see that pipeline of women coming through to put themselves forward for elected office' (Samantha). These opinions link with another argument for a future debate on the willingness of women to participate in political life and the use of some corrective measures to help their entry into the British Parliament: '[The Labour Party] tried to have all-women shortlists, but they didn't get the candidates coming forward' (Diane). However, I would like to clarify that this was not the reason, why the Labour Party had to abandon this type of equality promotion. As indicated in my first chapter all-women-shortlists was considered as discriminative towards men and was overruled by the High Court resulting in forcing the Labour Party to exclude this policy from future elections. Nevertheless, the above example given by Diane indicates that even with this additional encouragement, women still resist being involved in politics. This is because, '...women don't see it as a career, so it's harder for them to think of it as a career for them' (Rebekah).

This led to some questions on possible ways to encourage women to come forward and assure them that their professional and organisational capability would be sufficient. To tackle the difficulty of women's unwillingness to join the political arena, some participants suggested that what 'the Labour Party should be doing, or all political parties, is embedding itself and showing from a young age, that this is a potential career strand for people, otherwise you are not going to get women to come forward' (Janet) and 'we need to be encouraging people to come forward, and when they come forward, we need to support them, because it's a very lonely job' (Rebekah). Janet goes even further by linking women's resistance to enter politics

with the struggle to achieve a reasonable work/life balance: 'women don't apply because they look at how difficult it is for women to combine being a Member of Parliament with family'. However some authors argue that women's under-representation for example in the British Parliament does not reflect on their reluctance to be involved in politics (Allen and Dean, 2008). In opposition scholars such as Borgue and Grossholts (1984) suggest that women's participation in politics is equally active, but has different style. Thus although the above opinions are rich and well balanced, one of the participants strongly argued that:

Individually as a woman, I don't think there's anything stopping them now, other than themselves. It really is no good, absolutely no good, to say, we are being kept out of places. We are kept out of places because we don't wish to kick those doors open (Nicky).

This opinion illustrates that some women MPs have the ability to normalise women's under-representation in the British Parliament by employing the argument that the political arena is open to anyone. To complement the above claims, a wide body of research on the lack of female presence in parliaments concentrates on **women's fear** of entering the political environment. This was a concern of my participants and was a factor raised during my interviews.

Well, the old story about if a woman's got 90 per cent of what's needed for a job, she doesn't think she's quite good enough, women had to work very hard to persuade me, that I was good enough to stand as an MP (Katie).

The issue of apprehension has a close connection with women's political backgrounds and their worry about coping within the male dominated arena. Diane shared the same view and admitted that 'my assumption was because I was a

woman, because I wasn't from a political dynasty, that I would never become an MP, so I never even considered'. Discussion of confidence in women's abilities to enter the 'old boys club' (Childs, et al., 2005:68) has had a profound effect on the number of women in the British Parliament. The fear of male domination was expressed during the interviews where one participant 'just didn't feel that [she] would be comfortable in a male dominated environment' (Janet).

While participants emphasised the link between women's reluctance to put their names forward as political candidates and their fear of entering British politics, other participants queried the motives of some women MPs and expressed the issue of **lack of suitable women** for the political position. For example Nicky considered that 'some women will say, 'oh I am just used for window dressing. I'm just here to look glamorous, and they appear in fashion magazines'. However in contrast she also admitted that, 'my measure of equality is not the 50/50, it's when there are as many useless women as there are useless men'. Nevertheless, there is still the issue that 'at the moment, we haven't got an equal playing field because we haven't got the young women thinking that they can go into politics' (Diane) as 'women by and large aren't interested in, or few of them are interested in power' (Nicky).

The above predicaments led to some questions about other aspects of gender inequality in the House of Commons. Thus some questions which I asked to the participants developed my second category which I have named male/ female characteristics. The issues of femininity and masculinity were raised by some participants throughout the interviews.

Male/female characteristics

The differences and similarities between men and women regarding their cultural behaviour and patterns ingrained through socialisation set up an interesting base for discussion about the impact of personality on their behaviour on fighting for a position of power. Although some feminists and sociologists would undermine the connection between 'genes, hormones, instincts, physique and behaviour pattern' claiming that this phenomena has never been verified (Bradley, 1989:30) but my participants felt otherwise. According to them there are several possible explanations for this outcome: the nature of men, their fight to reach a position of power contrasted with women's personality, their emotional and practical abilities, and capabilities to work collectively to achieve their outcomes. Some participants expressed their belief that:

[Women] are not the same as men; we do have a different approach. Women find it very, very easy to work with people they don't like, to achieve a solution to a problem and then move on. Men find that very, very difficult' (Michelle).

'I think that [women] naturally have better listening skills' (Georgina). 'I think that women are naturally very good communicators' (Diane). Furthermore, their responses to a question on gender balance in politics indicated that:

Women work collectively, and they work with other people, and they work as part of a team, whereas men, see themselves as natural leaders, so it's easier for them to push themselves forward in politics than it is for women(Rebekah).

However, some participants also stressed the aggression in men's nature, the need for women to develop a thick skin or even to develop masculinity in their behaviour in order to survive the political race. Even the literature dealing with political masculinity reports that in order to survive in the male dominated environment, women in politics had to be masculine and feminine at the same time (du Vall, 2009). When seeking for example, the views of the interviewees on men's nature, Katie stated that: 'if a man got 20 per cent, he thinks he's over qualified'. To add to this assumption, Patsy and Katie also argued that 'men who are not remotely qualified, will say: I can do that!' (Patsy) and 'the boys are just focussed on the career' (Katie). The above quotes indicate that my participants paid special attention to men's behaviour when discussing their gender difficulty in entering the political elites. Furthermore, they expressed the belief that some men's responses when given tasks differed significantly from women's actions.

And you know there are differences, I noticed for example when we do telephone canvassing, all the way through there are some kind of gender responses, so you know you probably ring and say, 'What do you think about universal benefits?' and a typically woman's response, would be, 'Well, I don't think I know enough about that to have an opinion.' And you say, 'Would you like some more information?' and they'll say, 'Yes, I really do.' The men will go and give you a 15 minute rant on universal benefits, and then you say, 'Do you want me to send you information?' Even when they are wrong (Nicky).

However, while Nicky linked the contrasting responses of men and women, when the subject was asked to clarify her response, she added that 'Women probably have a tendency to say 'I deal with it' (Nicky). However, there is a common understanding that women's nature is to resolve a problem rather than talk about it: 'someone once

said that 'In meetings, men make a speech, but women make a point' so woman will stand up if she's actually got something to say, whereas men will stand up because they just want to talk' (Rebekah). This argument however, could be undermined when looking at the candidate election processes. I position my claim on studies of scholars such as Dave (2011) who questions the ability of women parliamentarians to help other women MPs. Also other scholars claim that the 'harsher and crueller' personalities of women politicians discourage other females from cooperating with each other (Vallance, 1979; Ross, 2002:43; Pankow and Post, 2010).

Another powerful predictor which links the differences and similarities between men and women with the behaviour of individuals is **developing masculinities** by women politicians. This particular phenomenon opens a debate on the challenges that women face when in a position of power and their coping techniques to survive, what scholars refer to as the cruel parliamentary environment (Childs et al., 2005). Some relationship between developing a skill to survive and masculinising women's behaviour where '[women have to] grow a very thick skin (Georgina) was noted by some participants, who also argued that prior to becoming a woman MP 'you have to have a pretty thick skin' (Annabel). It became evident that the ability to survive the difficulty of joining the 'old boys club' (Childs *et al.*, 2005:68) still surprised some participants:

I mean, it's really shocked me the lack of etiquette, you know people will shout their points across and/ or be very dominant in their body language, and all that stuff. So I think all of this makes not attractive to women to engage in. Or you have to turn into a man (Diane).

In contrast, surprisingly, some unanticipated findings were recorded during my interviews and I discovered that some participants sensed that there was no need for a change in women's personalities. Moreover, they felt that their gender helped them in their political careers. 'I'd say don't be afraid to be a woman, use it to your advantage, but what a lot of women do, is go into politics and try to be like the men' (Rebekah). Also the way to success in politics was indicated by Rebekah who claimed that: 'you've just got to try to show that there are different ways, you don't have to be like a man to be successful in politics'. An even stronger opinion was expressed by Katie and Diane:

Flipping right! You know, we are women, we don't have to dress like the men, we don't have to behave like the men, if the press think there is something amazing about that one, they'll just have to get over it, won't they, you know? (Katie)

and 'you don't have to follow the male approach, and when I see women doing that, I find this distasteful and unnecessary.' (Diane). These masculine changes in women politicians' behaviour were a concern to other MPs who argued that developing masculine behaviour was

Not going to help us, because we want to try to change the culture, we don't want men and women who are like men, we want women, so I'd think do it your way, don't try and mimic the way men do it, do it differently (Rebekah).

I paid special attention to my participants' common views on similarities and differences within each gender and how they affect the way women feel about a political career. I also expressed interest in the methods women used to cope with

the masculine environment and how other women perceived the behavioural changes of some MPs when dealing with the culture of the Commons. Surprisingly their divergent views were not explained by the length of their work in the House neither by the orientation of the party they belonged to. However it was important to question whether there were other things that affected women's willingness to become MPs. Thus my next category links the above aspects with another powerful factor which is family and the issue of work/life balance.

FAMILY

Work/life balance

A wide body of research on gender imbalance in the British Parliament concentrates on the impact of the family on women politicians and their difficulty in interlinking work and personal life. The issue of work/family balance and the **family responsibilities** was widely discussed during my interviews and it emerged as one of the most powerful factors when exploring the under-representation of women in the House of Commons. Issues such as family responsibilities, family support, social help and social changes have had profound effects on the number of women in the British Parliament. Because of the long parliamentary working hours, where some of the late parliamentary sittings in the House of Commons are carried out through the night Susan felt that 'the job is just not family friendly'. This is due to the fact that 'It has a huge impact on family life, and you must deal with that right from the start'

(Lydia) and 'There is no work-life balance. There is only work' (Lydia). Furthermore, my participants felt 'that women politicians have a much greater difficulty in balancing domestic life, which men should feel as well, but don't seem to' (Alison) so

If they [women] are more likely to be looking after them [family], that means the women will have less time to dedicate to being involved in local community activism and work, which means they are less likely to get involved with politics (Alison).

Some participants expressed a respect for the MPs who tried to link family life and their parliamentary work:

I think it's really hard. I've not been in that situation myself, but I think I really admire MPs who are balancing family commitments and their political life. I think, I also completely admire their families, because I think they take a lot of the pressure. If there's a partner at home, with, looking after the children I think that they absorb a lot of isolation, a lot of the family challenges on their own, you know, to all intents and purposes, they are practically lone parents for half of the week, and I think it's hard for families and politicians. Politics is a very full on job (Samantha).

'I admire greatly men and women with families who are able to manage those commitments' (Debbie). 'I have to say, I really admire those with younger children because I have no idea how they manage it' (Georgina). The strain of the responsibilities came as a surprise to some women MPs who admitted that they 'hadn't realised that it was quite so difficult for women, and so difficult for family life' (Janet) and she admitted that 'if I'd known it was going to be so difficult for the family probably I wouldn't have done it' (Janet). One participant was particularly specific on the time schedule when carrying out duties as an MP stating that:

The whole rhythm of parliament is incredibly difficult for women, because I now have to be down in London 3 days a week, for incredibly long days, and when I'm up here, I'm usually working evenings and I'm usually working weekends. And I'm single, and I don't have children, and that's the only reason I can do the hours (Diane).

She illustrated the point more clearly by linking the working hours with her family duties:

Then other things, like I'd be out for 18 hour days, but I'd still have to go home, and there was no consideration that I needed to do washing. I mean fortunately I don't have children, but if you had children, you would still be expected to work the 18 hour day and there was no awareness that I would have to go home and cook for myself, clean and get shopping and none of that was even factored in (Diane).

However not all participants had to face this type of difficulty, due to not having children or having their children already fully grown: 'No, [I did not experience difficulties] but then my children were more or less grown by that stage.' (Katie); 'My children were grown up when I came in, so the problem did not arise' (Susan). Additionally, the overall majority of my participants felt 'that also it's easier for women with no children' (Georgina) and 'If you are to look, and I'm sorry to keep pointing this out, but if you look at the women who were elected in 2010, quite a significant number of them have no children at all' (Georgina). This opinion also combined with the latest research carried out by Dr Rosie Campbell and Professor Sarah Childs. According to their 2012 research paper, 45 per cent of British women MPs were childless, compared to 28 per cent of men (Campbell and Childs, 2014; Ridge, 2014). Further, according to the 2012 global research on gender equality, nearly 20 per cent of women in legislative bodies have no children compared to 16

per cent of men (Rosenbluth et al., 2015). Overall, participants with no children or fully grown children were genuinely sympathetic: 'I feel for people who have got especially young families; when they are little you can't really explain to them why mummy and daddy aren't there' (Patsy) and had a high regards for younger colleagues: 'quite honestly, I've huge admiration for my younger colleagues, who have gone on to have babies while working as MPs. How they cope, I don't know' (Lydia).

To add to the above debate I have to refer back to my discussion about the political careers for women and its impact on their life. Even when talking about family life/balance my participants still argued that 'if you've got children, I just don't see how you could look at it as a viable career' (Diane) and specified that it is 'Very hard for women to get into politics. Particularly hard for women with children. I think a lot of people think that it's difficult or not right for a woman with children to do the job' (Janet). This is because

You've got to persevere, so it's a very difficult profession, and one for which you need a lot of stamina and to be prepared to make sacrifices. I mean you are not going to be able to do everything that you would like to do as a female for your family if you are going to be a politician (Janet).

Additionally, one participant linked this dilemma to the differences between men and women which I have discussed in the previous section:

There's some structural disadvantages to women, they take time off to go and have babies, some will take longer off than others, that kind of caring, family responsibility is not equally shared between men and women, so the women can sometimes pay quite a heavy price in terms of their own careers, in order to have children, in a way that very often men don't (Rosie).

My participants were expressing their views on the unsuitability of a political career when correlated with family/life balance, where being a 'women in particular because they are more likely to care and take responsibilities of either a child, or elderly parents' (Alison). This matter was illustrated even further:

Well, obviously, being an MP can be quite hard in terms of the very long hours and anti-social hours, and if your constituency is some way from London, then you can't go home every night. But if we lived in an equal society then it should affect men who have a family as much as women who have a family. But we don't live in an equal society, women still take on the family duties, the family role, men don't (Rosie).

At that point it was apparent that you have to get beyond the responsibility which woman politicians have towards their families and bridge these issues with the obligations towards the party. The value of this responsibility was expressed by Katie who felt that 'I think you've got to balance your own sense of guilt as well, because we feel we've got a responsibility to our family, to our children, but we've also got a responsibility to our party'.

In the response to my question on family issues, some other aspects of the family/life balance emerged. Some respondents discussed the family responsibilities of men asking 'Why is that a question for women politicians? It's not a question that was ever asked of a male MP' (Michelle). In respond to this question, Nicky revealed that 'yeah, but I think these days, family life balance is tough for everyone, not just for the women, it's the same for the men' Rebekah went even further by claiming that:

Don't think it's just that, I think people say that women don't want to go into politics because it doesn't fit the family life, whereas all the men I know in politics have got families and this didn't stop them. I don't think it's a very

family friendly environment, but then it doesn't stop men who are fathers, becoming politically active, so I don't see why it should, should affect women

The combination of family responsibilities and the difficulties in successfully bridging them with the work demands has led to questions about how to make the political entrance much more approachable for women. Thus the findings in the next section illustrate the importance of support that women MPs obtained from their families and possible consequences if the help was not there. **Family support**, when deciding on a political career, was on the agenda during the interviews with British women MPs. Many findings within the issue of family support also supports a global study 2012 on gender equality which illustrate that more women than men have been encouraged by their families to run for the election. In contrast 14.9 per cent of men compared to 7.5 per cent of women experienced family resistance when deciding on becoming an MP (Rosenbluth et al., 2015). Agreement between all family members on a woman becoming a politician was an essential step in a British women MP's career.

And I always say, that [political career] it's something for you to discuss with your family, don't enter this unless your family absolutely accept the amount of time, money and commitments that you are going to need to put in place (Lydia).

It became apparent that support of the family was inevitable when taking into account long working hours and extensive travelling. As one of the participants exemplified: 'you need a very supportive husband, because it's not a job, it's a way of life' (Janet). This issue emerged from the interviewees on numerous occasions.

The main idea behind the duty as woman MP 'it depends on how well you engage your partner about your family responsibilities' (Annabel) and not only 'you've got to be very determined' (Alison) but most importantly 'also you need a very supportive family' (Rebekah). One of the participants shared her experience said that 'he [husband] was extremely supportive...' (Patsy). And another one stated:

I'm very lucky, I discussed it with my husband before we got married, I said to him, don't propose unless you think you think you can cope with living with an MP, because this is what I want to do' and he said, 'I think you'd be very good.' And he's been very supportive to me (Janet).

However the difficulty of a husband proceeding with his own commitments sometimes made it very difficult for women politicians 'to have the same level of support, because often their husbands are pursuing their own commitments, their own interests' (Lydia). Furthermore, sometimes family support was not enough for women to proceed in a political career as one of the participants explained, 'I genuinely don't understand how women with children can manage, unless they've got a very supportive partner and probably a full time nanny as well' (Diane).

The importance of mutual agreement in supporting woman's political career however, did not always corresponded with the husband's knowledge of the demands and pressure of being an MP. Therefore 'Lots of marriages fail because the husbands can't cope with the lifestyle change' (Janet). The overall response to this subject was that 'it's very difficult and there are some very good reasons why 25 members of the 2010 intake have got divorced in the last three years' (Georgina). And another participant commented that '...you only have to look at the statistics for

the break-up of marriages in Members of Parliament...' (Annabel). From the interviews it became evident that:

Women are much more used to taking a backseat because of their husbands' careers, but husbands aren't used to taking a backseat to their wives' careers, so it's quite tough, a lot of women who come into politics end up getting divorced, it's quite sad (Rebekah).

To summarise the debate an opinion of Jessica Asato²⁴ could be illustrated in here. Jessica says that compared to other professions 'being an MP is probably one of the most un-family friendly jobs you can have' (Ridge, 2014). This could be also due to an extensive travelling and residing between the constituencies and the parliament (Rosenbluth et al., 2015). Moreover, a recent study on parliamentary gender equality around the globe validates that mainly women who have supportive families decided to choose parliamentary career path (Rosenbluth et al., 2015). Despite the difficulties women faced when in office, according to the participants some changes were already advanced, which helped them to enter the parliamentary environment and continued to work as MPs. These changes helped them to deal with work-life balance and made their political careers more family friendly.

²⁴ Jessica Asato is a Labour politician, was selected in 2012 as the parliamentary candidate in Norwich North for the 2015 General Election.

Social issues

A political job's demands are very time consuming and 'it is very difficult to balance because you have three sets of precedents, you have the house (of Commons), the constituency, and you have the family, who make their own demands' (Patsy). Therefore **social changes** seemed necessary for women who had chosen that career path. Despite many deficiencies in social care, my interviewees felt that '[social dealings] got better for women in many ways' (Michelle) and they 'are improving and becoming more family friendly' (Joan). For example 'It used to be two nights [late parliamentary sittings] but my quality of life is now better because I don't have that two nights' (Alison). My participants felt strongly that the unsocial working hours in the House of Commons put much pressure on family/life balance due to long sitting hours. Another participant supported the above argument stating that:

Over the past two years the timetable in Parliament has been rescheduled to make the working day shorter therefore the working day may end at 7 pm rather than midnight onwards as could happen in the past. This change was brought to help with family commitments' (Sarah).

Also there is 'more support available for issues encountered by female MPs, e.g. child care, care support (Emma).

The ability to normalise the image of women in parliament raises a question of how important culture is in women's political advancement. It is evident that in order to support women in their political career path **social help** and social changes must be achieved as these would transform coping with family-life balance. However, without the support of the whole family, women MPs found difficulty in combining the

demands of raising children and coping with parliamentary work. According to my participants these difficulties often led to the breakup of marriages and the distortion of everyday life. This is the reason why the next section concentrates on the impact of culture, the effects of political establishments and the influence of atmosphere in the parliament as prominent factors in gender parliamentary inequality

DISTORTIONS

Culture

In this section I aim to explore the impact of different obstacles that affect women as politicians and their political responsibilities. Some questions were designed to determine the impact of culture on the under-representation of women in the House of Commons. Prior studies have noted that according to traditional values women are culturally expected to raise a family and allow their husbands to be engaged in public life (Adamski, 1984; Sawer, 2000; Blau et al., 2002; Pankow and Post, 2010; Zukowski, 2011). What's more, historically, there were campaigns against married women who took on employment, which was seen as 'injurious to good housekeeping and the well-being of husbands' (Bradley, 2007:127). The results of my study indicate that in recent years **cultural barriers** are still relevant when talking about women's involvement in politics. 'It's the patriarchal society that means the gatekeepers of the position are men' (Lydia) as 'men traditionally have more time' (Lydia) and 'we've got an issue that people when presented with a man or woman

will choose a man over a woman when it comes to selection' (Alison). The main idea behind men's involvement in public life lies in a 'long history of engagement and easier political entry' (Annabel). The argument can be extended by claiming that 'some of it is tradition, there's still a gender difference between different jobs, so we still find women more in carrying roles' (Rosie). For example Bradley (1999:30) illustrates that in Britain up to the 1960s, the cultural stereotypes of women's role 'overrode class in the construction of employment hierarchies'. Within the same context, for instance Alison claimed that 'it was very difficult in those days and people used to shout at me 'go home, young woman', however 'those [cultural] barriers are being broken down' (Annabel). Although she thought that 'traditionally, 30 or 40 years ago, it was more difficult for women because people had a perception of women's role in the family' but 'the last 20 years has seen a radical change' (Annabel).

Nonetheless, although some cultural changes can be seen in the rise of women MPs in the House of Commons, it is still too slow to reach the parity that women want to achieve and 'women got the vote and the right to stand for election long after men, we had catching up to do' (Julie). As the proportion of women in the House of Commons is still just 29 per cent, in order to achieve a significant increase in women MPs, Rebekah suggested:

I think we need to change the way we actually do politics, it needs to be less adversarial, I mean if you look at something like Prime Ministers' question time, you know, where everyone is shouting, it's really sort of combative, it doesn't achieve anything, it just like schoolboy behaviour. Why would anybody want to enter into that sort of environment? You need to change the culture (Rebekah).

These changes would concentrate on 'changing the approach to politics from female's perspective' (Michelle) and 'by changing the type of people that are involved [in politics]' (Rebekah). Within the context of gender imbalance in the House of Commons, scholars have also reflected on the relationship of women politicians with the media. According to scholars' the **media's representation of women politicians** has a big impact on gender inequality in the parliament as it distorts the image of women MPs (Markstedt, 2007; 2010; Opyd, 2014a; Rosenbluth et al., 2015) and still promotes gender stereotypes (Rosenbluth et al., 2015). However, far lesser coverage of the impact of the social media on women politicians is illustrated by scholars and academics. Hence, this section intends also to address some concerns of women MPs with their experiences with social media. To add to this Rosie admits that 'there's still that problem, it's a lot better than it was, far better than it was. But I think there is still an inequality in the way women are portrayed in the media'. For example the media 'choose photographs that make you look foolish' (Lydia) and in many instances 'focus too much on the shoes we wear. Some commentators and sketch writers are personally vicious to some colleagues' (Debbie) and 'they also said of my female colleague her voice sounded like chalk coming down a blackboard' (Annabel). Many of my participants were truly upset with the bias of the media's coverage of women politicians. For example Annabel argued that:

You've got to have an even tougher skin now, with social media and even the most innocent of opinions can be distorted, misconstrued, and you leave yourself open to anybody who wants to call you anything under the sun.

Conversely a group of participants gave examples of positive aspects of the media's representation of women MPs. For example Diane admitted: 'I do believe that from a television point of view, I'm benefiting from it, so there are available for these sorts of opportunities' Another participant added to this debate by giving an example of a particular MP who used media to promote herself:

Some women politicians are very effective at using the media very well, I think Stella [Creasy] does for example. And I think that when women do get into the media, they often come across extremely well, they tend to be more discursive (Joan).

Reflecting on the positive aspects of press coverage on women MPs, the media 'are getting better, I get a sense that there is not the same patronising approach to women politicians' (Annabel). However, there is still inconsistency when comparing the media's coverage of male MPs versus women MPs. For example Rebekah gave a tangible example of the media's representation of women MPs versus men politicians stating that:

I think it's ridiculous! I think you are more likely to get in the paper as a woman politician for the shoes you are wearing, than for what you've said or what you've done; and it's the way they depict women in politics, if a man in politics is raising his voice, then he is being strong whereas if a woman raises her voice, she is being neurotic.

The same inequality arises when talking about physical images of women politicians.

My participants strongly admitted that the media:

Still differentiate, still will talk about women's looks, or about what the person is wearing, there are so many comments Theresa May's kitten heeled shoes, and they'll also still talk about women in terms of their family, or how

many children they've got. They, they wouldn't dream of doing that with regard to male politicians (Rosie).

Moreover another participant added to this debate illustrating coverage of one of her colleague MPs:

A male politician, for anybody to comment on his clothes, he has to be wearing something really peculiar; and whereas for a female politician, like the whole Theresa May shoes issue, has been going on for years. Would you get that about a male politician constantly? No you wouldn't (Georgina).

A similar example is given by Rebekah who reflected on her own experience with the media: 'if there's a thing like our local online paper, if there's a picture of me, loads of people would comment about how I look. You would never do that to a man'.

On the whole my participants felt that women MPs' appearance was constantly targeted by the media as:

How many times do you see a photograph of a male politician with comments on his clothes, his hair, and the way he looks, the way he stands, the way he walks? It is always something media will comment on, and especially sketch writers use to belittle female politicians, all the time (Lydia).

When talking about the media, the difference between male and women journalists become a concern to some of my participants. Patsy gave a strong opinion about the differences between the genders of the journalist:

Oh dire! Dire! First thing they do, by the way the women journalists are among the worst. Seriously. The nastiest, the most spiteful, but there you go. Yeah, they'll always talk about you, your clothes, or your appearance first. I remember once I was talking to a very experienced male journalist and he

said some, I can't remember what phrase he used, but anyway, he said something that I could be quite sort of acid or acerbic or something or the other. And I said to him, is that a quality do you think, that a woman would be described as a forensic capacity for analysis? And would they have done that to a man? Well, they wouldn't!

In general one of my interviewees felt that men journalists had a formulated sexist approach when talking to women politicians. She referred to coverage of this nature giving an example of one particular programme, the Six O'clock News:

If more women refused to appear with people who are sexist pigs, then maybe they'd get rid of them, and get better people in. You can identify the women journalists, they are always on the sort of like 'graveyard slot', they are always on late at night, or Sunday evening. The main like One O'clock News, or the Six O'clock News, it's always men who present (Rebekah).

Another aspect of scholarly debates about the media's coverage of women MPs is to examine the involvement of women politicians versus men politicians. However the significance of this aspect appeared to be very weak, as during my interviews only one participant tackled that issue, stating that:

I know there's much less representation of women in the media, they are much less likely to be on discussion panels, top news stories, political stories are less likely to be about women politicians and the work they are doing. And often when they are about women politicians and the work they are doing, there is a specific gender angle to it (Samantha)

In this chapter my intention is also to illustrate evidence of some **progress in political gender equality**. For example a couple of participants admitted that 'It's an ongoing problem, It's an issue that we can't back away from, and we have to keep pushing forward' (Lydia) as 'we worked out that it was going to take us 200 years to get to

gender parity' (Patsy). Some participants however expressed a different view in this matter saying that 'There has been a real progress in getting more women into politics and we now have the most gender diverse parliament ever' (Vicky). Other participants added to this argument giving examples of the 2010 General Election where 'there is also a really talented pipeline of women putting themselves forwards for selection' (Vicky) which resulted in a 'record number of candidates' (Nicky). This was due to the fact that 'more and more young women are becoming interested in politics as [women's] issues affect them' (Emma).

This nevertheless is a still on ongoing process in the House of Commons as according to prediction analysis based on the changes in women's parliamentary representation between 1945 and 2005, a 50:50 gender balance would be reached in 28 years if it was progressed at the current rate (Siemienska, 2005; Wawrowski, 2007).

Club Atmosphere

Although a wide body of literature discusses women's integration and behaviour when entering politics, my UK participants did not always feel that the issue was most important, when discussing the atmosphere dominating the House of Commons. Some participants mentioned that '[women] don't always vote for women' (Michelle) as an expression of lack of help by other women MPs to make the parliament more accessible to other women. Moreover, another participant went

further to illuminate this exclusion by giving an example of former US President, Harry Truman, who said 'if you want a friend in politics, get a dog' (Nicky). To add to this debate, the issue of competitiveness was also brought up by the participants where 'The real friendships are with the other party members, on your own side you always compete' (Nicky). This measure of the political atmosphere seemed to dominate the same participant's opinion. She argued that 'in relationship with other women? You compete' (Nicky).

Surprisingly only one individual felt otherwise and commented positively on the topic of women's behaviour when in parliament and mentioned that the atmosphere in the House was 'quite good'. I mean the older women really helped me. The ones that hadn't managed to get into parliament were really keen that I didn't make same mistakes' (Janet). In contrast to Janet's opinion, I am providing below an overview of the House of Commons controversial ambience. Something about the nature of this is not only a masculine conquered environment, but also highly dominated by sexism. This poignant constraint is taken for granted by MPs themselves in many instances. Within the same context, the competitiveness within the House, especially between women MPs, has to be recognised as this also influences women's choice of a career and their entry into politics.

Comparing the above opinions, it can be seen that although some antagonism among women prevails in the House of Commons, it does not dominate the parliamentary environment. Significantly a more common reason for the distortion of the atmosphere in the British Parliament would be related to **sexism**. Within this context,

an overview of the controversial issue is given by my participants who found this behaviour 'very strange, the attitudes of men were quite patronising towards women' (Janet). Something of the nature of masculine behaviour was a shock to the participant's husband, who struggled to believe 'by how much sexism dominated the House' (Janet). Other participants found this issue rather peculiar and emphasised that:

Men always comment, ooh don't you look nice today? It was like, I don't turn round to you and say you look nice, and it doesn't happen, I've had lots of different workplaces and I've never had that, so I find it very bizarre (Alison).

In relevance to the above I believe that sexism is treated as a norm among men MPs. Moreover, as Georgina illustrated 'some of the demographics of male MPs, particularly older male MPs, means that they think it's perfectly acceptable to be sexist, patronising, dismissive of females' so women MPs 'have to put up with quite a bit here' (Janet). From the participants' point of view sexism had profound effect on gender inequality in the British parliament as 'women look at politics as an unattractive career and part of that is perpetuated by the inherent sexism in parliament' (Georgina). However, the age of the woman MP has to be considered when discussing this issue. Some participants expressed their view that sexism is related to the age of women politicians. Katie and Samantha just confirmed that by sharing their experiences: 'when I went into politics I've just got that sort of maturity. Apart from several notable exceptions, most men stop looking at women when they get to that age' (Katie), and 'I haven't been subject to some of the particularly unpleasant or sexist experiences that some of my younger political colleagues have

had' (Samantha). To interlink sexism in the House with the age of women MPs I am presenting below an occurrence experienced by Georgina:

A female MP? You know, I think it is pretty tough. There is still in the House of Commons a horrendous amount of sexism, and I'll always say that in my entire life I'd never encountered direct sexism, until I arrived in Westminster.

Controversially, one participant employs another view of sexism in the House stating that 'I'll be glad when they stop. But, if they make sexist remarks at least they've noticed that you're a woman' (Katie). Nevertheless, sexism in the House of Commons is still on the agenda today affecting women's choice of career and their survival techniques in the male orientated environment.

Political establishments

When talking about gender under-representation in politics many scholars are concerned with the impact of the **electoral systems**. According to some, the British first-past-the-post system is far less favourable for women than Proportional Representation. However the role of the electoral system was a concern of only one individual who stated that 'our system of election, first-past-the-post, takes longer to achieve [gender equality] change than a list system' (Julie). Surprisingly, this aspect was not significant to majority of my participants when talking about barriers to women's political advancement in the House of Commons.

Positive actions

The introduction and implementation of positive action strategies has been debated not only by many scholars but politicians themselves. Any type of equality promotion strategy, and its effectiveness, is still very controversial and disapproved of by many individuals. Still, it is evident that in order to increase the number of women in the House of Commons, these strategies need to be applied whether they are short term solutions or a permanent establishment. For example previous literature acknowledges the role of **quotas** and their effectiveness based on the results of the 1997 general election. Due to the implementation all-women shortlists by the Labour Party, the number of females in Parliament doubled overnight. This was also mentioned by one participant who explained:

So I think you always need to do these kind of safeguards, because power has a habit of the minute it is exposed, and you know it operates then it moves to different areas, so just as the women's quotas in 1997 suddenly forced the trade unions, for example, the male trade unions absolutely dominated the whole show, and there's a danger that this is happening again (Nicky).

There are different opinions regarding Quotas among my participants that vary from dis-approval: 'although they have been very effective but they remain controversial' (Tilly), to acceptance and illustration of the positive aspects when they were used. The feeling of one participant was that:

For years and years and years we had all male shortlists and nobody was worried about that, and I don't think, looking at some of the people who used to get elected, they could say they got in on merit, because they don't look to me like the most talented people in the country (Rebekah).

Therefore the majority of my participants felt that '[quotas] are necessary. We tried everything! We tried exhortation, we tried encouragement, we tried all kinds of mentoring, we tried all kinds of things' (Patsy), therefore 'positive discrimination is not perfect, however, it does address the issue' (Emma).

The above arguments were supported by other participants who claimed 'that equality promotion strategies in Parliament have been effective' (Sarah) and 'they are vital as without them equality does not advance at all' (Julie). Further, regarding equality promotion strategies, one participant stressed that 'You have to have something. If you leave it completely to the way things always were without having any kind of positive action, then women don't get selected' (Rosie).

In the British Parliament the most prominent affirmative action used in the previous general election was the introduction of all-woman-shortlists; therefore mainly this type of quota was discussed by my participants during the interviews. They felt that 'Labour have taken some good steps, with all women shortlists'

If we have an all women shortlist in an area, all the women will go for the all women shortlist, and none of them will go for the open selection, although actually men and women can go for an open selection (Patsy).

In particular one participant stressed that 'I was encouraged to stand, if it hadn't been an all-women shortlist, I wouldn't have come to the conclusion that I should

stand, certainly not for Westminster' (Rosie). Other participants strongly felt that 'all political parties should have six designated all-women-shortlists, so that it becomes a natural part of British politics' as 'the reality is that for women there has to be positive discrimination, there has to be all-women shortlists, if we are to continue to get to the point where it becomes so much the norm' (Lydia).

The majority of my participants repeatedly supported the idea of positive actions seeing them as a solution to gender inequality in the House of Commons. One of the strongest opinions was given by Rosie who stated

I'm a strong supporter of it, I'm a strong supporter of taking positive action to ensure there's more women in politics, and particularly in the elected bodies in all countries. I'm not quite sure if I'd go as far as quotas, but the Labour Party's all woman shortlist I've been a very strong supporter of, and indeed, I was selected through an all-woman shortlist. I've advocated that it has to be offered in many areas to make sure that we get more women into parliament, and as a result of that the Labour intake of the last two general elections has been to have more than 50 per cent women.

Similar argument was also illustrated during the global study on gender equality 2012 where one of the British women MPs stated that the biggest asset to her advancement in politics was 'All women short lists' (Rosenbluth et al., 2015:16).

However it is important to question whether quotas also affected women's candidacy. As mentioned at the beginning of my discussion about equality promotions, there was much resentment when all-women shortlists were introduced and implemented by the Labour Party. However during my interviews I discovered that only a few participants continued to reject this guarantee. For example Susan illustrated this point by saying 'No, I am against quotas of any sort'. Another opinion

against quotas was expressed by Annabel who claimed 'I don't think it's a solution; I don't think it's the only solution'. Some participants went even further in this debate by linking the use of quotas with their feelings. In their opinion quotas were 'so divisive; it creates such resentment within the rest of the parliamentary party that you are only there because you are a woman, that I just don't think it's worth doing' (Georgina). This argument was extended by opinion of another participant who claimed that

So although clearly, that helped me as a woman to get elected, it meant that as soon as I was elected a lot of men have said 'oh well, you only got elected because it was an all-woman shortlist, and if you'd stood against men you wouldn't have won. There has been quite a lot of prejudice about that (Rebekah).

Katie goes even further by giving examples of women MPs who fought with the prejudice saying that 'It's patronising to women, certain people. One particular woman was going round with a T-shirt with: I am not a token woman'. However according to Janet there is a solution by:

having 50/50 shortlists, because I think you'll get lots of women seen that way. I think you'll have to be very careful that you don't just slip back; I mean some evidence, I remember the Labour women MPs saying to me don't go for women only shortlists because it causes a lot of resentment in the constituency, and that woman is somehow labelled with; 'well, course, she's only in because she on a women only shortlist.' But just watch the backsliding, into letting women go and not replacing them with women.

While some participants strongly resented the use of all-women-shortlists, they also admitted that 'they have proven extremely effective at boosting the number of Labour women in frontline politics. In my view that is a hugely positive step' (Joan).

Their measurable effectiveness where the number of women MPs doubled overnight encouraged some women MPs to change their opinion about the use of this type equality promotion. For example Janet reflected on her view stating that

Yeah. I started out not wanting there to be any positive discrimination, because I felt that we should get there on merit, because otherwise we wouldn't be respected. But I saw how really, really difficult it is; and the trouble is, there's prejudice against women. So I actually swung round completely in favour of positive discrimination.

Similarly another participant modified her opinion: 'I was for many years opposed to all women shortlists, but it became clear that there would never be anything like gender equality in the House of Commons without using them albeit for a limited period' (Debbie).

While scholars highlight the effectiveness of quotas (Short, 1996; Ballington and Karam, 2005; Dahlerup, 2005; Norris, 2006a; Kelly and White, 2009; Rosenbluth et al., 2015), some of my interviewees felt that 'they are the best short term solution' (Diane) and 'hope they are not a permanent solution' (Samantha). The same participant stressed that she trusted that:

We will get to the point where you know constituency parties are, genuinely will not subconsciously prefer men over women, and I also hope that we will get to the point where politics changes sufficiently to attract a much more diverse range of applicants, because many people don't even put themselves forward (Samantha).

To conclude the debate about positive actions I would like to present a judgement by Rebekah whose pragmatic approach clearly defined the way quotas should be implemented and used within British Politics:

Well, I think it's a necessary evil in a way, I think positive discrimination and quotas, it's not ideal, but what you want is to have equality, but we don't at the moment, and I think it is the only way to actually force change through because if we didn't have things like all women shortlists, if you look at the number of women who got elected before all-women shortlists, it's like about 150 years before we had equality, so I think, I think that it has to be forced (Rebekah).

The majority of women MPs seemed to agree that 'men don't go 'oh, women need to get elected, men need to stand aside and they are not going to do that voluntarily' (Rebekah) and 'unless, you have something like, some sort of positive action scheme, then that's never going to change, the situation won't, resolve itself, unless there is this sort of artificial intervention' (Diane). An important fact in these findings is that these divergent views about the pros and cons of gender quotas were equally spread between MPs from the left or right wing political parties with some of the right-wingers for example approving the all-women shortlists and equally with the left-wingers disapproving this type of equality guarantee.

Some scholars advocate legislation in order to help women to become MPs. This has led to a question as to whether in British politics the **interference of the government** to set certain strategies such as legislative gender quotas would be welcomed by my participants. The main idea behind the question was to test the participants on the ground of the political parties being forced to comply with gender quotas rather than implement them on a voluntary basis. There is already evidence of the use of

legislative equality guarantees by the Nordic countries which have proven to be very successful. The majority of my participants strongly opposed the idea of the governmental interference as 'people would react badly against it' (Alison) and 'there'll be a resistance to that' (Janet). Participants felt that 'we've probably gone as far as we needed to' (Nicky) and 'now I would say Labour has demonstrated you can do a lot with all-women shortlists' (Samantha). The main idea behind the opposition was that 'the priority at the moment is for women in all political parties to be pressing party machines to take that action' (Samantha) as 'Governments can't interfere with the management of political parties' (Lydia) and 'cannot tell political parties how they select their candidates' (Debbie).

On the other hand for one participant was more insistent that governmental help:

Goes wider than MPs and I think it's to do with having public services that can look after children and ill elderly parents, which applies to people in all sorts of jobs, and I think at the moment there is such pressure and cuts in that area, it's going to make life much harder (Alison).

My participants also shared some common opinions on the subject of legislative equality promotion policies. They felt that by introducing legislative quotas 'you run that risk that you can force the numbers to go up, but when it actually comes to the regular selection process, you can actually damage the chances of women standing anywhere else' (Georgina) as 'there's a limit to how you can do with legislation as a tool' (Patsy). However one participant, although a bit reluctant:

It's too much of a hot potato, I think, for Governments to legislate. It's up to parties to decide how they want to select their candidates. Those parties

who've been brave have got what they deserved, and those parties that have stuck to the old ways, have got what they've always had (Katie)

On the contrary, some participants had the impression that the Government had already interfered in helping to improve gender inequality by implementing 'the provision in the Equality Act 2010 which enables political parties to use women-only short lists' (Vicky) and also by passing 'a law in 2012 that allows for political parties to favour women over men' (Julie) therefore 'It is now for the parties to tackle the issue' (Julie).

Election processes

A process structuring the entry to the House of Commons is the election of the candidates. This powerful predicator interlinks the selection of the candidates with the support they need to be able to win the election. This is the reason why this section concentrates on the selection of the candidates and illustrates the importance of electoral help. While scholars emphasise the importance of the selection processes as an empirical link to gender imbalance in politics, they also illustrate the prominence of positioning the candidates in **winnable seats**. This theoretical aspect is poignant in the success of electing each candidate as 'You could have a lot of women candidates, but not in winnable seats' (Alison). As the British first-past-the-post electoral system allows the voters to vote only for one runner from the list, parties are very careful with the choice of the gender of their candidate. This political practice has been commented on by my interviewees who felt that 'the

numbers were still small because what used to happen was that the women nearly always had the furthest seats' (Patsy). This was reflected in the 1997 election where 'unfortunately the '97 intake, which saw huge number come in, a lot of them were in the more marginal seats' (Rosie). As another interviewee commented, 'in 97, all women shortlist, you had some people saying, can't possibly have them in the mining seats' (Nicky).

Some participants also expressed the significance of **electoral support** during the election processes. Electoral assistance involved help with finances as 'all costs money, and if you don't have resources, it's very hard to do it. If you don't have your own funding, it can be very difficult' (Alison). Similarly the global study on gender equality 2012 illustrated that 34 per cent of women candidates finance their own campaigns from their own pockets (Rosenbluth et al., 2015). Additionally, some scholars claim that finances are one of the barriers to women's political advancement (Siemienska, 2000). However, the same study on gender equality 2012 also uncovered that overall women in general receive higher share of electoral funds from the parties and from the government (Rosenbluth et al., 2015). Nonetheless, when talking about electoral support my interviewees also agreed that other types of support such as 'mentoring and training can help and can make a difference' (Patsy). The main idea behind electoral assistance was to provide:

everything from giving women encouragement and coaching to be more confident in interviews, particularly in public speaking, right through to women only shortlists. I mean there are a whole range of measures (Janet).

Within the concept of the electoral support the majority of my participants claimed to have received some support. Moreover, they stated that 'they are making more effort to mentor and train female candidates, both before selection, and after selection' (Georgina) as for instance 'over the years, there's been good general training, for candidates, and some events arranged specifically for women candidates that I've been involved in' (Samantha). There was some evidence of the training received by my participants, for example Rosie admitted that she had 'a lot of help, of help and media training'. Equally participants received support such as mentoring; 'I had mentoring, I had two mentors; one was a man, one was a woman' (Katie) and 'some training from the party before selection and support for selection from fellow party member who had been selected' (Julie). Overall, 'there was help for candidates at all sorts of different levels, in relation to how to handle media, how to present yourself, there's all sorts of different support' (Lydia). On the other hand some participants admitted that there was no electoral support during their electoral campaigns and neither at the beginning of their work as MPs. For example Patsy who was elected in the early 80's argued very strongly that 'No, no there wasn't anything like that when I first became an MP'. Another participant also admitted 'No, I didn't really, I did have some women in my team who were quite helpful, and supported me emotionally and stuff like that, but I didn't really get any [electoral support]' (Rebekah).

According to the literature political parties also play an important role in the support of women candidates in the selection, promotion and election processes during the electoral campaigns. Therefore I explored the issues of **help/lack of help from the**

political party among my interviewees. The evidence from my data collection shows that in the House of Commons help was very limited as illustrated by Alison who admitted that ‘no, no, and in my case, just as speaking as how it was for me, when you put your name forward for selection; you’ve no party behind, you’re on your own’. However one participant felt that she ‘did not feel this was required’ (Emma). Others rather briefly commented on this issue stating that ‘no I didn’t [receive help from the party], but they do now’ (Georgina), ‘yeah, there was all sorts of training on offer’ (Annabel). Nevertheless, the issue of the party’s involvement in supporting women candidates or newly appointed women MPs was still far from being conclusive.

The **selection of the candidates** under the FPTP electoral system was also considered as a barrier by the interviewees, due to its limitation of the number of candidates who could be elected for each constituency. Janet had ‘found it very difficult to get selected’. The reason for this has been linked closely with a phenomenon discussed earlier in this chapter, the candidate’s family responsibilities. One individual stated that

When I was younger, my children were young. I was always asked how old the children were- they are entitled to do that, because they are not employing you. And in any event they are thinking it, you know, sitting in front of a young woman, they want to know how many children you’ve got, how old they are; and I felt that as soon they heard the ages of the children they would sort of mentally think; ‘well she can’t do the job (Janet).

Other responses to this issue included more open grounds for restrictions to join the House of Commons: ‘I was rejected, twice, I’m not sure though, to be frank, with you

whether or not that was because I was a woman or because the constituency party didn't like where I was coming from politically' (Anabel). In relevance to the above the same participant repeated that 'it's quite difficult to dissect the reasons why people are not selected for example for seats. I could say that was because I was a woman. I'm not entirely sure that would be the truth' (Anabel). Nonetheless, a common ground interviewees agreed was that changes were needed in this field as:

You know, if you leave it, people often say you have to leave it to merit to ensure that the best person gets the job, but it was very clear there's no evidence that good women are even getting the right chances to get the job. In parties that don't take positive steps, to address the habits of selection committees (Samantha).

Overall, changes in 'the perception of the selection panels of what it is they are looking for in a candidate' (Rosie), will have a profound effect on women due 'to get them to start thinking outside of the box, that they are not always going to be a, a particular type of person' (Rosie). These changes are also important as according to some scholars the reluctance of party to nominate equal numbers of female and male candidates 'limits voters' (both women and men) ability to vote for women' (OSCE, 2014: 29)

Background of the candidates

Education plays a very important role in gender equality in all sectors of public life. The literature dealing with educational aspects regarding women, reports a close link between financial affairs and education. According to some scholars limited financial resources restricted women's access to achieve higher education which relatively restricts women's ability to become parliamentarians (Platek, 2004; Paxton and Kunovich, 2003 cited in Stevens, 2007; Wawrowski, 2007; Abdela, 2010; Rosenbluth et al., 2015). However to the contrary, the latest report on countries belonging to OECD (the countries I paid special attention to during my secondary research) reveals that young women are more likely to complete upper secondary education compared to young men. Equally a higher number of women enter higher education (OECD, 2012; UNSD, 2014). Within this context, the idea of **education** of women when they already have reached higher positions has been discussed by my participants. According to my participants there should be a common model to 'just to teach more in schools, as well. To start younger as well, so we give young girls positive role models around politics' (Alison). Moreover, the importance of educating women about their ability to be more politically active was a concern of one of woman MP who stated that 'I would hope that we have supported young women, so that they do put themselves forward' (Diane). On the other hand according to another woman MP, 'If I hear that just once more [about training], I will scream, I really will!!! Because who ever heard a man, who says 'I need more, I need more,

more, more mentoring, and more training?’ NO!’ (Nicky). In relevance to the above the view of my participants was that education and training of women MPs was not important as only a minority of my interviewees tackled on that issue.

Slightly more important than education was the issue of the MPs having some **political experience** before entering a parliamentary position of power. Some participants mentioned that ‘I had been interested in politics since my childhood’ (Debbie). Another participant also indicated that she had ‘always been interested in politics from being a young child’ (Alison). Moreover, other participants illustrated their involvement in politics for a considerable amount of time. For example Michelle and Samantha admitted that ‘But I had been engaged in the political life of my country for a considerable time’ (Michelle) and ‘I was actually a very experienced politician by then’ (Samantha). However, another factor derived from my interviews such as becoming politically involved from a young age as Annabel reflected on stating that ‘I’ve been in politics most of my life; I come from a political family’. Additionally, one participant did not agree with the above statements as ‘youth was seen as a greater asset, than experience’ (Alison) and ‘if you look at that 1997 government, it was of the new people, the younger people who were promoted rather than the older people’ (Alison). Nonetheless, the reality is that still in the current time ‘women with political talent are failing to get elected while political parties dip further into the pool of lesser qualified male candidates’ (Rosenbluth et al., 2015:12).

Coming together

This section uncovers women MPs' views on the parliamentary environment. My participants discussed the masculinity of the parliamentary setting, referred to potential feminisation of the parliament based on critical mass phenomena, spoke about women's solidarity in supporting each other and their contributions in supporting women's issues. The literature dealing with the nature of parliament reports House of Common as a **male orientated environment**. As my participants reported 'it's all macho, masculine environment' (Rebekah), where 'being a female MP is more of a challenge, it's quite an angry aggressive atmosphere to be in' (Rebekah). The well-known 'male bastion' (Annabel) significantly 'puts women off, as there is a lot of shouting and a lot of aggression, it's not a naturally female way to work' (Rebekah). For example, Bradley and Healy (2008) illustrate that the male dominated culture which prevents women to get to the top in other professions as well therefore correspondingly, majority of CEOs and directors are men (Bradley, 2007). Also according to my participants, male domination of the House of Commons is considered as one of the biggest factors for women's reluctance to put themselves forward as parliamentary candidates. 'The way that local level politics happens, and you must know this, it's very male dominated. The language and the, the sort of gladiatorial way' (Diane) forces women to become more masculine and to work much harder in order to prove their political ability.

As men's solidarity in the House is relatively visible, women also have formulated their own groups and **women's organisations** in order to support each other as

politicians. What's more, according to the global study on gender equality 2012, women drew more support from women's groups (Rosenbluth et al., 2015). As Samantha illustrated, 'there is a lot on offer, for example the Labour Women's Network, they offer some very good training'. These organisations offer to help and support candidates and women MPs. For example, 'in 2005 the Conservative women's organisation came out and spent a day in my seat campaigning' (Georgina). Relatively my participants experienced 'a lot of help, there's lots of women in women's organisation that are fighting for the Labour Party to adopt the all-women-shortlist' (Rosie).

However, there were still other participants who experienced otherwise:

Before I got elected, from years ago, I was part of a thing called the Emily's List which is like Labour Women's Network, where they give you loads of training on things like public speaking. But when I actually went for my election, I didn't get any help then (Rebekah).

Critical mass, a concept used since the 1980s in gender research has its roots in nuclear physics where it describes the smallest amount of fissile material that was needed to endure irreversible nuclear chain (Campbell and Childs, 2014). However, scholars argue whether this physical process could hallmark the changes in the social life. Nevertheless, the literature dealing with such phenomenon reports that **critical mass** has also been successfully transferred into political science, being important as a measurement of gender impact on workplaces and parliaments (Grey, 2002; Dahlerup and Leyenaar, 2013). A poignant argument is that more women in parliament increases women's power within the institution and within the political

party (Campbell and Childs, 2014). According to one participant this could be visible in the House of Commons as ‘although we are still only 23 per cent, I think of the House of Commons, it is still a critical mass’ (Annabel). Another participant reflected on the ‘Entire history of parliament; and at that moment it broke through the critical mass’ (Nicky). The changes due to the rise of a critical mass ‘made a huge difference to the atmosphere of the place, and the way it is run’ (Rosie) as ‘women are, are doing a different style of politics’ (Diane). Still, in order to be able to:

Have serious contributions to make in parliament. I think it’s a good idea for women to caucus on some things, because we are in a minority, sometimes, right across the parties, we need to stick together to achieve some changes (Janet).

Therefore it was important that ‘on balance women are going to stick up together’ (Alison), a collectivism created on sharing the same experience (Waugh, 1992 cited in Bradley, 2007). As Bradley (1999:35) claims, collective power mobilises smaller groups to “‘promote more specific interests’ This collective work would allow women MPs not only to raise awareness about women’s issues but also influence some policies prioritising legislative procedures such as child care or education. Thus in my next sub category I give examples of participants’ views on this subject.

Many scholars assume that the bigger the representation of women in Parliament the better chance for women to encourage changes in policies concerning **women’s issues**. My participants agreed with this belief as the danger of gender under-representation is ‘that the policies that are developed in parliament are not going to properly reflect the full range of human experience’ (Samantha). And to make a

difference meant 'having more women in parliament, and the difference becomes in terms of the policies that the Government delivers on' (Rosie) because 'a woman is more likely to stand up for female issues because she is a woman; she's going to understand what it means to be a woman' (Alison).

Gender Equality not an issue

Scholars widely emphasise the difficulties in reaching the parliamentary position for women, the global study on gender equality 2012 also have confirmed that gender have a big impact on political progress. Being a woman more likely had negative effect on candidates due to promotion of gender stereotypes (Rosenbluth et al., 2015). To the contrary, two of my participants did not experience any barriers faced by women on their way to the parliamentary seats. Katie claimed that there are **no barriers** for women and 'if you really want it, and you're really prepared to work, you can!' and more importantly 'being a woman was a really positive thing' (Diane). However as only two opinions out of 23 MPs interviewed raised the awareness about this issue, those findings become insignificant when taking into consideration ways to achieve gender equality in the House of Commons.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter my intention has been to present an opinion on gender inequality in the lower chamber of the British parliament, the House of Commons. My findings,

based on interviewing 23 women MPs, exposes some issues already discussed by scholars and researchers, which I have illustrated in my literature review chapter. However it is important also to notice some new factors emerging from the interviews such as MPs' concerns on the differences between men and women, their strong views on equality promotions or even more advantageous opinions that there were no barriers to women's participation in political establishments.

This combination of findings provides some support for the conceptual premise that gender inequalities in British politics have a strong background. These have to be taken up by politicians and their parties, the government and citizens. Previous literature on gender imbalance in the House of Commons acknowledges the role of the political culture, its foundations and structural difficulties influencing women's participation in politics. Thus, although these were reflected on by my interviewees, still a large body of findings emerged which is yet to be discussed by academics. These findings give clear an overview of the many difficulties which affect women's willingness to enter the male dominated environment and give some indications on how to be successful in their political race. It explores the MPs' views on the reluctance of women to put themselves forwards as parliamentary candidates in many occasions based on their fears about not coping with the parliamentary demands. Further, the chapter illustrates the differences between men and women and women's coping techniques when in the office.

Another powerful predictor illustrated in this chapter is the participant's view on life /work balance and the need for social changes to help women parliamentarian to

cope with family and work demands. This also leads to other distortions which prevent women becoming MPs, such as cultural stereotypes, the bias of the media coverage of women politicians and the atmosphere in the House of Commons. In this part also the negative aspects of the British electoral system are presented. I also endeavour in this chapter to gain a deeper understanding on the women MP's perception on equality guarantees and the difficulties which arise during their journey to the parliamentary seat. Within this context it can be noticed that regardless an MP's age, the length of their parliamentary work or the party they belonged to, their opinion about the pros and cons has changed over time. After experiencing the difficulty of working as a woman MP, some participants changed their opinion about the need for equality promotion policies and become in favour of equality guarantees, although suggesting that the use of quotas would be a short term solution.

Finally, some possible ways to improve on gender parliamentary inequality are expressed by the participants and the importance of collective work among women politicians is also expressed in this chapter. The interviewees gave their opinion and shared their experiences by linking backgrounds of the candidates with the political experience that in their opinion every MP should have in order to cope with the parliamentary demands. They also tackled on the impact of women's collective in terms of critical mass and their influence on women's issues. The chapter concludes with a contrasting opinion on the lack of barriers to women's parliamentary work which has been also expressed by interviewees.

CHAPTER V: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS EMERGING FROM INTERVIEWS WITH POLISH WOMEN MPS

INTRODUCTION

But how exactly are women in the Polish Parliament? The novices, who just entered politics and these so claimed themselves veterans? Or are better the one who feminised the environments? Or maybe these who have 'balls'? What do they have to give it up? How do they cope with family/life balance? And how do they enter politics? Are they able to walk away from it or does politics addict them like it does to the men? (Kondzinska and Uhlig, 2012: np, own translation from the Polish text)

Unequal treatment of women in politics has been on the agenda for a considerable time. As Platek (2004: 6) claims:

The realisation of political rights requires more than legal guarantees. It is not enough to declare in the Constitution that women and men are equal. Mechanisms are needed to put laws and resolutions into force. However, we not only need adequate procedures but a certain mentality that makes society aware of issues concerning the equality of women and men.

What's more, I argue that gender inequality has its background in variety of factors from social and economic influences to structural and cultural aspects of women's political involvement. Despite Polish women being allowed to vote and be candidates in national elections from 1918 (Platek, 2004; Zarnowska, 2004), the number of females in the lower chamber of the parliament still remains very low reaching just 24 per cent.

`In this chapter I would like to illustrate how the Polish woman MPs dealt with and challenged many difficulties which arose on their way to the parliamentary seat. Within the context of exposing gender similarities and differences I demonstrate the difficulty with convincing women to come forward, due to their fear of not being able to face the challenges which the parliamentary work would bring. According to the Polish participants' women's reluctance to join politics can be attributed to the behavioral differences between men and women, and also in their struggle to cope with family/life balance. With relevance to the above, I also addressed the issue of social changes and social help, as these matters were also raised by my participants. The disparity between men and women in the Sejm, according to Polish women MPs, has also its roots in the cultural stereotypes, according to which a woman's place was to raise her children and look after the family. Many findings also relate to the involvement of media in creation of the image of women politicians, as according to majority of my participants, the media plays a big role in women's political activity.

The degree of Polish women MPs' feelings about the atmosphere in a Polish parliament is equally illustrated here, with emphasis on women and men's integration and a degree of sexism that was experienced by some participants. My interviewees also tackled briefly on the issues of religion, communism and the spectrum of political parties linking them with barriers to women's political participation. This led to the discussion of structural pros and cons, where women MPs paid special attention to equality promotions and the importance of election processes. My participants also gave their opinion about potential ways to tackle parliamentary gender inequality. They referred to the background of the candidates,

their educational and political experiences and their need to come together collectively in order to achieve gender balance in the Polish Sejm. On the other hand I also illustrate some of the differing views of few Polish women MPs, who claimed that there are no barriers to women's political advancement and there is no need for more women in the Sejm.

GENDER SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Reluctance

The difficulty with women's resistance to join the political elite was very common among women (Siemienska, 2000; Suska, 2005; EIGE, 2013). Apprehension towards the challenges they face on their way the upper echelons of power proved very common among the Polish respondents. In this section I am presenting the views of Polish women MPs on some difficulties they faced on their way to the Polish Sejm. According to my participants the fact that **women don't come forward** and their reluctance to put themselves forward as electoral candidates, was very common. 'It really is hard to find a woman, who wants to get involved in politics, it is difficult' (Agata) as 'firstly they do not want to come forward and so far it is even a problem that they want to enter politics in the first place' (Celina). One of the participants admitted 'Somehow I've never wanted to be a candidate to a Parliament' (Marta). However other participants argued that women's unwillingness to come forward was only in men's view who would say 'that you need to look for women, if you need to

find them' (Mariola). Overall, what has also been confirmed previously by Siemienska (2005) and Suska (2005), women do not think about politics as a career path and it is very hard to encourage them to join the political elite. One of the main factors mentioned by the majority of my participants was **women's fear** inhibiting them from becoming involved in politics. As a response to a question on why there are more men in politics, Teresa admitted that 'Women still do not believe in their own strength and ability'. Even though Civic Platform political party had implemented some equality guarantee quotas, 'it is often that women are resigning as they have not enough courage'(Zofia). In order to fill up the electoral list the party had to 'very often to find them' (Zofia) as 'they did not put themselves forward' (Zofia). Overall, 'there was a problem in many instances to find women who wanted to be the candidates' (Roza). This was due to the fact that many women 'use their imagination on what can go wrong and they are afraid to take the risk and meet all these challenges' (Agata). After being approached to stand for election, one participant admitted, 'I got really scared if I can manage. I thought to myself: gosh, they opted just for me, and also I did not believe that I can manage. This was my first impression' (Marta). Another participant confessed, 'they asked me already twice to stand for the election to the Sejm. The first time, I rejected it as I thought I was not ready' (Roza). Additionally women do not think about politics as a potential career. This was the view of one participant who stated, 'when I was a member of the party, regional authorities asked me to be a candidate to the Parliament. This was for me an absolute surprise because I never thought about higher politics in my life' (Maria). In general, my participants felt that, 'women need to believe in themselves and in their ability.

And they have to understand that they can accomplish both, their personal and their work tasks' (Jolanta).

To normalize women's political career paths, my participants strongly insisted that 'first of all you need to encourage women to be involved in politics' (Agnieszka) by 'changing their mentality because women have to believe in themselves' (Agnieszka). According to the interviewees, women need to have 'no fear to put themselves forward' (Mariola) as if a woman 'has the determination, she can do it' (Ewa). It takes as little as 'believing in their own ability and taking it all in their own hands' (Jolanta). Therefore, according to my participants, the importance of changing women's perception on being involved in politics and choosing politics as their career path is very important. On the whole, women have to 'for a start, have more belief in themselves and not fear entering politics (Malgorzata). Other participants went even further in their opinion by linking women's fear with work/life balance and social responsibility. For example, Anita stated that 'in my opinion, women do not push themselves into politics because of their family duties'. Additionally, the main idea behind women's ability to cope with work/life balance was to establish social help for women, so there was a need to 'create 'social conditions for women so they will want to stand for election' (Sabina). Controversially, one participant did not agree with encouraging women to come forward and interfering with their choices as 'if women do not want to [be involved in politics] then why to force them?' (Halina).

From the interviews it was evident that reluctance played a big role in lack of gender balance in the Polish Sejm. My participants illustrated the challenges women have to

deal with when deciding on a political career and uncovered how women's fear affects their ability to put themselves forward. Moreover, while scholars emphasise the link between the work/life balance, it was evident that some participants felt that this was not the main reasons for women's reluctance to become involved in politics.

Male/female characteristics

From my interviews it became apparent that one of the concerns of my participants was the differences between men and women. Some researchers such as Siemienska (2000), Suska (2005) or du Vall (2009) have tackled on the issue of women being too emotional to be politicians or working more effectively in collaboration than men. However differences like these are rarely discussed by social scientists when talking about gender inequalities in politics. To expand on the behavioral differences between men and women I would like to present a quote from Marta who admitted that, 'I do not want to express wrong views about men, but they think that they are the most important politicians, belong to the largest class, and they are the most clever. And this is actually not always the case'. This opinion was supported by another participant who felt that 'wherever you place a man, he thinks that he will be the best to cope with things' (Agnieszka). Possible explanations of the strong feelings of the participants about the nature of men can be deduced from opinions of Zofia and Ewa who believed that:

Women are better organized than men, the only difference between us is that a man does not know what the task will be and already says that he will cope

with it. And the woman, when she knows what the job is, she counts and calculates whether she could cope with the different roles, whether she has sufficient knowledge. Well, needless to say, when a woman takes on the task, usually not many things go wrong. Women are very task orientated and this is very important in politics (Zofia).

And:

Well, I do not understand to be honest, because I think that women are performing very well and it would be nice if there were more women in politics as everything would be more in order. Because men are often improvising, and we are more accurate and systematic, as if we have to prepare something, we do it within the time limit. While men like to improvise and not always end the tasks they have taken on. Besides, women are really good at coping. And I will tell you so, apart from a few exceptions in the Parliament, because unfortunately some women are totally antipathetic, but generally women smooth the atmosphere and, when they argue, they are not as abusive as men (Ewa).

Moreover, according to my participants women in politics are very successful and their ability and sensitivity when talking to others are 'much more effective than men's aggression' (Elzbieta). These differences were attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, men more naturally show 'leadership capabilities' (Monika), what is required by the natural structure of the society and that is why there are more men frontrunners than women. Secondly, men are more 'aggressive, which probably is genetically proven' (Agata), and in competition with their hostility 'women are backing off' (Agata). Thirdly, women are much more 'level headed in everything they propose, they are definitely a gender which is willing to commence dialogue' (Irena) and this is why they show better communication and negotiation skills compared to men. However my participants also indicated that women are much more affectionate and very often they 'expose their emotions very easily' (Roza). Women

are also 'so hysterical and silly, therefore if they want to be treated equally to men, they should take a deep breath, think and become calmer' (Roza). Overall their emotional personality is in many instances 'exploited by men' (Roza).

The above argument can be extended by claiming that in general 'everyone can see that women are working harder in the Sejm' (Monika). Thus 'only by working hard, they can become known in politics and they can be successful. Unfortunately in my opinion women have to work twice as hard as a man' (Celina). During the interviews I discovered some interaction between hard work and collective work where 'a woman is more capable of team work than a man. Not only is she able to work in a team but she is willing to give up part of her ambition so the task would be accomplished' (Zofia). But still

Men show more solidarity, they can easily work with each other, even if they have different opinions. They can argue but if they have the same goal they can go collectively further. Unfortunately with women this is not the case as there is more competition between them, therefore they find it harder to unite. In these alliances men are able to take a step back in order to go two steps further, and women unfortunately cannot do that (Evelina).

One participant controversially expanded on this subject and stated that 'men struggle with organizing their time, therefore will not survive in life. My husband always says that a man is a man of specific tasks, which he fulfills. A woman, however, during similar time is able to fulfill many tasks' (Agnieszka). Unfortunately in many instances when women achieve something 'a man gets the praise and only some men would show some appreciation to women (Mariola). Moreover, when more serious initiatives are discussed 'women are not treated seriously' (Agata). This also applies

when there are difficult ministerial decisions to be made in the parliament where 'most of the ministers are men' (Mariola). The reason for this could be that 'all men are pushing themselves up, whether they are good or bad, whereas women are more careful' (Zofia). The above arguments, however, are undermined by other participants who felt that 'women fulfill the same criteria as men do' (Marta). Halina went even further and explained that:

In general I do not think in gender categories. I am a human being who is an MP and who was elected to do the job. In general any phobias and discrimination are ridiculous and I absolutely do not see the difference, I don't see myself in the role of a woman or a man, I am just an MP

FAMILY

Work/life balance

Work/life balance is considered by many scholars as one of the major barriers to women's involvement in politics (EIGE, 2013). This issue was also important among Polish women MPs who felt that their **family responsibilities** have a big impact on their parliamentary work. Some MPs admitted that they thought very carefully and for a long time before they decided to choose that career path. The reason for this was, for example, the fear as stated by Elzbieta who expressed concern about her ability to 'manage to fulfil the role of mother, wife and being an MP without of abandoning any of the responsibilities at the same time'. Another MP felt that working in the Sejm 'is not easy as this is a type of work which requires loads of

availability as being an MP takes priority and unfortunately family comes second' (Marta). A further participant admitted, 'I would not decide to become an MP if I was living outside Warsaw and I had children in another town. I would not leave my children for four days every two weeks' (Justyna). Zofia agreed with the fact that:

It is not easy and when I sometimes see women MPs who hold babies or just gave birth and run to feed their babe in a room, I have mixed doubts. I appreciate their ambition and different aspects of their career but for me children always were a priority.

Further,

This is a job for twenty-four hours a day if anyone wants to do the job properly. Therefore this is a hard combination to manage work/life balance. Besides if you see the average age of women parliamentarians, they are middle aged, therefore their children are already grown up (Roza).

The above opinion justifies my other findings where some participants admitted that 'when I was running for the election I had a dilemma and my decision was made mainly on the fact that my children were already independent and fully grown' (Hanna). Moreover, within the same context Zofia stated that 'I had some life experience as my children were already fully grown, therefore I could commit fully to this job'. Also Sabina continued to explain that the difficulty of becoming parliamentarian:

Comes out of our women's role, I made the decision to be involved in politics when my children were fully grown. I do not imagine and I strongly admire my colleagues who have a small child and stay with the child in rented accommodation when being in the Sejm.

Another participant also added, 'I am in very comfortable situation as I have two fully grown daughters who have generally left home, therefore I do not have any family responsibilities' (Agata) and 'I made the decision to become an MP when my children were fully grown. I would not make that decision earlier' (Sabina), 'I was waiting till my children were fully grown' (Dagmara). One of the participants had an even bigger advantage over her colleagues as she had not started a family yet, therefore 'I do not have to choose whether I should sort out some important social issues or spend the same time with children' (Zofia). Moreover, a survey by du Vall (2009) uncovered that voters more trust women politicians who do not have families or children as they can allocate more time for parliamentary work.

On the contrary, other participants felt that being a politician at the same time as being a mother and wife had no impact on their lives as 'today in general women work, therefore I do not see in here any problems; as we would have to also ask women from other professions how they cope' (Wanda). The main argument behind this opinion is that 'men also have to look after the family' (Agnieszka) and 'a friend works as an MP for a third electoral cycle and she copes very well. This is an issue of being well organised' (Evelina). Further, another participant admitted, 'I was always a woman who was active and looking for challenges. Being a mother and wife was never a barrier to my career. Moreover, my children were always proud of my achievements' (Malgorzata). This has also been discovered for example by Suska (2005), who found out during her research on Polish women MPs that family responsibilities did not have any impact on women's parliamentary involvement.

According to my participants the main aspect behind being successful as a woman politician was strong **family support**. The advantage of having family backing was widely discussed by the participants who felt that:

It is very important to have support of the nearest: family, friends and colleagues. In my opinion without this support you cannot fulfil the duties and there always would be a worry and fear that being involved in politics would result in neglecting our families (Elzbieta).

Additionally, the decision to become an MP had to be discussed with all members of the family as 'decision that has to be considered together; at least I considered my decision with the family so we would not hurt each other in the future' (Sabina).

Another participant endorsed the importance of family support:

I asked my friends from the Sejm and they are really coping fantastically well. One of my colleagues has been in the parliament for two and half years, the other for just under a year, but they have fantastic partners who allow them to grow and they are coping very well. This is a matter of good organisation. A strong partner on your side allows a wife to pursue her passions, this is very important. I also get help from my relatives and my parents who support me (Evelina).

Within the same context a further participant agreed that it was important to promote gender equality in marriages so that 'women are not loaded with all the family duties alone' (Celina). So women would be:

More willing to be involved in other things than family issues, if men were helping them. They can do things together, for example, if they wash the dishes, cook and clean together, women have more time for themselves and more time to be involved in politics (Celina).

Another participant illustrated how her colleagues coped with children by 'having family members who come with them to the Sejm and help them with feeding their babies. If the children are older, they are left at home also with members of the family (Ewa). Nonetheless, it was common that, before deciding to run for politics, women 'consulted the family first and made sure that they would be able to support them' (Zofia). For example, Agnieszka admitted that 'after the family agreed knowing what the work of a parliamentarian means, I decided to run for the Sejm and since then we cope reasonably well'. More participants declared that 'my family stands behind my decision' (Zofia) as 'this decision must be taken together, the same way as sharing duties together. Partnership was the ethos of my family so I could develop my interest and go forward. Therefore I did not understand why this was a problem for other women' (Karolina).

In relation to the above, many participants praised their relationships with their family members. For example, 'I was lucky that I was living with my parents who helped me' (Wanda) and 'in my family my husband helps me a lot and he understands that I need to work in different areas. He does everything and I think that he can do these things probably better than me' (Marta). Further,

I have a very good husband who absolutely understood and approved of my run for election. And of course the children had to participate equally and help everyone, so the impact of me being away every other week did not have such an impact on family life. Everyone had to take on my duties. This was achievable but required the cooperation of the whole family (Irena).

One participant reflected on her goals before she got married and decided that partnership in her relationship would be a priority. She warned her husband: 'listen,

don't you try to restrict my freedom.' (Karolina). Further, another participant proactively added to the above debate giving an example of some changes in modern families where 'modern people in their thirties do not have problems, as on many occasion I have seen young fathers who push the prams in late mornings' (Hanna). However, one participant admitted that she struggled to persuade her husband to accept her career choice as he 'unfortunately did not accept her role as an MP. He came from an older generation and I had to convince him which was very difficult. He even refused to accompany me at events' (Celina).

Social issues

In this thesis I argue that women's entry to parliament has to be supported socially, as according to recent research by Adams (2011) the socioeconomic factors such as education and financial capabilities still prevent women from becoming parliamentarians. Public help involves changes by the government to assist women with issues such as childcare (du Vall, 2009). My participants also felt that social issues were very important and illustrated the need for transformation. Some participants complained that there was a need for **social change** and 'something needs to be done to help women as the resources with which women have to raise their children are one of the barriers to their political involvement' (Karolina). According to my participants, the biggest problem in Poland is that 'we do not aim to use opportunities to help women in their struggles, as Polish women do not have the resources. If there is no employment and a lack of nurseries, where should they leave

their child?' (Karolina). Another participant describes this situation as 'a glass ceiling which has to be broken by implementing policies allowing paternity leave '(Mariola). In order to encourage women to be involved in politics and consider running for parliamentary election it is important to 'help women and open more opportunities for them so they will be willing to be a candidate in the general election. It takes as little as help in childcare to give them the opportunity to leave the child in a nursery or at school' (Sabina). Also, a different participant admitted that if she wanted to start a family 'a nursery within the workplace would be a very good idea and it would most definitely encourage, especially young women, to be involved in public life' (Roza). In contrast, one of my participants felt that there was already an improvement in social help. She believed that the situation was improving and 'is going in the right direction as more and more often men do not work and sit at home. Although, sometimes they object to that as not every man likes it when a woman is the bread-winner'(Anita). Overall my participants strongly felt that **social help** was very important and mainly it should involve 'arranging better help in child care in terms of creating more nurseries and improvements in the conditions of maternity leave' (Karolina). This help should go beyond the cultural norms and allow women to have 'equal access to men with employment and especially when children are born, equal opportunity to return to work after maternity leave. Hence this should be called parental leave and not maternity leave' (Hanna). In relevance to the above, the need for formalization of paternity leave has been also illustrated by other researchers (du Vall, 2009; APPG, 2014). However, Szelewa (2013) in her research uncovered that paternity leave is closely related to the father's income which in many

instances is higher than women's earnings (Szelewa, 2013). That is why according to study by Bunning and Pollmann-Schult (2015: 3)

Another major factor determining whether fathers take leave is the income replacement rate. Overall, men generally use parental leave only when a portion thereof is exclusively reserved for fathers and when the rate of income replacement is high'.

The prime example was mentioned earlier in my chapter II where paternity leave was abolished between 2009 and 2013 in Estonia, due to the difficulties with the income lost when fathers were staying at home.

DISTORTIONS

Culture

Scholars and researchers argue that the impact of country's traditions plays a big role in political gender inequality. **Cultural barriers** were one of the most common impediments to women's advancement in politics and had a significant impact in Polish society (Platek, 2004; du Vall, 2009; Adams, 2011). The deepness of these cultural roots is successfully illustrated by Platek (2004:10) who indicates that:

It was not moral for a woman to think of divorce when the husband was abusive, a drunkard or a philanderer, and at the same time it was morally acceptable for a man to discipline his wife, drink and forget the rules of fidelity.

These different moral standards for men and women were replicated in social and political life leading to the exclusion of women from political life (Fratczak, 2009; EIGE, 2014). For example, Ballinska (2007) discovered in her study that cultural stereotypes indicated that women should not be involved in politics as they do not have the predisposition to be politicians. What's more, if a woman is successful, then she is seen as a 'woman who does not watch her home' (du Vall , 2009:89). The impact of culture was also widely discussed by, my participants, who felt that 'for a long time women did not exist in politics as political affairs were mainly reserved for men' (Barbara). The lack of women in politics:

Has its background in tradition where man was going to work and woman was left at home with the child. This is still the case in many instances. Therefore it is natural that the man goes into politics and progresses his career while the woman faithfully waits at home (Hanna).

Further, another participant reflected on historical events where men kept the role of 'men fighters, men knights and men kings. Man was always strong, a leader, whereas woman was set aside and was expected to look after the house and carry out house duties' (Agnieszka). This tradition is 'very hard to change and a woman has to break many stereotypes, so she can function in society and become accepted in male mentality as being equal to them as a partner and not as someone who achieved something by chance' (Zofia). A further participant contributed to this debate giving an example of history in literature where even 'in Shakespeare, men played women's roles' (Malgorzata). There was also a lot of tension when participants talked about the traditional passivity of a woman's role, 'women are still not brave enough to say anything. The stereotypes still have deep roots in people'

(Roza). Therefore participants felt that still some women in politics suffered from very 'deeply rooted gender stereotypes and the stereotypes which dictate the position of women and men in the society' (Elzbieta). Moreover, 'only 15 years ago men politicians loudly stated that woman's place is at home where ultimately they can buy her a new vacuum cleaner. Their thinking is still the same, but now they would not say that aloud' (Justyna). Besides, men 'have generally more time to be involved in politics. Unfortunately, in my time woman was responsible for kitchen and raising children as partnership in marriages did not exist' (Celina). Regrettably this kind of tradition was practiced across 'all social classes. Women were needed only to cook, slave and raise children' (Malgorzata). Historically, there was no way forward to accept women's involvement in politics and even now 'man with the pram, who was looking after the house when the wife was working is still not accepted in society' (Mariola). Therefore 'men are more involved in politics. Some of them say that women are more suitable to wash the pots' (Marta). Men's larger involvement in politics could also be due to the fact that previously there was 'no competition for men as women were not there' (Roza).

It was very obvious according to my participants that 'there are not enough women in politics. We have to challenge these established cultural stereotypes, where women are pushed into margins of politics' (Teresa). This tradition, especially in politics, 'have deep roots as women very often liked to give to men' (Zofia). However, 'It is very easy to convince a woman to go further as in reality it is only men's wishful thinking that women are still half a step behind them' (Zofia). My participants also argued that 'there are loads of clever and well-educated women' (Barbara) and this

fact is still not taken into account. However 'in Poland still loads needs to be done so women feel equal to men. I think this problem lies not only in women's mentality but in men's attitude as well' (Roza). Besides, men 'have to understand that we are not designed to work only as secretaries' (Mariola) and 'we want more than the traditional role' (Roza).

On the contrary, some participants admitted that cultural changes were already taking place, 'the mentality is slowly changing and there is a willingness to accept the new changes' (Karolina). Roza felt that:

The twentieth century brought the emancipation of women and brought an opening for women's rights so people could think differently. They could be more modern and more liberated and we expect that women want more for themselves than traditional roles in terms of being a wife, looking after the family and raising the children. The progress of civilization triggered women beginning to wake up in their new roles, and they started to believe that they could be as good as men.

These changes were obtainable because now women 'know that they can easily combine family responsibilities with employment' (Jolanta). Women have reached the stage where it would be advisable to 'invite men to stay at home and allow women to come out' (Justyna). However changes like that 'need time and they have to be implemented equally within the political parties and in social mentality' (Elzbieta). And more importantly, we should 'not to try to force the changes. Of course the world is changing and now it looks totally different than in my grandmother's life' (Wanda). The changes were so obvious that Mariola employed two concepts in her argument that 'we used to talk about a glass ceiling for women and now we are talking about a glass floor for men'. As Bradley (1999:96) illustrates,

although some men are supportive to women's struggle to gain equality, but at the same time they claim that 'things have gone too far' and they feel now as the 'disadvantaged sex'.

When I endeavored to gain deeper understanding of the nature of Polish traditions, some participants had a diverse approach to this issue. For example Agnieszka admitted that she recently read an article on young women and what they expected from life and their futures. She confessed, 'I am devastated. I think that there is no hope for having more women in politics if our younger generation thinks in those terms'. Also another participant had the same concern and gave an example of her conversation with an 11 years old girl who wrote to her asking if she felt that she should be involved in politics. She told her that 'she respects me a lot, however she feels that women should stay at home and not be involved in politics as politics is for men' (Agata). The same participant admitted that 'an eleven year old girl should not repeat those medieval views that woman should be at home and only men are suitable to be involved in politics' (Agata). Therefore the education of young women is important as it would not only change their thinking about the stereotypes but it would lift their self-esteem (Balinska, 2007; EIGE, 2013), engage them to consider to be involved in decision making processes in the future (EIGE, 2013) and to develop positive gender identities (Crowley, 2013). However du Vall (2009) feels that it will also take time to eliminate these stereotypical ideas.

Another factor in the under-representation of women in the Polish Sejm according to my participants was down to the media that play a big role in women's political

life. According to many scholars, the **media's representation of women politicians** can make or break their reputations. During the interviews my participants had mixed feelings about the media's representation of women politicians. Their opinions varied, with both negative and positive experiences with the media, and also differed in their experiences of gender inequality of media coverage on women MPs to their appraisal. For example Marta emphasised:

I feel that this is the end of era where women in politics were perceived as decorative flowers. Some women made careers out of their appearances, especially the young and pretty ones. They felt the media's attention and the media's sympathy. However, this did not necessarily had positive outcomes as very often the media turned the situation around and presented them as sweet idiots

A further participant, Teresa, sensed that 'the media are far more sympathetic to male politicians, regularly during the election campaigns and during the term of office in the Sejm. Women MPs are clearly discriminated against by the media'. The media's common opinion about women was that 'women should concentrate on cooking and staying at home. They should not push themselves into politics' (Sabina). Moreover, in some instances young women MPs from the Law and Justice Party were described by the media as 'Kaczynski's angels' (Ewa). Therefore some of my participants were angry that in presenting women 'the media were more interested in someone's dress or the type of a bag she was holding and how much they earned rather than what they achieved as women MPs' (Celina). Also on many occasions 'the camera is showing women's breasts' (Malgorzata). As one participant expressed 'I wince every time I hear about competition for the prettiest woman MP. There is no such competition for men MPs' (Evelina).

The other claims about the media's representation of women MPs included inequality in the amount of coverage by the press. Agnieszka illustrated this point stating that 'the coverage of women by the media is far less. Everyone talks officially about that'. However, other participants contradicted the above statement and said that 'I feel that fewer women are appearing in the media as there are only about 30 per cent of us in the parliament' (Barbara) and the media's coverage of women 'is proportional to their number' (Halina). However, the feeling of one of my participants was that 'the media create men. If you look it is very visible. I have many colleagues who are excellent in what they doing but the media invite only men for the interviews' (Agata). Another participant added that 'we have a journalist who invites only male MPs and he just does not invite women MPs at all' (Agnieszka). Nevertheless, other participants felt that the politician's gender doesn't matter if the media want to trivialise the individual as 'the media are very selective in the subject and generally they are not interested in their work and the effects. Moreover, women and men are equally displayed under a magnifying glass' (Irena). Overall journalists are 'very objective when presenting work of women or men MPs' (Jolanta) as it did not make any difference whether the media reported on men or women MPs, their main objective was to 'seek blood and that is always the case' (Dagmara). Nevertheless, media's replication of the stereotypes by indicating divergent function of men and women in the society (Ballinska, 2007) where women are associated with family responsibilities (Ballinska, 2007; Beveridge et al., 2015) is still causing an impact on women's struggle to reach the position of political power.

Club Atmosphere

I also argue in this thesis that one of the issues commonly discussed by academics is culture in the parliament. My participants also reflected on this subject offering some views about **gender integration**. The most common opinion was that women do not always interact well with each other. The literature also illustrates that there is little solidarity among women and they do not help each other (Kasa-Kovacs, 2004). Therefore according to my participants 'it was always obvious that problems are better resolved between women and men than between women themselves' (Roza). There was a certain hallmark on women who were 'competing with each other' (Malgorzata) and on many occasions were 'jealous of each other' (Mariola). This is known in Poland as 'a step ladder which is pulled up behind' (Mariola) so others cannot reach the same level. However Mariola also felt that the younger generation thought differently and they 'push the step ladder down so others can reach to the top'. Still, 'every woman joining politics, becomes a competitor to other woman' (Justyna). In these contests one participant felt that 'women who are already successful in politics should support each other. However our jealous nature tells us that another woman in parliament is only a competitor to us' (Sabina). Women generally were jealous 'from their birth' (Malgorzata). However, if 'we would get together then we could win all the elections. And that is what the problem is. We are not supporting each other and very often we choose men over women' (Celina). On the other hand, one participant gave examples of positive experiences involving women colleagues who 'got involved in the electoral campaign with enthusiasm and happiness that there would be another woman in parliament. I also heard that they

encouraged each other to vote for me' (Agnieszka). However, even if women do support each other, eventually they 'withdraw because they see competition from other women' (Roza).

Another concept raised by my interviewees related to **men's integration**. According to the participants, on many occasions, 'women felt men's reluctance and could see men's collaboration with each other' (Wanda). Something of the nature of 'men supporting each other' (Maria) was not widely discussed by the participants therefore I would question whether this matter significantly affected women's candidacy to the Sejm.

Another obstacle to women's parliamentary inequality in Poland mentioned by the participants was **sexism** within the Sejm. Karolina was concerned with the nature of conversations between men in power who thought that 'women should be more interested in cooking pots than politics'. This remark was considered by the participant as sexist. Another participant mentioned that she had:

A few male colleagues who are bitter chauvinists. Their opinion was that women are only suitable for looking after home, cooking and raising children. They expressed these views not only in front of me, but in front of my female colleagues as well (Roza).

Similarly a further participant had experienced men MPs treating her always as 'something they can play with and have fun with' (Celina). Sexism was also a dilemma for Karolina who illustrated her experience with one of the men MPs who 'did not miss any occasion to flirt with women in restaurants and cafes. And when he kissed

the hand of the same women for the third time, I lost my patience'. The overall message from my participants was that:

We have to change the mentality of men so they accept the fact that women are starting to appear in politics and they have to start to treat them seriously. They have to treat women as partners and on the same level as their male colleagues. I have seen the difference when my male colleague was speaking with another man. When I started a conversation with him he treated me as some little star, nice, warm, just as a little decoration (Agnieszka).

Political establishments

Another factor which affected women's presence in politics was, according to my participants, the impact of **religion**. In Poland the dominating faith is Catholicism, therefore on many occasions the Catholic Church dictates family rules. As Sozanska (2009) illustrates although the church does not accept any kind of gender discrimination, it does however allocate different activities to different gender groups. For example, women's activity is to give birth and nurture the family therefore the engagement of women in politics is acceptable so long as it does not impact on the family (Sozanska, 2009). The church in Poland used the solidarity movement²⁵ to reinforce the dissident activity of Catholic women (Baldez, 2003) however according to Heinen and Portet (2009) at the same time is still seen by feminists as a male organisation. According to my participants, under the Catholic belief, 'the place for women is with the children, with the husband and with the family' (Roza). This rule is written 'in the Bible, that our role is to look after our home

²⁵ Solidarity movement: non-violent, anti-communist social movement that, at its height, boasted some 9.4 million members. It is considered to have contributed greatly to the fall of communism.

and take care of the family' (Sabina). Moreover, the main concern of the same participant was that:

It is not possible to change a man into a child-carer as this is not common in our culture. In Poland Catholic beliefs are still very strong and the role of a woman is to look after the family. However, we object to that as this is not a medieval age (Sabina).

Thus religion has a big impact on low women's political representation (Kosa-Kovacs, 204). However, Heinen and Portet (2009) claim that over the years the church has already become more open to women's political activity.

The same unwritten rule that women's place is at home was promoted by **communism** under which 'men established certain standards regarding women. Women were portrayed as belonging in the house, and staying in the shadow of men' (Roza). Another participant also agreed with the above opinion stating that:

In the early 90s women in politics were seen differently. If you follow the years of different governments, you can maybe see women from time to time. A significant change arose after 2001 when we entered the 21st century and all of a sudden it turned out that a modern political party is more accepted when it has women on the lists. And then suddenly it turned out that women, often labelled as nice looking flowers, were very valuable. Therefore they began to search for women (Justyna).

A wide body of research relates also to the **spectrum of political party** as one of the influences on women's visibility in politics. My participants tackled this issue and illustrated that:

The left wing parties such as Palikot's Party or Social Democratic Party have accepted a smaller number of women that you can count on one hand. But

as I said, Civic Platform, the right-wing political party, has the largest number of women. I think around one third of all members of the party are women (Hanna).

Furthermore, the Parliamentary Group of Women also dominates the 'right-wing party, the Civic Platform' (Hanna), such a contradiction from the UK, where the political left-wingers that are more open to women. Nevertheless, despite their spectrum, researchers argue that is the political party's responsibility to encourage women's political participation (Kosa-Kovacs, 2004; EIGE, 2013).

STRUCTURAL PROS AND CONS

Positive actions

One of the main factors explored during the interviews was my participants' reflections on gender **quotas**. My aim was to investigate my participants' views on the nature of positive actions and whether this type of equality promotion has had the expected effects on the presence of women in the Polish Sejm. From some of the participants' point of view, gender quotas were necessary 'in order to convince women who have a lower opinion about themselves that they can achieve something and they can be as important as their husbands or their men partners' (Hanna). There were different opinions about quotas, but if they exist 'women would more likely stand as parliamentary candidates' (Marta). In fact according to the latest research by Gorecki and Kukolowicz (2014), the introduction of quotas in Poland, considerably

increased the number of women candidates. Some of my participants had taken an active approach in the process of promoting equality guarantees in Poland where 'in the first five candidates on the electoral list they have to have three women or three men' (Ewa) as 'if there are not the required thirty five percent of women on the list, the list is not registered' (Irena). Some Polish MPs went even further and proposed to 'amend the thirty five percent quota to introduce zipping' (Ewa). However, other participants who accepted the need for quotas 'were not convinced about zipping as it feels artificial' (Agata). Besides, zipping, an equality promotion where every second candidate on the list is a woman is considered by some scholars as principle which could be easily adapted under the PR electoral system (LeDuc et al., 2010).

Nevertheless, one also admitted that despite being against gender quotas, she has changed her mind and strongly felt that 'in a young democracy and in a society which is not ready to see an image of women in politics, quotas are acceptable' (Agata) as 'gender equality in politics is very important' (Justyna).

Several participants agreed with the use of quotas only as a short term solution to improve gender inequality in the Sejm. They felt that affirmative action was a 'stage to give women a chance to be involved in the election campaign and hence the chance of demonstrating that they are ready to work in the parliament' (Teresa). In their view 'quotas are needed at the beginning as they help women to compete against men' (Hanna) and also it 'would promote the idea of women being seen in politics' (Hanna). The main idea behind quotas is to prepare society to understand that 'women can play an important role in politics' (Barbara). In support, according

to Dahlerup and Friedenval (2005) quotas were proven as a fast track to women's parliamentary entry. Besides, 'when people see how great women are as politicians' we will not need quotas' (Celina). There was also another approach to the use of the 35 percent quota in the Polish Sejm where Mariola defined quotas as a 'temporary tool to tell women to get into the parliament'. As an example, Agnieszka admitted that the 35 per cent quota 'helped me to get to the top five of the candidates and I am sure I would not be there without'. On the other hand, the majority of participants felt that any type of equality guarantees promoting women were wrong and unnecessary. Maria for example admitted she felt that quotas were:

Some kind of misunderstanding. Firstly, because I do not like dividing between men and women. I think that everyone is a human being, everyone has their own brain and everyone chooses their own path in life as nothing is given on a plate. If you want to do something then firstly, you have to want to do it and secondly, you have to work for it.

Another participant felt that women are 'ambitious enough and strong enough to be able to get what they deserve by their own work' (Evelina). Moreover she admitted 'I always run equally with men and have never used my gender as an excuse' (Evelina). Also another participant argued that 'everything I achieved, I did on my own, by engaging and working in local politics. However, some jealous people said; you got in because of quotas' (Roza). It was evident that many participants felt that quotas did not help some women as in many instances when they were placed on the electoral list they 'did not feel they were ready' (Ewa). This argument can be extended by illustrating the findings from a survey on gender equality by du Vall (2009) which uncovered that the use of quotas may result in women being randomly

selected. During my interview Hanna was also concerned about 'forcing women and taking them away from their families and crying children'. This argument can be extended by claiming that the proper way of increasing women's participation in politics is to provide 'support for women, to help them to share family duties as we have the same rights and responsibilities as men. We would find then the way but we have to be treated equally. For me positive action is an artificial measure' (Maria). One respondent argued that 'the introduction of quotas is after all like destroying reality' (Agata). And 'if we have to divide between men and women, why not divide for example, between blondes and brunettes' (Maria). Overall my participants felt that the introduction of quotas was 'contrary to the rules of democracy and the Constitution which says that elections should be equal' (Halina). Moreover,

If someone can't cope then you have the choice as nobody is forcing anyone. If women want to sit at home, this is their choice. Quota means that there is a privilege to get on the list, and women come forward as of their willing nature. But after that the family and the politics suffer equally as they would have to compromise (Halina).

Besides, if 'men have some predisposition to be a politician, women equally have this as well' (Monika). The main idea of promoting gender equality was to 'choose the balance in order not to undermine anyone' (Roza). What's more, Gorecki and Kukolowicz (2014) argue that according to their latest research, while the result of the implementation of the gender quota in Poland increased the number of women candidates by nearly double the number, the actual number of women elected was not comparably as great. This also undermines the claims by some researchers who state that legislative gender quotas (which are currently used in Poland) are more

successful than voluntary party quotas (EIGE, 2013; Beveridge et al., 2015). Overall according to Sierakowski (2014), Sledzinska and Bodnar (2014), the success of using equality guarantees is to associate gender quota with gender ideology.

While exploring equality promotion I went further and tested my participants on their opinion on the **interference by the government**, regarding gender balance in the parliament. I got some strong responses where for example Halina resented very strongly any interference and argued to 'keep the Government off this issue. The Government is supposed to be neutral in every way. The Government has to ensure that people who want to get there have followed ordered rules and procedures'. For another participant it was more important to ensure that political parties should take responsibility for balancing gender in the parliament as, 'if they improve the climate for women, then there will be no problem in having more women in the parliament' (Elzbieta). The reason for the participants objecting to intervention by the government was also that a democratic country such as Poland should make all decisions democratically and that 'the government should not take the decisions on everything itself. The issue of improving gender balance is up to women and women's organizations' (Monika), and 'these matters should be dealt with by other associations or non-governmental institutions' (Malgorzata).

Another participant related interference by the government to women's consciousness about their abilities. She conceptualized that when 'women become more conscious about their abilities, they have bigger aspirations and this helps them to come forward and join politics' (Wanda). Within the same context there were also

contrasting opinions about the involvement of the government in gender equality issues. For example, Agnieszka strongly agreed that the government should 'support the idea of rebalancing gender within the parliament as it is more powerful'. Also Maria and Anita felt the same stating that 'everything that promotes women is appropriate' (Maria) and that the government should interfere as otherwise 'the political parties will act as they wish' (Anita).

Election processes

Although there is some degree of inconsistency when debating the electoral systems and their impact on gender inequality in parliaments, I have endeavored to explore this issue further. My participants predominantly exposed the impact of **position on the electoral list/winnable seats**. In support some researchers claim that position on the list is very important to women's electoral success (Balinska, 2007; du Vall, 2009).

The main message from my interviewees was that:

There is one rule only that works in Polish political life very well. During the election, the biggest chance to win and enter the parliament is to be the first on the electoral list and the first female on the list. The first woman on the list, even as it is the third or fourth, usually collects more votes than those men who are in front of her (Justyna).

However although sometimes women were running from lower places on the list, they still 'managed to run excellent electoral campaigns and win the election' (Sabina). But, men who have leading positions on the list 'would do anything not to place strong women at the top of the lists. Then it is not important whether you have

a woman or a man, but what matters most is whether there is a strong woman and weak man' (Wanda). In reality Polish 'women were mostly placed at the bottom of the lists, just to fulfill the promises. And of course these were not the places from which you could get to the Sejm' (Hanna). To the contrary, one participant admitted 'I have chosen tenth position on the list as this was a position which you did not have to fight for, nor to compete' (Roza). Moreover, 'if people decide to vote and know who to vote for, they should find that person on the electoral list' (Anita).

My participants also tackled the topic of **electoral support**. Agata admitted that 'it would have been easier for women if they had not been thrown into the deep end' as 'everyone had cope alone' (Hanna). However, another participant admitted that 'there was a lot of support, not only verbal or electoral help but financial help as well' (Karolina). There was also 'training provided and we could use the advertising. However I did not use that help as I managed to cope myself. I did not require any help' (Ewa).

The other issue the participants tackled on was **help/lack of help from the political party**. One participant 'had not expected any help' (Karolina) and therefore after she won the election she was fighting to help the new coming women. Another participant admitted that she 'did not expect any additional help from the party' (Agata). She also declared, 'I felt that I have the same electoral strength as a man' (Agata). However, one participant claimed that 'help and support from the party in my constituency was available' (Agnieszka). However the literature dealing with the responsibilities of the political parties also reports that parties fail to find a suitable

women who would fulfill the candidate standards recommended by the EU (Kosa-Kovacas, 2004) and the supply of suitable women is still problematic (Beveridge et al., 2015).

WAYS TO GENDER EQUALITY

Backgrounds of the candidates

Education of parliamentarians has been emphasized widely by academics over the years. The historical tradition in Poland restricted women from gaining sufficient education due to the limitation of female schools within the country (Fushara, 2006). By 1919 compulsory and free education applied to all children till they reached the age of 14, however, the majority of young girls faced difficulties in continuing their further education due to lack of funds. Nevertheless, by the mid-1970s some development in the country's culture and improvement in educational policies allowed women to gain higher education and at present women parliamentarians in Poland 'are better educated than men' (Zofia). However, some scholars argue that education still does not make any difference in gender parliamentary equality (Platek, 2004). But other scholars claim that women with higher education show more interest in politics (Kosa-Kovakas, 2004). During the interviews my participants discussed this issue saying that 'some programmes addressed to women would be desirable, and certainly would result in more women's activity in social and political life' (Roza). My participants felt that this was not 'the best way of improving gender

balance in the Polish Sejm' (Irena), but on the other hand the education of young people and adults would be 'one of many ways to help with the political gender imbalance' (Irena). Barbara and Justyna gave some tangible examples of action taken either by women's organisations organising 'training for women electoral candidates' (Justyna) as this type of training was 'sufficiently applicable to women the same as to men' (Justyna). However, although Barbara remembered many training sessions throughout the political journey, she felt that 'they were not very effective or visible'.

Another aspect discussed widely by scholars is the importance of having **political experience** before entering parliament. This topic was also raised by the interviewees who felt that 'you cannot be a parliamentarian without having previous political experience' (Marta). Another participant reflected more strongly on that subject saying:

I think it is very important that only people with political experience should join the Sejm. I am against very young and inexperienced people. And it is not because I do not value young people, as I really do, but I believe you should have some experience in order to be able to get into parliament (Maria).

Having political experience helped Zofia to 'to grasp the technical areas of parliamentary work'. Moreover, she claimed that she would 'never take this high political step without any experience'. However, Hanna conceded that although most of her colleagues 'had political experience working previously as councillors or mayors in local government, there are still a few who did not hold any such positions'.

Coming together

The literature also deals with ways of improving gender imbalance in politics by reporting on the masculinity of the parliamentary environment which is considered not suitable for women (Balinska, 2007). The parliamentary culture is often referred to as a **male orientated environment** and its cultural environment was described by my participants as a 'terribly brutal game' (Maria) where 'a woman is crossed out as men would do anything to cut her out' (Sabina). Another participant felt that 'I was just a fulfillment of the list' (Mariola) and rationalized that if 'my male colleagues had predicted that I could get in, they would never have put me on the electoral list' (Mariola).

In order to fight men's domination of the Sejm, women have joined together and formed **women's organisations** and this has helped them not only to support each other, but has also helped to change the parliamentary atmosphere. Overall in Poland there is the beginning of a new era with the 'big social movement called Women's Congress' (Hanna). This has led to the creation of women's associations, organisations and foundations, which have benefitted women by 'raising awareness about their rights, their capabilities and showing them what they can achieve in political life' (Roza). One of the organisations is called the Parliamentary Women's Group which is responsible for 'mobilising women to fight for 50/50 balance of women and men on electoral lists' (Marta). Furthermore, Ewelina felt that if 'women join together and become active together; they help not only themselves but other women as well'. Another participant illustrated some positive experiences with

women's organisations that 'helped me in the electoral campaign even though they were from a different constituency' (Agnieszka). These organisations did upset male MPs and when one of the participants got involved in a foundation supporting other women 'men got cross and very angry' (Karolina). While most scholars assume that women's organisation are closely linked with helping women to reach political eminence, some of my participants felt otherwise. As Halina illustrated:

We can see all these females who are demanding parity. They have created women's organisations that had nil or close to zero votes and with these votes they tried to establish something like the Women's Party. There were some beauty divas who had nobody voting for them, neither had any support. They were some walking oddballs which spoiled the image of women.

A further participant experienced difficulties when approaching such organisations which showed 'some resistance and kept to themselves' (Justyna). Another participant simply 'did not have any support at all' (Roza) from any women's organisations during her political career. What's more, some scholars argue that women organisations have little influence on state policy (Kosa-Kovacas, 2004) and according to survey done by du Vall (2009), only 5 per cent of women could name at least one women's organisation.

When considering the above debate, scholars pay attention to a phenomenon which affects not only women's involvement in politics but contextualises the responses of men to women's political representation. This observable fact is given the name of **critical mass**. My participants also tackled this important issue claiming that a larger number of women in the Polish Sejm would cause 'men to fear that we would take all the power away from them. Therefore they would defend their position by

forming their own pressure groups' (Maria). For example, one participant reflected on her experience in the parliamentary debate session where she was sitting next to a male MP who swore: 'damn, how many women are there: woman ministers, woman chairmen of a committee, damn we soon would have to fight for our own rights' (Hanna). She then felt that 'men are feeling cornered and somehow give signals that the fight for equality went too far' (Hanna) as 'men feel trapped by women' (Karolina). The reality is that 'out of 206 people in our party, there are 72 women, therefore you are reaching one third of gender representation. Hence we could influence many crucial decisions' (Roza). Moreover, 'we felt privileged as we felt from the beginning that we had a big power (Hanna). However, 'if there were too many women, I do not know how this would influence the atmosphere in the Sejm' (Roza) as it has become accepted that we have already 'calmed the party's customs' (Agata). Conversely one participant argued that 'I do not believe in the assurance that more women in politics would change anything in politics. Moreover, I do not feel that there is a need for the changes' (Justyna).

Thus it is important to question whether in reality the rise of women in politics would affect women in any other field. Scholars argue that a majority of women could have a crucial effect on decisions concerning **women's issues**. Some of the participants felt that there were not 'enough women in politics as women are much more sensitive about social affairs, the softer issues such as education, sport, social policy and health' (Roza). In reality women more often 'talk about their problems which effectively involve family issues' (Hanna). According to my participants:

The fact is that there are issues easily digestible by men and there are more empathetic topics that are for women. However, I would argue again that I am not in favor of dividing issues between being seen as 'issues for men' and 'issues for women' (Agata).

On many occasions women were 'pigeonholed into certain boxes as primarily they dealt with social affairs regarding children, family and women' (Agnieszka). And surprisingly it turned out that 'women turned their attention to issues that men absolutely do not pay attention to' (Justyna). These issues 'translate to simple things such as, for example, whether to place a bus stop next to the football stadium or next to the nursery' (Justyna). Therefore it seemed important that 'there are as many of us as possible so we can have an impact on some important women issues' (Roza).

Gender Equality is not an issue

Surprisingly some of my participants gave a completely different view on gender equality in the Polish Sejm. They argued that there are **no barriers** to women's political advancement. For example Marta claimed that 'if women want to, they have the opportunity to run for election as nobody poses any barriers to them'. Women in general have different obligations, but if they want to run for election 'the field is open for them' (Halina). Moreover, Ewa felt that 'women are perceived positively and they cope with their responsibilities very well'. Consequently 'are there any obstacles to women's political involvement? No! If she wants to be involved, she can be' (Halina). Dagmara added to the above debate based on her experiences 'I did not

think about that, I am a woman and for me this was not a problem' and more 'once I made the decision to be the candidate, then it was easy'.

To add to the above debate some women MPs claimed that **no more women are needed** in the Sejm. For example, Halina strongly argued that 'there is no need to regulate either there would be more or less women. Let's the political life regulate itself', Therefore, 'leave it alone, don't increase the number of women' (Halina). This argument can be extended by claiming that

It should be that if you want to be involved in politics then OK. We already introduced quota that there should be women in the first five candidates. Thus, to encourage the balance of 50/50 in parliament would not be achievable as there are not even enough women in politics (Wanda).

Besides there are questions

Is it necessary to have more women in the Sejm? Is that a new ideology? We already moved towards new ideology which wants to equalize everything. However a woman is a woman and a man is a man and I hope that difference would be reputable till the end of the world (Wanda).

Also the evidence from a survey by du Vall (2009) uncovered that seventy percent of Polish women feel that having only a small number of women in politics is not a problem.

Within the context of gender equality not being an issue in the parliament, some participants illustrated their positive experiences when in the Sejm. Karolina admitted 'for me being an MP was a positive experience'. Other respondents also claimed that 'my gender actually helped me to get into politics (Justyna) and 'I experienced sympathy and encouragement' (Jolanta).

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have aimed to illustrate the views of Polish women MPs on the issue of gender balance in the Sejm. Of the cohort of 25 interviewed women MPs, the majority agreed that an improvement in gender equality within the Polish Sejm was necessary and that more women were needed in the political arena.

This study has shown that woman MPs' consider that one of the differences between the genders was the reluctance of women to come forward due to fear of not being capable of holding a powerful position. The MPs believed that physical and behavioural differences between men and women played a considerable role in sustaining parliamentary gender imbalance. These differences were closely linked to women's duties in looking after the family and the main concern of my participants was that family responsibilities were significantly restricting women's choice of career. However, this could be tackled by having family support and by fighting for social changes. These improvements were dependant on changes in a well-established culture where women were seen as wives and mothers and a political

career was still not acceptable as a profession. At the same time, the image of women was constantly distorted by the media, although some participants had positive experiences with the press.

Another issue that arose during the interviews concerned structural barriers such as the support of the party during elections and the importance of the position of women candidates on the electoral list. Although there was a disagreement about the most effective ways to improve the gender balance in Polish politics, the majority of my respondents agreed that the introduction of quotas was the best solution to tackle that problem. However, a majority of interviewees suggested that gender party quotas should only be a short-term solution. Furthermore, participants firmly insisted that the government should not interfere in the regulation of gender balance and that this issue should be tackled by political parties instead.

Also, it became evident that as well as quotas, in order to improve the gender balance in the Polish Sejm, other routes to gender equality had to be taken into consideration. One of the main concerns of my participants was to have the right candidates coming forward. Within this context, the interviewees discussed the level of education and the necessity of having political experience by the candidates. The help provided by various women's organisations was considered as being important by many of the participants, although some participants had experienced negativity and resentment from other women MPs. Additionally some participants mentioned the idea of a critical mass as being an important step in strengthening women's power, and considered its implication on men's fear of 'being overpowered by women'.

Surprisingly some participants claimed that there were no barriers in women's desire to become politically involved and even claimed that there was no need for more women in politics.

CHAPTER VI: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES: BRITISH AND POLISH WOMEN MPS

INTRODUCTION

Scholars argue that comparative political studies are valuable not only for understanding the political systems in the studied countries, but for establishing the similarities and differences between them and investigating their impact on the studied subject. As I was endeavouring to gain a deeper understanding of women's under-representation in parliaments, I positioned my study by comparing two European countries on similarities and differences in women MPs' perceptions of this issue. Academics concentrate on identifying ways to gender equality and try to discover how to increase the number of women in legislative bodies. However, true democracy, according to Kittilson (2006), is taking place when there is an equal opportunity for all citizens to join the national legislature. If true democracy were present, then women would have equal access to parliamentary elections. The reality of my chosen countries, the UK and Poland, is that gender parity still does not exist in either of the parliaments.

Many scholars argue that for some women the fear of reaching the parliamentary summit derives from lack of confidence or a feeling of being unable to compete against their male colleagues (Vallance, 1979; Karam and Lovenduski, 2005; Pankow and Post, 2010). However, there are more obstacles that affect women's advancement in politics. For instance, in reviewing the literature, very little data was found on behavioural differences between men and women. Women and men differ

not only in physical attributes but also in the ways of thinking and behaving which they learn through cultural socialisation. Hence, it could be hypothesised that behavioural aspects of socialised human nature might contribute to the robustness of gender inequality in national parliaments.

A variety of cross-national and international studies indicate other reasons for women's under-representation in national parliaments such as socio-economic, socio-cultural factors or the impact of electoral systems. These aspects were widely discussed by my participants with emphasis on particular issues regarding political, economic, and structural factors and the ideological aspect of women's political suppression. Although Paxson and Kunovich (2003:92) argue that 'to bypass the need for proxies, researchers have attempted to include more specific measures of ideology', I would argue that this data must be interpreted with caution because of its emphasis on more traditional variables such as religion and culture. Nevertheless this study discovered that each country's structural, cultural and ideological characteristics make a significant impact on women's parliamentary representation. The degree of these limits is uncovered in this chapter, noting the similarities and differences in the British and Polish women MPs' perceptions of gender equality dilemmas.

Gender similarities/differences

When examining the absence of women in politics, the evidence from my interviewees suggests that there are not enough women coming forward. In the discussion about the degree of women's involvement in politics, participants from the House of Commons equally agreed with the participants from the Polish Sejm that the lack of women applying for political positions made difficult for the political parties to place woman as electoral candidates. However, my interviewees from both countries suggested that women's political reluctance mainly related to their struggle to accomplish a work/life balance. They also illustrated the difficulty of fulfilling the requirements of quotas that have been implemented by political parties. Further, the main idea of political participation according to my participants lies in involvement in private activism such as petitioning. In the UK and Poland around half of the interviewees mentioned this jointly with women's reluctance to be put forward as an electoral candidate. This was so important to them that some of my participants mentioned this issue more than once. Moreover, in the selection process, the ideology of having the best candidate for the election has been a concern of the political gatekeepers. However, a very small number of interviewees (just two participants from the Sejm and two from the House of Commons) mentioned the difficulty of finding suitable women who could be considered as the parliamentary candidates. They referred to women's desire to join politics for the wrong reasons, women's lacks of interest in politics (please refer to Figure 9 and

Figure 10 in the Appendix 4) and some other difficulties in finding further parliamentary candidates. According to my participants, this also applied to women's lack of desire in entering political scene for the wrong reasons, which was clarified by my respondents as meaning entering politics solely for the purpose of gaining power or becoming famous. However, my participants did not feel this topic was important, as only one interviewee from the House of Commons mentioned this more than once.

Family

Within the context of family responsibilities my participants also had strong views to share. In both countries this issue was very important; therefore this subject was widely discussed by the majority of the interviewees. Out of 22 interviewees from the House of Commons, 20 raised the subject, with 12 of them raising the issue more than once. Out of 25 interviews in the Sejm, 23 cited family responsibilities as a barrier to women's political advancement and 18 of the interviewees addressed this issue more than once. Within this context my participants from both countries were mostly concerned about the commitment women face having to look after the family and the time to allocate their availability when working in the parliament. They discussed the difficulties in establishing work/life balance, especially for those with small children. Some participants from both countries claimed that the only reason they were able to become MPs was that their children were already fully grown. Within the same debate, I also paid some attention to uncovering the participants'

views on social assistance to help women with their family responsibilities. With relevance to social help, however, my participants were not very explicit as in fact only one participant from the House of Commons discussed this issue, followed by two participants from the Polish Sejm. Further, only one participant from Poland mentioned this issue more than once. Overall, my participant's response to a question on social help was poor in both countries.

Distortions

Sexism in parliament has perpetuated a masculine identity for the institution. Surprisingly, according to my participants from both countries, although overt sexism still exists, only four women MPs from the House of Common and five from the Polish Sejm indicated this as a problem. However, for the British women MPs this issue was so important that four of them mentioned this more than once. In contrast only one Polish woman MP came back to sexism in her conversation. The British participants gave some very crude examples of men's behaviour including being patronising and very unpleasant, especially towards younger women MPs. There were also some sexual harassment claims in the Polish Sejm. However, my Polish interviewees were talking more about men's flirting with women rather than being abusive.

During my interviews a significant discussion about the media and its biases about women politicians took place; 19 interviewees from the House of Commons and 22 from the Sejm were concerned with this subject. This issue was so important to my

participants that 12 from the UK and 17 from Poland reflected on this topic more than once. Women MPs from both countries were similarly concerned with the distorted images that media imposed on women politicians with the emphasis on women's appearance and their clothes rather than the political achievements of the individuals.

Structural pros and cons

In my research I aimed to explore the importance of using quotas as a measure to increase the number of women in Parliament. All the 22 interviewees from the House of Commons expressed their views on the use and effectiveness of quotas. The interviewees from the Polish Sejm, similar in number (24 out of 25), raised this subject during the interviews. Also, the issue was so important that 16 MPs from the UK and 24 MPs from the Polish Sejm mentioned it more than once.

My participants drew on the effectiveness of British all-women-shortlists, A-list and the Polish 35% quota. Overall, the implementation of gender quotas was considered by my participants as the only visible solution to tackle parliamentary gender inequality. However the majority of the participants claimed that the use of quotas was only a short term solution. Also my findings about the effectiveness of gender quotas fed back into the type of quota policies, classifying them as legal gender quotas and party gender quotas. My participants reflected on the differences between legal and voluntary quotas and the difference that such legislation made in the selection process within the political parties. In both countries my participants

admitted that in contrast to legal gender quotas, the party gender quotas had weaker effects on the rise of women in parliament in the long term (Please refer to Figure 5). Overall, comparing these two countries it can be seen that this equality promotion issue was one of the most discussed during the interviews.

One of the most striking findings was a response to a question about the interference of the government to tackle gender imbalance. In both countries participants responded to this question in equal number, 17 from each country. The issue was quite important to my participants as eight from the UK and four from Poland mentioned the subject more than once. The most common response from both countries to the question of whether the government should step in to tackle gender balance in parliament was that the government had more important matters to deal with and it was up to the political parties to sort out political gender disparity.

Being placed in winnable position was also quite important to my participants as seven UK interviewees and 11 Polish interviewees debated on this topic. To some (two from the UK and 10 from Poland) this topic was so important that they discussed this more than once. My participants argued that the failure of the political parties to select women for winnable seats undermined the availability of suitable and highly trained women candidates. Their main concern was that in practice the top positions on the electoral lists were reserved for men. My participants argued that political parties were blocking women's access to parliament by not placing them in a position from which they would be likely to be elected from. In the UK, this was due to political parties' fear of wasted votes as in their opinion voters would prefer to choose male

over women candidates. Moreover, during the general election for the Polish Sejm in 2011 some political parties such as Prawo i Sprawiedliwosc (PIS) and Platforma Obywatelska (PO) placed men at the top of the electoral lists due to a fear of potentially having a women as leader of the party.

Ways to gender equality

A powerful argument is that more women in parliament increases women's power within the political party and this was discussed by my interviewees in equal number (nine in the UK and 10 in Poland). Similar numbers of the participants mentioned this issue more than once (four in the UK and five in Poland). According to my participants, the presence of a critical mass within the political parties allowed women to impose the introduction of equality promotions such as quotas. The other response to this issue among the British and Polish women MPs was also that a critical mass causes concern for male MPs who feel that their power and position is being undermined by the presence of too many women. Some Polish participants mentioned changes in the parliamentary ethos stating that having more women in the parliament had influenced the way of doing politics and that political communications had become less confrontational.

However, in both countries the participants were mainly concerned about the need for women to 'stick together' rather than the feminisation of the parliament. Their general feeling was that there is a lack of solidarity between women

parliamentarians, who compete with each other instead. Overall, my interviewees complained about the lack of cohesive sisterhood within the political environment.

Women's issues were a subject that was also discussed by my participants. Overall eight British MPs and six Polish MPs commented on this issue. For four participants from the UK and five from Poland the promotion of women's issues was so important that they mentioned this matter more than once. Accordingly, my participants illustrated the impact that women MPs make on 'female friendly' policies such as in health and education. This phenomenon was commented on during the interviews where some women MPs gave examples of changing men's perspectives on matters regarding human experience.

Surprisingly, some participants claimed that there were no political or legal barriers to women's advancement in politics. Seven MPs from the House of Commons and eight from the Polish Sejm argued that the political arena was open to anyone. In fact their feelings were so strong that five MPs from the UK and one from Poland made this point more than once.

UP-AND-COMING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BRITISH AND POLISH WOMEN MPS

Gender similarities/ differences

My participants had different feelings about women's reluctance to enter politics. There was a big difference in the numbers of MPs from the two countries who

discussed this issue. Only five MPs from the House of Commons mentioned that women did not believe in their ability to become an MP, and only one MP mentioned this issue more than once. The British women MPs mostly spoke in a context of women's fear of not coping with the parliamentary male dominated environment, which was substantially different to the Polish MPs' understanding of women's fears within the parliamentary context. In comparison, sixteen MPs from Poland illustrated their own and their colleagues' experiences of being scared to stand for the Parliament and not believing themselves to be good enough as potential candidates. The Polish MPs feared that they would not be able to fulfil the requirements of being women parliamentarians and they were frightened of taking on the risk of failing to fulfil the parliamentary tasks and cope with life/work balance at the same time. Some MPs even admitted that they had been asked numerous times before they decided to stand for the election and some had even resigned from that position. Thus the women MPs felt that women needed to be encouraged to abandon their fear about entering politics and believe in themselves - that they would be good enough and capable to be as good parliamentarians as men. However other Polish MPs felt that if women did not want to join politics, they should not be forced. In fact the issue of women being afraid to choose politics and parliamentary work as their career was so important to the Polish women MPs that seven tackled the issue more than once.

Nine women MPs from the House of Commons explored the difference between masculine and feminine traits within the parliament, with three of them mentioning this matter more than once. They illustrated women's capacity for collective work and their effectiveness when dealing with difficulties. The British women MPs' main

concern was women's desire to resolve any problem rather than just talk about it, and women being better communicators than men. Nonetheless, only nine MPs spoke about this aspect, with none of them discussing this phenomenon more than once. The behavioural patterns among men and women, however, was of particular interest to the Polish MPs, among whom the majority of my interviewees (20 of the women MPs) commented on the differences between men and women in the context of learned behaviours during their social development. Apart from talking about women's ability to be realistic about what they can achieve (contrasting with the male bravado of taking on tasks which they are unlikely to be able to complete), they also illustrated emotional differences between men and women and indicated the solidarity of men with each other, compared to the competitiveness of women among themselves. Some Polish MPs illustrated this behaviour by giving examples of men pushing themselves to take-on various tasks on irrespective of whether they were good or bad choices due to their belief that they belonged to the most clever group in the entire population. What is more, the participants felt that men were more abusive and eager, thereby, to display apparent leadership capabilities. On the other hand, the women MPs described themselves as better organised than men and as people who could fulfil more than one task at the same time while unfortunately being simultaneously more hysterical and emotional. Furthermore, the Polish women MPs felt that on many occasions, women's achievements are undermined with men taking the credit for women's work. Overall, this subject was so important to the Polish women MPs that 13 of them referred to the issue more than once.

Another major difference between the views of British and Polish women MPs arose in discussions about the development of masculinity traits by women upon entering the political arena. This was seen as necessary by eight British participants who overall had different opinions on this topic. Some felt that in order to survive in the male dominated parliamentary environment women had to grow thick skins, but for the others the development of masculinity by women was not only unnecessary but distasteful. They stressed that women should not follow the male approach as showing that there was a more feminine way of doing politics was helping women in their parliamentary careers. Surprisingly, none of the Polish women MPs had anything to say about the development of masculine behaviour by women politicians. On the other hand, this was so important to British participants that five of them mentioned this issue more than once during their interviews.

Family

An interesting result of the interviews was a debate on family support. Eight participants from the House of Commons commented on this issue, with four of them mentioning this more than once. In the UK the debate centred on the significance of having a supportive partner and discussing this type of a career path with the family prior to standing for the Parliament was very important. An unfortunate side effect of being a female MP was the higher than average number of divorces which the interviewees attributed to the difficulties in achieving work/life balance by women MPs (please refer to Tables 12 and 13 in the Appendix 5). Also, the husbands were

most likely to be pursuing their own commitments and careers. In Poland, on the other hand, 16 participants indicated the importance of family support with 12 of them mentioning this issue more than once. The Polish MPs also dwelt on the support of the whole family and the importance of taking the decision about a parliamentary occupation with the whole family. This included the significance of having supportive husbands and supportive parents who helped to look after their children and supported their career choice. What is more, when compared to the British MPs, it was very important for the Polish women MPs was to promote gender equality in marriages so women would not be left with family responsibilities on their own. In their view, men, women and children should share domestic tasks together, and do so equally. However the Polish MPs had already seen changes in this domain: young fathers pushing prams had become more common. They also emphasised the importance of discussing their political involvement with their families prior to becoming MPs.

I have illustrated above the importance of family support in the lives of women MPs. However, it is important to question whether social changes have occurred in the Polish or British parliaments. I placed my question in context by giving an example of a former British Prime Minister's response to these changes. Just before May 2000, when British Prime Minister Tony Blair expected the birth of his first child, his wife Cherie Blair complemented Finnish Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen, for taking a week of paternity leave to care for his child. However in his public response to this, Tony Blair said: 'I've got a country to run...I know what people want me to say, but the truth is, if I went away and stopped taking calls, or having conversations, it just

wouldn't be real...I cannot stop being Prime Minister'. Despite the importance of social changes, only four British women MPs discussed this during the interview. In Poland on the other hand the need for changes such as providing more nurseries and allowing fathers to take paternity leave was a concern of 11 MPs and two mentioned this issue more than once during the interview.

Distortions

Cultural barriers were also on the agenda during my interviews. The overall discussion about this issue was unequal between the countries. In the UK thirteen women MPs raised this matter with four women MPs talking about cultural difficulties more than once. The British women MPs spoke about Britain being a patriarchal society, giving the example of the political gatekeepers who were mainly men. Within the same context, the participants urged that there was a need for change in the male dominated cultural atmosphere of the parliament where at present the shouting culture dominated. They also pointed out that women were given the vote much later than men, and that men traditionally had more time. The British participants also tackled the issue of women being associated with female roles and caring jobs. However, according to British women MPs, changes on the perception of women's role in society were already visible and the cultural barriers were already being broken down. Compared to UK, the subject of cultural stereotypes was discussed more frequently by Polish women MPs; twenty three spoke about cultural stereotypes, feeling that men naturally go into politics, while a

women's place is seen as being at home. In the view of Polish women MPs, the lack of women in politics was rooted in the tradition where men were the breadwinners and women stayed at home to care for the family. And again in contrast to the British women MPs, they indicated that the tradition was hard to change and there was no hope of achieving parliamentary gender balance if the young generation was still thinking in the stereotypical way. However, they also urged that cultural changes should not be forced but should be implemented slowly, and that the education of young girls in this domain was important. In fact, 15 Polish participants discussed this matter several times.

Another major difference in the debate between the British and Polish women parliamentarians was on the advancement of gender equality. According to British women MPs, there had been some progress towards gender balance in the British parliament, where the prime example was the increase in the number of women MPs within the Conservative Party. There was also a rising number of young women entering politics. However, the overall response about recent progress in gender equality was poor as only five British women MPs gave examples of some progress in the representation of women in parliament based on the results of the 2010 general election, where more women put themselves forward for selection. They also raised a concern that it would take more than 200 years to achieve gender parity at the current rate of progress. However, this issue was not considered very important by my participants as only one British MP talked about this more than once. In contrast, none of my Polish participants raised this subject in the debate about political gender imbalance.

Women supporting and encouraging each other in parliamentary decision making was also considered during the interviews with British and Polish women MPs. In the UK this was not very widely discussed as only five participants spoke about women not being friendly to each other in the parliament or of the difficulties of having women competing with each other, rather than working together for a common cause. Only one British woman MP mentioned this issue more than once. In comparison fourteen Polish women MPs spoke about jealousy between females and the competitiveness among women MPs. However they also gave some examples of women supporting each other. This matter was important to some Polish participants among whom nine spoke about this issue more than once. On the other hand mutual male support was a topic avoided by British participants and only two Polish participants gave an opinion about men's collaboration with each other. Also only one Polish woman MP gave her opinion about this matter more than once.

Religion was one of the least discussed subjects occurring during my interviews, and completely absent among British participants. However, it was discussed only by two Polish women MPs of whom only one spoke more than once. These MPs considered that Catholicism was one of the barriers to women's political advancement. The Polish women MPs gave the example of as church being a male organisation and the rules written in the Bible according to which women's role was to care for the family.

Unsurprisingly, communism also was not on the agenda of British women MPs. This was discussed by three Polish women MPs and two of them spoke about this more than once. Overall, communism was seen as one of the barriers to women's political

representation with indications of only slight changes in the 21st century when the modernisation of political parties had taken place and women were becoming more acceptable in politics.

Also an important issue in the debate was the differences between left and right wing parties in promoting more women. This was mentioned by one Polish woman MP who emphasised this issue twice. According to her, it was the right-wingers who supported and recruited more women into the Polish Sejm. She also gave an example of a women's organisation belonging to the right-wing party who fought for gender balance in the parliament. Surprisingly, none of the British women MPs mentioned the party as being important in gender equality.

Although the impact of electoral systems has been widely discussed by academics in the literature, surprisingly only one British woman MP spoke about the disadvantages of the FPTP electoral system. Supporting the academic findings, she claimed that the PR was more women friendly and when FPTP was used, it took longer to achieve gender equality. In contrast, Polish women MPs never mentioned this subject.

Structural pros and cons

According to my participants, political parties acted as 'gatekeepers' for women who were willing to take the step towards entering the parliamentary arena. What's more, according to my interviewees, the gatekeepers could easily change their

position from keeping women out to letting them in instead. Therefore according to my interviewees the proper function of the political parties was to support women's participation in politics and help them to fulfil their ambitions and then roles as Members of Parliament. There was a mixed feeling among my interviewees about electoral support. This topic was quite important among the British interviewees, as twelve of them talked about this problem and four discussed electoral help more than once. Some participants regarded electoral help as being met by the valuable mentoring and training provided to women candidates and women MPs. On the other hand, there were some who argued that this kind of support did not exist. In contrast only eight Polish women MPs illustrated some support, but also claimed that there was a need for more help. Three Polish MPs spoke about this issue more than once.

Following my participants' suggestion that political parties play an important role in the increase of women in parliament, some differences between Poland and the UK were visible when talking about the political parties' involvement in the election processes. Only five women MPs from the UK indicated that either they did not get or require help from their political party. Some British MPs stated that from the selection process onwards, the woman MP was on her own. However some stated that there was some help already in place. In contrast 12 women MPs from Poland raised this issue and three of them spoke about their experiences more than once. Their main feeling was that they did not require any special help, although that help was available. Moreover, some helped other women in the electoral fight. In contrast, some women MPs felt that they had the same electoral strength as men.

There was also a major difference between the UK and Poland, when talking about the selection processes. In the UK three of the participants talked about selection. According to some participants, the gatekeepers who operate the selection processes in many instances discriminated against women by the criteria under which the candidate was assessed. For example, the selectors prized the more masculine characteristics, which made the male candidate more likely to be chosen. The main concern of the British women MPs was that the selectors were looking for a particular type of a candidate, and one who would not be restricted by family responsibilities. In Poland, on the other hand, the selection process was not mentioned by the MPs during the interviews.

Ways to gender equality

Education was raised as slight contributing factor among both English and Polish MPs. Three participants from the House of Commons illustrated the need for educating young girls on politics and political careers. Two of the UK women MPs discussed this issue more than once. In comparison, eight Polish women MPs referred to the need to have a good education among the younger generation and this matter was so important that six of them raised the matter more than once. One of the most striking differences between English and Polish interviewees was their personal levels of education. In the UK, out of twenty two interviewed women MPs, one had completed secondary education, one had a HND qualification, seventeen had finished their BA degrees and three had achieved Master degrees. In contrast, out of

twenty five interviewed Polish women MPs, twenty two completed Master degrees and three finished their education achieving PhD (please refer to Table 11 and Table 12 in the Appendix 5).

There was also a debate among British and Polish women MPs about the importance of having political experience before entering the House of Commons or the Polish Sejm. In the UK, only ten women MPs mentioned this issue: seven of them discussed the importance of being politically involved before entering the House of Commons more than once. They gave examples of their own experiences, expressing interest in politics at a young age or being involved in politics at the local level. Some admitted that their families were already politically involved. In Poland, on the other hand, the majority of my participants (21 out of 25) stressed the necessity of having good political experience (please refer to Table 11 and Table 12 in the Appendix 5). Moreover, ten of the Polish women MPs talked about this more than once. Their main concern was that young inexperienced women were not aware of the technical side of being an MP, therefore becoming involved in local politics was necessary before becoming a parliamentarian. However, some women MPs admitted that they did not have previous political experience and that this had not affected their candidacy for the Sejm or their subsequent parliamentary work.

Surprisingly, there was a difference between British and Polish women MPs when talking about the need for more women in parliament. In the UK the participants did not comment on this subject whereas in Poland three women MPs argued that there was no need for more women in the parliament. Additionally two Polish women MPs

gave a strong opinion about this more than once, and felt strongly that the gender balance in politics should regulate itself.

The masculine environment of UK and Polish parliaments were also discussed by my participants. Seven women MPs from the House of Commons commented on the challenges women faced in the House and the aggressive parliamentary atmosphere. Five British women MPs tackled this issue more than once. In contrast only three Polish woman MPs talked about the parliament being dominated by men and about men's desire to alienate women with their macho politics. Just one of the Polish woman MPs mentioned this issue more than once.

According to my participants, women's organisations were involved in providing necessary help and supporting women's political advancement. In the UK 11 participants talked about the advantages of belonging to women's organisations and the help they had received from these organisations. Four British women MPs felt that this issue was extremely important and spoke about their involvement with women's organisation more than once. In contrast, 20 Polish women MPs illustrated the pros and cons of women's collectivism and eight of them returned to the subject more than once. In their answers, women's organisations not only changed the parliamentary atmosphere but supported other women politicians. However, Polish participants also indicated some negative experiences with women's organisations and claimed that they had not obtained any help from them at all. In contrast there were less negative responses from the British women MPs as many participants said that although they had not received any help but because they had not required it.

There was a difference between British and Polish participants when talking about positive experiences when in the parliament. In Poland three women MPs raised this issue. They stressed their positive experiences when in the Sejm and claimed that being a woman had actually helped them to get into the parliament. The British women MPs gave no indication of any positive experiences they faced during their parliamentary careers.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have aimed to illustrate some similarities and differences in the views of British and Polish women MPs on difficulties that are responsible for obstructing women's political advancement. These similarities and differences are attributable to a number of factors such as the breakdowns of gender representation in each country. The baseline for the comparison is the similar number of women MPs in each country: 29 per cent in the UK and 24 per cent in Poland. The noticeable differences illuminate the use of two opposite types of electoral systems within the UK and Poland. The above statistics indicate that under the so called women unfriendly FPTP electoral system in the UK there are still more women MPs in the House of Commons than in Poland. This is not what would be expected as the PR electoral system is, according to scholars and academics, proven to improve gender parliamentary representation. Another factor relates to the establishment of democracy (a well-established democracy in the UK and a relatively new democracy

in Poland). Within this context scholars suggest that communism suppressed the participation of women in politics, however as illustrated in Figure 5 and Figure 6 (chapter II), the number of women in Poland during communism was significantly higher than the number of elected British women MPs. Finally, the choice for comparison of UK and Poland was based on the use of different types of equality guarantees (all-woman-shortlists, A-lists in the UK, and the 35% quota in Poland). And again, despite the introduction of quotas in Poland, far later than AWS was introduced in the UK (2011 Poland compared to 1997 in the UK), the number of elected women MPs in Poland between the years 1955-2015 was again considerably higher (see Figure 5 and 6 in chapter II). The main idea of the comparison was to explore how the women who are involved right at the very heart of politics in the House of Commons and in the Polish Sejm classify the barriers to women's parliamentary representation.

The literature dealing with gender representation in parliament reports many difficulties responsible for gender inequality. However, I would argue that these depend on a country's individual demands, culture and ideological background. The most significant similarities emerging from my interviews consist of the following: around 50 per cent of my participants suggested the reluctance of women to come forward. They explained that women did not apply for parliamentary positions mainly due to an inability to stretch their time between work and personal life. Another powerful obstacle suggested by 90 per cent of my participants from both countries was future family responsibilities. They indicated that women were committed to raising their families and balancing the time which MPs had to allocate

for parliamentary duties would not allow them to fulfil their obligations as mothers and wives. Some participants also admitted that the only reason they could become MPs was due to having fully grown children (please refer to Table 9 and Table 10 in Appendix 5). Media representation of women politicians was also indicated by nearly 90 per cent of British and Polish participants. Women MPs argued that the media epitomised distorted images of women parliamentarians, concentrating on their outfits rather than on their achievements. 98 per cent of my participants also discussed the effectiveness of gender quotas. For the British and Polish women MPs the use of equality promotion was the only solution to improve the gender balance in parliament, but some interviewees stressed that quotas were only a short term solution. Moreover, British and Polish women MPs correspondingly drew on the contribution of the government to tackle gender parliamentary disparity. 73 per cent of all interviewees strongly objected to any intervention by the government and suggested that this issue should be dealt with by political parties. Women's low representation in the parliament was also attributed to the failure of the political parties to place women in winnable seats or high on the electoral lists. 38 per cent of my participants spoke on this matter, claiming that higher positions on the electoral lists are reserved for men as positioning women at the top of the list was a risk of a wasted vote. 41 per cent of all participants shared the same view about the power of women in parliament. The term 'critical mass, has been used in their debates as an indication of men's fear to have too many women in the parliament. Also the need for women to 'stick' together was a big concern for my participants from both countries. The main idea behind the critical mass issue was the importance of the

impact that women parliamentarians would make on women's issues. 30 per cent of my participants claimed that more women in parliament would help to establish woman-friendly policies. This would also modify men's views on more human orientated matters such as childcare and health policies. Surprisingly, 32 per cent of my interviewees claimed that there were no barriers to women's advancement in politics. They stated that political careers were open to anyone.

As the above factors were quite important to my participants when talking about barriers to women's political involvement, it is important to question whether other aspects play an equally significant role. For example, only 20 per cent of British and Polish women MPs discussed the impact of overt sexism within the lower chambers of parliaments. They mentioned the abuse they faced as women and the constant desire of men to flirt with the opposite sex. Similarly, a small percentage of interviewees (nine percent) mentioned the lack of suitable women as a barrier to women's advancement in politics. Further, the importance of social help was mentioned by my participants with the emphasis on the poor standards of social help in each country. This issue, however, was not considered a major barrier by the British or Polish women MPs as only approximately seven percent of my interviewees discussed this matter.

In the previous section I illustrated similarities between the British and Polish women MPs' views on barriers to women's political involvement. I now summarise the differences that emerged from comparing the views of British and Polish women politicians on women's political participation. Women's fear was a big concern of the

Polish women MPs (64 per cent) compared to British women MPs (23 per cent). Polish participants discussed women's fear of not being good enough and not believing in their ability to fulfil the role of MP. Another argument raised mainly by Polish women MPs (80 per cent) compared to British women MPs (41 per cent) was the differences between men and women. These included the advantage of women being able to work collectively and being effective in finishing given tasks. On the other hand, when talking about gender differences, the participants indicated emotional differences between men and women and the high level of women's competitiveness between each other. 64 per cent of my Polish participants compared to 36 per cent of the British participants indicated the importance of family support. One of the reasons that women felt able to join politics was having supportive husbands who helped with family responsibilities and agreed with the woman's career choice. Their political plans, however, had to be discussed and agreed with the family prior to the woman's political involvement. Forty-four percent of Polish women MPs compared to 18 per cent of the British women MPs also mentioned the importance of social changes. They pointed to the need for more nurseries and support with more paternity leave, allowing fathers as well as mothers to shoulder the burden of caring for very young children. Cultural barriers were also mainly a concern of the Polish woman MPs (92 per cent) compared to British women MPs (60 per cent). In this context the participants indicated cultural differences where men were naturally expected to be seen in the political arena while a woman's place was at home.

Other matters including women's issues were discussed by 56 per cent of Polish participants compared to 23 per cent of the British participants. In this context, the women MPs mainly interlinked women's competitiveness with each other and their hostility towards other women. When talking about political parties, there was also a difference between Polish and British women MPs. 48 per cent percent of Polish interviewees compared to 23 per cent of the British interviewees illustrated the importance of receiving help from their political party, though some claimed that they did not require or did not receive any help. An additional factor in women's participation in politics mentioned by 32 per cent of the Polish participants compared to 14 per cent of the British participants was the demand for more or better education of young girls on politics and political careers. Another argument raised mainly by the Polish participants was the importance of having political experience before entering parliament. Eighty-four percent the Polish women MPs raised that issue, compared to 45 per cent of the British women MPs. The participants also indicated their political involvement since being young women or coming from a political family. The majority of Polish participants (80 per cent) compared to 50 per cent of the British participants also testified to the effectiveness of women's organisations in helping women politicians. However, some woman MPs said that they had not received any help from women's associations.

Some of the barriers to women's participation in politics were completely ignored during the interviews with British women MPs. These included, for example, men's collaboration with each other (only mentioned by eight percent of the Polish participants) or religion and the impact of Catholicism (only mentioned by 8 per cent

of the Polish participants but not tackled on by the British women MPs). Also the impact of communism and the recent changes in the early 21st century, where modernisation of the political parties has taken root, was only discussed by 12 per cent of the Polish participants. And finally, the role of the political party in supporting women's participation in politics was discussed by only five percent of the Polish participants who gave examples of right wing parties supporting more women than the left wing parties.

One of the most striking findings from my interviews was the assertion by 12 per cent of my Polish participants, who claimed that there was no need for more women in the parliament and political gender balance should regulate itself. This could be linked to the competitiveness among women, therefore their unwillingness to accommodate more women in the parliament.

12 per cent of the Polish participants spoke about having positive experiences while being in the office and indicated that their femininity helped them as parliamentarians. In contrast 36 per cent of the British women MPs talked about the need to lose their more feminine aspects and develop more masculine behaviour in order to survive in the dominant male orientated environment.

One of the factors in encouraging women's participation was, according to 23 per cent of British participants, the wider progress in gender equality, where more women were already coming forward. However, they predicted that at the current state it would take 200 years to achieve gender parity in the House of Commons. Five percent of the British women MPs also spoke about the electoral system, indicating

some disadvantages of FPTP as being less friendly to women, as they are less likely to be selected. Also the selection processes were debated by 14 per cent of the British participants, who claimed that the selectors were looking for a particular type of candidate and one who had predominantly 'male' characteristics. Also, British women MPs dominated the discussion on two other concerns which regulated women's parliamentary participation. For example, 55 per cent of the British participants compared to 32 per cent of the Polish participants discussed the weakness of electoral support, which although sometimes sufficient, but was mainly not adequate. Lastly, 32 per cent British women MPs compared to 12 per cent of the Polish women MPs raised their concern about the parliament being dominated by men. They gave examples of the women unfriendly 'macho-politics' and the aggressiveness of the lower chambers.

The study has shown the contrasting perceptions of women MPs from the two different countries on gender inequality in the parliaments and barriers that women face on their way to becoming part of the political elite. This study provides additional evidence that political gender imbalance depends on many variables including the social, cultural and political atmosphere of a particular country. This study also contributes to understanding the importance of cross international research and its implications for identifying the differences in establishing the foundations and backgrounds to women's parliamentary advance.

CHAPTER VII: FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Life is made up of small comings and goings. And for everything we take with us, there is something that we leave behind... The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate for the stormy present and future. As our circumstances are new, we must think anew and act anew. And so must we... We need to look at this old issue in a new way, not simply for today but to make our tomorrows more rewarding, more fulfilling, and more compelling because of the change we make today (cited from Summer of 42; Sir Ken Robinson; Jack Canfield).

The thesis's core aim has been to investigate the fundamentals that account for women's under-representation in the House of Commons and the Polish Sejm by carrying out cross-national research. The purpose of the study was to determine and evaluate the difficulties that women are facing on their way to the political top from the perspectives of women who are already involved right at the centre of the parliamentary work, the MPs themselves. This project addressed some of the unanswered questions derived from previous cross-national studies. In this project, two countries were compared which have two different electoral systems, two dissimilar models of equality promotion, different historical cultures and are at different stages of achieving democratic status. Despite the major differences between these two countries, at the time of this fieldwork they had similar numbers of women MPs in the lower chambers of the parliaments and substantial under-representation of women in power. The approach in this research examined existing women politicians' view on the electoral systems within each country, when and impediments to women's struggle to reach the political top. It allowed me to explore why there are similar numbers of women elected under Poland's so-called women-

friendly PR electoral system compared to the FPTP electoral system in the UK, and why compulsory gender quotas have apparently made no difference vis-a-vis the UK's voluntary party equality guarantees. This study equally allowed me to clarify why both countries' parliaments are still lagging in the worldwide movement towards gender equality from the perspectives of those most involved, the women MPs.

I based my research on a method very commonly used by social scientists of semi-structured individual interviews with women MPs from both parliaments. However, my aim was to conduct a PhD study with real world applications, thus I geared my findings towards a wider non-academic audiences such as policy makers who would be able to use this research as a guide for implementing suitable strategies to tackle gender inequality. I explained the implications of proceeding in this manner in chapter II with all its complications when carrying out a cross-national study. I proceeded to assess how women in power perceived parliamentary gender inequality and what was of most and least importance when explaining the numbers of women in the lower chambers of the parliaments. The aim of the interviews was to uncover and explain:

- (i) How much impact gender similarities and differences have on women's desire to join the political elites.
- (ii) What is the impact of the family on women's political career choices and of how valuable is family and social support when in office?

- (iii) What are the distortions to their political involvement, especially how likely are mechanisms such as equality guarantees to help them to reach the political top and what are the implications of using such approaches?
- (iv) Further within the same context, how does bias in the media's coverage of women in politics affect their role as politicians?
- (v) How significant is the role of social and parliamentary culture on the numbers of women in the lower chambers of the parliaments?
- (vi) How, if at all, does the democratic status and history of the country make a difference?
- (vii) What is the impact of religion?
- (viii) How should governments be involved in equality promotion, if indeed they should be at all?
- (ix) What are the potential ways to improve the parliamentary gender balance?

Since the research involved elected members of two lower chambers of the parliaments, the House of Commons and the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, it was essential at first to establish women's parliamentary presence within a global overview of other parliaments. Fortunately, the data provided by other academics and researchers (presented in chapters II and III) indicated many similarities in the assessments of the difficulties that women face on their routes to parliaments worldwide. It also indicated the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches taken by the governments, political parties and women themselves towards helping women not only in the selection, promotion and election processes but also when

they take office. Socio-cultural factors and the need to challenge stereotypes is one of the topics discussed in the literature. These factors include common perceptions of the proper roles of women in society and women's reluctance to join politics due to the difficulties of achieving an acceptable life/work balance. Research indicates that another barrier which women have to overcome when deciding on a political career is the impact of the media on women in politics. Media bias when presenting women in politics has been widely discussed by scholars and is considered to be one of the main difficulties encountered in women's careers as MPs. Further, the impact of socio-economic factors such as education and lack of financial resources are considered in previous studies as equally important when talking about the barriers which affect women's numbers in national parliaments worldwide. Finally, the perceptions of men on the feminisation of parliaments and their fear of losing their 'critical mass' status, is also widely discussed in the literature. Within the same context, women and women's issues are highlighted by previous researchers as among many difficulties which have to be addressed if parliamentary parity is to be achieved.

Empirical findings

This study has shown that gender equality is still far off: we suffer from lack of gender balance in our parliaments. However, the study also shows that parliamentary work differs from other professions as the parliamentarian's work requires not only

extensive travelling, but also living in two locations (the capital and the constituency) at the same time when holding the position of an MP. This research has also established that the barriers to women's political advancement are clustered in five major types (Illustrated in chapter II). First, this study has found that fundamental similarities and differences between men and women have an impact on the willingness of women to put themselves forward as political candidates. For example, in the UK only 25 per cent of those who put themselves forward as willing to stand as Conservative Party candidates in the 2015 parliamentary election were women. The second concern was mainly voiced amongst Polish women who often felt that they are not good enough to cope with parliamentary work. Their concern was that they would not be able to cope with the responsibility and they were not prepared to take the risk, feeling that they may fail to fulfil the role, and hence face judgment from their peers if they joined the male dominated environment. This leads to the conclusion that there is a need to change women's mentality and teach them to believe in their ability. However, the possibility that this is a serious barrier might lead to another significant conclusion, namely that the behavioural patterns of men and women which they acquired during their cultural and social learning might enhance or restrict their ability to cope with the male dominated parliamentary environment. Women, when compared to men, were seen to have a different approach to problem solving and to be generally better listeners. Moreover, women's ability to work collectively and to be well organised allowed them to complete more than one task at the same time. This was because women resolved a problem rather than just talking about it, whereas men improvised and took on all

tasks regardless of their ability to complete these tasks effectively. Overall MPs thought that as women in general are not appreciated and are not treated seriously, and that masculine qualities are more highly prized than feminine ones. They felt that women have to develop a 'thick skin' to survive the parliamentary atmosphere where people need to be dominant in their body language, and aggression is a part of the parliamentary culture. In this respect, women had not only to work twice as hard as men in order to be respected, but they also needed to change the attitudes of men to dealing with 'hysterical women' when dealing with difficulties. Nevertheless, other new evidence suggests that women's ability to talk to others rather than being abusive could prove to be more effective. Therefore they should not use masculinity to fit within the male oriented environment, but rather they could use their femininity as an advantage and smooth the aggressive atmosphere. Moreover, despite the implementation of equality promotion strategies such as all-women-shortlists, there has still been a shortage of female candidates coming forward. This is most likely to be due to women not considering politics as a potential career. Therefore, in order to challenge their perceptions about joining their countries' parliaments, more support should be offered, especially practical help to enable women especially to manage additional family responsibilities. This help would encourage women to come forward and eliminate their worries about achieving an acceptable work/life balance.

Another powerful finding from this research concerns the impact of parliamentary work on the family and the importance of family support. The significance of this discovery proved related to the culture of the country. In a country with a deep

family-orientated culture such as Poland and with its Catholic religion, the support of the family is the most vital, and a demanding political career simply had to be discussed with the whole family prior to taking on or even seeking parliamentary commitments. Moreover, there was also a lack of debate about communism endorsing the traditional role of women. In contrast, there was some debate in Poland about the change to democracy and how this transformation helped women to be seen as more valuable in politics. Overall, the Polish MPs felt that there had already been progress towards gender equality and that more women have become interested in politics, yet expressed concern that at current growth, it would still take 200 years to achieve parliamentary gender parity.

The job of MP was considered family unfriendly by the interviewees in both countries, with MPs feeling that for parliamentarians to do the job properly, they have to make sacrifices in their family life. One of the claims made in this research was that when women have to choose between family and community activism, they choose to fulfil family duties first. When working as an MP, many felt it was inevitable that some family responsibilities would have to be abandoned and that it was not possible to be a wife and an MP at the same time. On many occasions they gave examples of where women were put under pressure to choose what was more important at the time, to be with children or to sort out social issues. The main difficulty with life-work balance was said to arise especially when women had young children. Many MPs admitted that if they knew how hard the job would be, they would not have considered becoming an MP. Others conceded that they only became MPs because they were living in the capital, otherwise they would not have

considered the career path. Many women became MPs only when their children were fully grown or if they had no children at all. Some said that they would have been scared of being judged as choosing ambition over children. Overall, they believed that people felt that it was not right for women who had small children to become MPs at the same time. This is due to living in an unequal society where women are expected to look after the family and therefore they would feel the guilt of making a choice between family and political party. On the other hand, some MPs speculated why this was a question only for women MPs but not for the male MPs, and questioned what the difference was as having a young family was hard for men too. Within the same context the question arose about how women with children and family responsibilities coped in other professions. Some women MPs felt that being well organised would be the solution to establish a good life/work balance. In order to achieve this, they considered it very important to discuss the choice of becoming the MP with family first as this profession was not just a job but a way of life. Therefore it was necessary to have the support of family and friends. However, some MPs felt that things had become better for women as social changes were ongoing and, for example, in the UK there was more support with child care. In contrast, in Poland there was still an urgent need for more help in social care and a need for more nurseries. A common ground for the MPs in the UK and Poland was a concern to allow paternity leave for fathers.

This study has also explored what I have described as distortions to women's parliamentary involvement. This study provides additional evidence that the roots of women's parliamentary under-representation are embedded in the cultural

stereotypes which allocate the roles of women and men in a society. The degree of women's participation in politics derives largely from cultural backgrounds where men traditionally have more time and there is no competition in politics except from other men. What is more, it used to be the case that when voters were presented with the choice, they would choose men over women. Although there has been change in this domain, politics was still seen as being reserved mainly for men. In general women were associated with caring roles and family responsibilities. These cultural stereotypes have proven very hard to change due to their deep roots. The women MPs felt that there was a need to challenge established cultural stereotypes and especially young girls' perceptions of women's role in society. The interventions that are still needed which could help to change people's perception of women's and men's proper roles include, for example, the image of a man with a pram still not being accepted by society. Yet surprisingly, some women MPs felt that cultural barriers had already been broken down and that some individuals were concerned about a 'glass man's floor'. Needless to say, this is questionable as men still think the same old way: they just do not want to say it aloud. An implication is that it remains necessary to change men's perception of women's role, but at the same time not to force the changes.

Within the same context, another huge obstacle identified in this research is the impact of the media on women in politics and the media's promotion of stereotypes. In general, the main concern was that the media were distorting the image of women politicians, presenting them as decorations rather than as politicians equal to men. The media were believed to concentrate on women's clothes rather than what their

achievements were and tended to be more sympathetic to men. It is worth noting again in here that even in 2014, the media is still referring to women in the UK's parliament as in the derogatory terms of 'Cameron's Cuties'. The MPs also felt that the media were supporting stereotypes about women's role and overall women journalists were the most unpleasant. Another point was that there was far lesser media's coverage of women than men in politics. However, this could have been due to the lower number of women in politics overall. Some MPs had rather different views and felt that women were benefiting from media coverage and that they could use media to their advantage. Some of the findings in this the study indicated that there has been an improvement in the way in which the media represent women in politics, which although still unequal, was getting better because the media are not as patronising as formerly. In general, participants considered that journalists were mostly interested in sensationalism irrespective of whether this involved men or women politicians. Within the same context, a very important finding emerged from this study regarding social media. Overall my participants feared that everyone was open to social media criticism without of the option of responding to allegations.

The results of this study also indicate a surprising lack of cooperation among women within the parliamentary environments, but this was especially noted by the Polish MPs. Although some women MPs acknowledged that they had received help from other women MPs, largely the consensus was that there was a lack of help from other women, who it was felt, mostly competed with each other. It was believed to be different for men, who in contrast tended to support each other. Evidence from the study also suggests that men adopt patronising attitudes towards women

parliamentarians, openly expressing patriarchal views on women's political involvement and criticising women colleagues for not concentrating on traditional roles. British women MPs also experienced a large amount of overt sexism, especially towards younger women MPs. The striking finding was that some MPs said that they had never experienced this type of sexism until they arrived in the parliament. Controversially, some indicated positive aspects of this phenomenon arguing that women should be glad because if men made sexist remarks this showed that they were being noticed.

Perhaps surprisingly, there is a complete absence of any indications in this project's findings of the different electoral systems making any difference to women's successes in getting elected. This was contrary to the evidence reviewed in chapter II which found that in many countries belonging to the OECD which had List Proportional Representation electoral systems, the representation of women in the lower chambers of parliaments was slightly higher than in countries with FPTP or other electoral systems. Significant differences were shown especially in Nordic countries such as Sweden, Finland, Iceland and Norway. However, in view of this project's UK-Poland findings, it may well be that in the Nordic countries women's high profile in the parliaments depends on other social factors and the success of equality promotion strategies.

Returning to the question posed at the beginning of the study on the foundations of parliamentary gender imbalance, one of the significant results I discovered in this research that the PR system used in the Polish general election did not have any

significant impact on increasing the number of women MPs, especially when compared to the UK's FPTP. In chapter II, Figure 4 presented the differences in the numbers of women in the House of Commons and the Sejm of the Republic of Poland. However, when compared over a period of 11 years, I identified only a slightly higher percentage of women in the Sejm than in the House of Commons (see chapter II, Figures 5 and 6).

This study has also identified some structural factors that have an impact on women's parliamentary involvement. However one of the new findings in this study suggests that any types of equality guarantees are only a short term solution and not a permanent resolution to gender parliamentary imbalance. The most contentious practices explored in this study were the use of equality guarantees and their effectiveness. The findings suggest in general that there is a need to use some special measures to help women to reach their political goal and the most effective equality guarantee is the use of a quota. Although this type of affirmative action was seen as imperfect, it did encourage more women to come forward. In practice, in the UK women had chosen to take the all-women-shortlists route rather than get elected under the open list. The MPs felt that for years there were unspoken all-men-shortlists and without of the use of a gender quota there would be no progress towards gender equality. The overall feeling was that quotas were needed to allow fair access to the parliament and to promote women's visibility. Once people realise the ability of women to be equally effective as politicians as men, there will not be a need for any equality guarantees. There is also the consideration of the 'critical mass' impact on the feminisation of parliamentary environment, greatly objected to by

male MPs, which is precluding women's success at the current time. Therefore, quotas should be considered as a short-term measure, but not a permanent solution. In opposition to this, the women MPs had found that quotas created resentment were controversial, seen as patronising to women and an artificial measure. To avoid the accusation that someone was elected because of the use of quotas and not on their own merit, it was argued that women should work for the privilege to be elected in the same way as men. Moreover, there should not be a division between men and women politicians. Within the same context there was a debate about the intervention of the governments in promoting gender parliamentary equality. Surprisingly, another significant finding from this research suggests that most women MPs from both countries are very much against any intervention by the government and feel that equality issues are the responsibility of the political parties. Moreover, compulsory gender quotas in the UK were not at all welcome. Besides, the overall feeling was that the government had already intervened by introduction of the Equality Act of 2010 (modification of the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidate) Act 2002) to allow the re-introduction of all-women-shortlists. It was argued that governments should only intervene to improve the climate in the parliament so that the atmosphere became more woman-friendly. In contrast some Polish women MPs felt that any help to improve gender equality was welcome even if it was forced by the government. There was a general feeling that women entering politics required more support as many MPs had been left on their own after being selected, and on many occasions were placed in seats where their chances of success were low. However, some of them still were successful even though they had been placed

towards the bottom of the electoral lists in Poland. Another difficulty uncovered by this study was that the party gatekeepers (who constructed the lists) were unwilling to choose women because of their family responsibilities. The overall feeling was that political parties should encourage selection committees to choose the best person for the job and think outside the box. Surprisingly, there was a divergent view which was that there was no need for special support as women had as much strength as men. I paid special attention to some ideas on how to improve the gender balances in the parliaments, thus the study indicated some paths to gender equality. The main idea was to educate young girls about politics and political careers. Also, political experience was a necessity, and most of the MPs were already involved in politics before they decided to stand for election. It was equally interesting that women MPs in Poland were better educated than men. The main idea behind training was to encourage women's organisations to provide help during electoral campaigns and to fight for the introduction of party quotas. These organisations were also encouraged to raise awareness about women's rights. However, some MPs had experienced resentment from women's organisations. As each parliament was male dominated, the aggressive atmosphere caused resentment towards women who put themselves forward. It was also inevitable that more women in parliament influenced the atmosphere, so they were accused of taking power from men. Moreover, women would support women's issues, which on many occasions were then abandoned by men MPs. This study has also illustrated different views. Some women MPs in each country argued that there was simply no issue and there were no gender barriers to women who wanted to get into the parliament. Overall, some MPs felt that special

obstacles to women's political involvement had already been removed and there was no further need for more women in the parliament.

In contrast, this research has also discovered that some women politicians feel that there is nothing to stop women from reaching the political summit. Some MPs suggested that the parliaments were open to everyone and women who fulfilled the same criteria as men were mostly stopping themselves becoming involved in politics. What is more, these MPs argued, being a MP is not a role that needs artificial gender parity, it is merely another type of job; therefore, if women were not willing to take on this kind of occupation, they should not be encouraged.

The cross international comparison of the empirical findings

This study found that women MPs in the two countries held many similar views on the difficulties that women faced on their way to the parliaments (presented in chapter VI). The main concerns discussed by the majority of MPs were that women did not want to come forward and women's worries about not being able to cope with family responsibilities and to fulfil the role of MP at the same time. Another main worry was the interference of the media in presenting distorted images of women politicians, emphasising their outer persona rather than their achievements.

An additional issue was the use of equality guarantees, especially gender quotas and their value in tackling gender parliamentary imbalance. The discussions about equality promotion encouraged a debate about the intervention of the governments

in the promotion of political gender equality, and the study discovered how strongly women MPs felt that their governments should not interfere.

As for intra-country differences, the study has shown that some issues were relevant to some women MPs, whereas others did not regard these issues as barriers to women parliamentarians (as explained in detail in chapter VI). The main inter-country differences discovered among the women MPs were the emphasis of Polish MPs on women's fear of choosing that career path and the deeply-rooted behavioural differences between men and women which were not as widely discussed by British MPs. Another difference in their opinions was the impact of the prevailing culture on women's political activity. Yet another was the importance of family support in the choice of a political career. These issues were mostly alluded to by the Polish MPs. Equally, the difficulty of women competing against each other and being excessively hostile towards other women MPs was seen as more important by the Polish MPs. However they also praised women's organisations which had helped other women politicians. The importance of having prior political experience before standing for election was also discussed by Polish MPs more widely than in Britain, as was the lack of help from political parties in women's struggles to get elected. In contrast, the British women MPs were concerned about male domination of the parliamentary environment and the development of masculine behaviour by some women. Very few British MPs raised the need for improvement in electoral support in selection processes.

Theoretical implications

The main results from the study obviously and unsurprisingly support the conclusion that gender inequality in national politics persists. The findings also confirm some common reasons why women struggle to reach the political top. The results in chapters IV and V are similar to those of Shedova (2005): those socio-cultural factors have a powerful impact on the number of women in national parliaments. These factors include the role of women in society and their difficulties in establishing work/life balance when working as MPs. Moreover, the findings suggest that, in contrast to other professions, work in a parliament requires not only excessive travelling but also living and working in two places, the capital and the constituency. What is more, some women MPs admitted that their willingness to stand for election was only due to the fact that they were already residing in the capital as otherwise they would not even have considered taking the role of MP. Also, the evidence from this study suggests that the culture of a country has an impact via the role of the family. For example, in Poland family support has deep roots in members' responsibility for each other, and collaboration between members of the whole family is considered a fundamental duty. Therefore, support for women who decided on political careers from their families was always very strong. Within the same context, this study provides additional evidence that the impact of their families on women MPs' parliamentary careers depends on the age of their children. The study discovered that most women MPs in both countries had no children or their children were already fully grown when they stood for election. This research contributes the

additional finding that among women MPs there is a high number of divorces during their work as parliamentarians. However, this study has not found support for other socio-cultural factors such as religion in general or Catholicism in particular as a main barrier to women's political activity. The evidence from this study also indicates that the impact of the media on women politicians varies as some women MPs reported positive experiences with the media.

Some scholars have stressed the impact of socio-economic factors such as education, financial resources and electoral support on gender parliamentary disparity (Shedova, 2005; Krook, 2010; Ruedin, 2010). For example Wawrowski (2007) and Abdela (2010) argue that the struggle of women to get a good education still affects their political rights. The results from this study do not support this claim as most British and Polish women MPs had obtained a higher education. Moreover, some women MPs claimed (correctly) that women in general were now better educated than men. Also there was an absence of evidence in this study that financial resources restricted women's electoral activity. Lack of support throughout the electoral process was widely debated and the research confirms previous findings that women do not have the necessary support from their political parties. Within the same context, this research contributes to previous findings that electoral assistance comes from women's organisations, an issue that has been widely discussed (for example by Lowenduski and Karam, 2002). On the other hand, the claim by Pankow and Post (2005: 35) that 'the biggest enemy of a woman is another woman' receives some support in this research. In contrast, this study has confirmed

that women's collective work has resulted in the introduction of affirmative action measures on gender in both countries.

Men's domination of the parliament has been considered as another barrier to women's participation in politics. The findings from this research support claims made for example by Childs et al. (2005) who state that women constantly struggle to cope with the male controlled environment. This study, however, makes an additional contribution to this topic and provides additional evidence with respect to sexism which was reported as extensive in the House of Commons, but not as intense in the Polish Sejm. In the UK, sexism was associated with making abusive remarks and more sophisticated misbehaviour such as the sexist gestures made by male MPs. These were more likely expressed towards younger women MPs. What is more, sexist behaviour in the British Parliament appeared to be greater than in other professions. On the other hand sexism in Poland was associated with flirting. Previous scholars have also emphasised the significance of the behaviour of men who, as Pankow and Post (2009) suggest, will do anything to get power, and the impact of a critical mass which according to Stevens (2007) and Zukowski (2011) forces feminist orientated change. The findings from this study also underline the need to understand the impact of behavioural differences between men and women on their parliamentary behaviour, which has been missed by many scholars in relation to political gender representation.

This research has uncovered some hitherto relatively neglected factors which play important roles in women's political activity and inactivity. This study partially

substantiates claims by scholars that the introduction of quotas can improve the gender balance in politics, especially in countries with compulsory gender quotas (Ruedin, 2010). However this study found no significant differences in its cross-national comparison: the difference between the UK and Poland in women's parliamentary representation was only 2 per cent. Ballington and Karam (2005) maintain that the quota is a secondary resource best used after preparing the groundwork. This study similarly suggests that the foundation has to be prepared from an early age, where women must be educated about the possibility of choosing a political career path. Therefore, education on political careers for women should be implemented as early as at primary school. Additionally, the findings suggest that gender quotas can be no more than a short term solution. The issue of intervention by governments was also explored in this study, leading to a clear preference for it to be left to political parties to tackle the problem of gender parliamentary imbalance. Some scholars emphasise the link between the electoral system and women's access to a parliament (Darcy et al., 1994; Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Paxton, 1997; Galligan and Tremblay, 2005; Ruedin, 2010). I have found in this thesis that this was not greatly significant to the women MPs.

Overall, the findings indicate that a vital point in the improvement of gender parliamentary equality is the need to challenge stereotypes and address cultural beliefs as other matters such as electoral systems, culture, democracy, religion or the introduction of quotas do not make any significant difference if not supported at the foundations.

Limitations of the study

A number of important limitations need to be considered regarding this study. The investigation was limited by the time available for the research into such a complex issue as political gender inequality, and requires many aspects to be investigated further if any conclusions on how to improve the gender parliamentary balance are to be reached. The current study was not able to investigate in depth the impact of some aspects, particularly family responsibilities. These issues include the rate of divorce which occurs among women MPs during their parliamentary work or the preponderance of childless women MPs or those with fully grown children at the time of their election. The research was not able to analyse these variables. Further, the current study has only examined in depth the impact of traditional media on women politicians, but has not tackled the impact of new social media such as, for example, Facebook and Twitter. Another issue that was not addressed in this research is a comparison with women in other professions, especially when discussing the development of masculine behaviour by women parliamentarians and how this relates to the predominant behavioural patterns among men and women. Equally, this study did not investigate how sexism in other professions limits women's ability to reach positions of power.

This study also was unable to explore the significance, if any, of political changes within each country while carrying out the research: for example, fresh elections, political parties losing power or introducing new policies and how these events might

have affected the empirical findings. Finally, the current investigation was limited by the difficulty of accessing the elites and their willingness to accommodate time for the interviews, across a comparable number of political parties.

Recommendations for further research

This research has thrown-up some questions that need further investigation. Some I have already mentioned in the limitations of the study. Further research should take a more quantitative approach to the analysis of divorce among women MPs while in the office and the number of childless women MPs or with children who are fully grown. It would be also interesting to compare the experiences of women MPs with the experiences of women in other professions regarding both overt and institutional sexism and how this affects the development of masculine behaviour by women. Considerably more work needs to be done to determine the impact of social media on women politicians when compared to men politicians. Within the same context, there is a need to explore the impact of both types of media on male politicians as well as female politicians. This suggestion can be also used to develop targeted interventions aimed at general media as well as social media to ensure that gender stereotypes are not promoted. Nonetheless, unless governments adopt and establish a clear understanding of the principles of gender equality and link these with the misleading use of stereotypes, the full benefits of for example equality guarantees will not be attained. Further, more research is needed to build a better understanding on the extent to which behavioural differences between men and women affect

their ability to reach positions of power and to exert real influence in the parliamentary environment.

Taken together, all the study findings support strong recommendations to policy makers. Firstly, they should take advantage of the organisations which promote equality guarantees, trying to link them together and collectively promote gender equality in schools and other educational institutions. Education should lean towards the promotion of politics as a potential career path for girls and support the transformation of gender roles from stereotypes towards equality with men. Within the same context, education should promote the re-distribution of domestic duties and the introduction and acceptance of paternity leave.

Secondly, there is a strong need to work with the media to promote gender equality and challenge media bias regarding gender roles in society. Within the same context, men should be encouraged by the media to fight for the promotion of gender equality in positions of power and improvements in understanding gender bias. Also, more education about the use of social media would allow individuals to be protected from outside allegations and help to clear any incorrect information. A reasonable approach to tackle gender bias would also be the encouragement of media to promote women into leadership positions within the political parties. Another important practical suggestion would be to respond to sexism with harsher punishments not only within corporations, but within the parliament.

Finally, it will be important to indicate to party selection committees that women comprise around 50 per cent of the population and this reflects on the number of

voters. This recognition would be very important in promoting more women into politics and voting for women.

REFERENCES

- Abdela, L., (2010). 'From palm tree to parliament: Training women for political leadership and public life'. *Gender & Development*. 8(3): 16-23
- Adams, K., S., (2011). 'Moving towards Gender Parity: Female Representation in National Legislatures, 2001 and 2011'. *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social sciences*. 6(3): 55-74
- Adamski, F., (1984). *Sociologia malzenstwa i rodziny-wprowadzenie*. Warszawa: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe
- Allen, N., Dean, J., (2008). 'No (Parliamentary) Gender gap Please, We're British'. *The Political Quarterly*. 79(2): 212-220
- Altbach, P.G., Gail, K.P., (1986). *New Approaches to Comparative Education*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Armstrong, M., (2001). *Polish Women During Communism and After: As Portrayed by the Polish Press from 1978-1998*. [Online] Available from: <http://germslav.byu.edu/perspectives/2001/8-Polish.pdf> [Accessed: 19 April 2015]
- Ashley, J., (2008). *Women's Parliamentary Radio: ERS Debate The reform of Voting Systems. Interviewed by Jackie Ashley*. Podcast [Online] Available from: <http://www.wpradio.co.uk/> [Accessed: 11 June 2012]
- APPG, (2014). *Improving Parliament. Creating a Better and More Representative House*. Report. London: All Party Parliamentary Group for Women in Parliaments. [Online] Available from: <http://appgimprovingparliamentreport.co.uk/download/APPG-Women-In-Parliament-Report-2014.pdf> [Accessed: 19 June 2015]
- Atkeson, L., Rapoport, R., (2003). 'The more things change the more they say the same: examining gender differences in political attitude expression, 1952-2000'. *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 67(4): 495-521
- Avison, D., Fitzgerald, G., (1988). *Information Systems Development: Methodologies, Techniques and Tools*. Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications
- Axinn, W.G., Pearce, L.D., (2006). *Mixed Method Data Collection Strategies*. New York: Cambridge University Press
- Baldez, I., (2003). 'Women's Movements and Democratic Transition in Chile, Brazil, East Germany, and Poland'. *Comparative Politics*. 35(3): 253-272

Baldez, L., (2006). 'The Pros and Cons of Gender Quota Laws: What Happens When You Kick Men Out and Let Women In?' *Politics & Gender*. 1(2):102-109

Balinska, B., (2007). *Politika rownosci plci: Polska 2007*. Raport. Warszawa: Program Narodow Zjednoczonych ds. Rozwoju

Ballington, J., (2008). *Equality in Politics: A survey of Women and Men in Parliaments*. Reports and Documents n 54. Geneva: IPU

Ballington, J., (2009). *Equality in Politics A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments An Overview of Key Findings*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/equality08-overview-e.pdf> [Accessed: April 14, 2012]

Ballington, J., Karam, A., (2005). *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers. A Revised Edition*. Stockholm: Publications Office International IDEA

Bashevkin, S., (2000). 'From Tough Times to Better Times: Feminism, Public Policy, and New Labour Politics in Britain'. *International Political Science Review*. 21(4): 407-424

BBC News, (1998). *UK Politics: Talking Politics The 'Mother of Parliaments'*. [Online] Available from: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/96021.stm [Accessed: 02 December 2012]

Baum M., Espirito-Santo A., (2007). 'Exploring the gender gap on Portugal: Women's political participation, in Freire, A., Costa, M., Magalhaes, P., (ed.) *Portugal at the polls: in 2002*. Plymouth: Lexington Books

Baxter, J., (2014). 'Austin Mitchell showed us why people hate politicians'. *Labour List*. 20th August, 2014 [Online] Available form: <http://labourlist.org/2014/08/austin-mitchell-showed-us-why-people-hate-politicians/> [Accessed: 17 June 2015]

BBC, (2007). 'The "Blair babes": where are they now?' [Online] Available form: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/4698222.stm [Accessed: 20 May 2014]

BBC News, (1998). 'UK Politics: Talking Politics The 'Mother of Parliaments'' [Online] Available from: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/96021.stm [Accessed: 02 December 2012]

Beer, C., (2009). 'Democracy and Gender equality'. *Studies in International Comparative Development*. 10 (44): 212–227

Beckwith, K., (1989). 'Sneaking Women into Office'. *Women & Politics*. 9(3): 1-15
Beckwith, K., (1992). 'Comparative Research and Electoral systems: Lessons from

France and Italy'. *Women and Politics*. 12(3): 1-33 Bergstrom, I.I., (2013). *Media images of women are getting worse*. [Online] Kilden Information Centre for Gender Research in Norway. Available form: <http://sciencenordic.com/media-images-women-are-getting-worse>. [Accessed: 14 February 2015]

Berry, J.M., (2002). "Validity and reliability Issues in Elite Interviewing". *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 35(4): 679-682

Beveridge, F., Cengiz, F., Drywood, E., Corsi, M., Szelewa, D., Lepinard, E., Altan, L., Debusscher, P., (2015). 'A new strategy for gender equality post 2015'. *Directorate General For Internal Policies Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights And Constitutional Affairs. Compilation of in-depth analyses*. Brussels: European Parliament. [Online] Available from: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2014/509984/IPOL_STU\(2014\)509984_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2014/509984/IPOL_STU(2014)509984_EN.pdf) [Accessed: 01 June 2015]

BIS, 2011, 'Women on Board'. *ICM Research*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/business-law/docs/w/11-745-women-on-boards.pdf> [Accessed: 01 January 2012]

Biuro Studiow I Ekspertyz Kancelarii Sejmu, (2003). 'Kobiety w gremiach decyzyjnych'. *Konferencje i Seminaria*. 8(52):03, Warszawa: Kancelaria Sejmu

Black, A., Champion, D.J., (1976). *Methods and Issues in Social Research*. New York, London, Sydney, Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Blau, F.D., Ferber, M.A., Winkler, A.E., (2002). *The Economics of Women, Men, and Work*. 4th ed. New Jersey: Prentice Hall

Bleir, R., (1986). *Feminist Approaches to Science*. New York: Pergamon Press Inc

Brislin, R., (1976). 'Comparative Research Methodology: Cross Cultural studies'. *International Journal of Psychology*. 11(3): 215-229

Bochel, J., Denver, D., (1983). 'Candidate selection in the Labour Party: what the selectors seek'. *British Journal of Political Science*. 13(1): 45-59

Boren, Z.D., (2014). 'Harriet Harman: powerful men and long hours foster sexual harassment in Westminster'. *The Telegraph*. Saturday 12 April 2014. [Online] Available from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/harriet-harman/10762144/Harriet-Harman-powerful-men-and-long-hours-foster-sexual-harrassment-in-Westminster.html> [Accessed 22 January 2015]

Borgue S., Grossholts, J., (1984). 'Politics and Unnatural Practice: Political Science looks at female participation' in Siltanen, S., Stanworth, M., (ed.) *Women and the Public Sphere: A critique of sociology and politics*. London: Hutchinson

- Bradley, H., (1989). *Men's Work, Women's Work*. Southport: Polity Press
- Bradley, H., (1999). *Gender & Power in The workplace. Analysiing the Impact of Economic Change*. Basingstone: McMillain Press Ltd
- Bradley, H., (2007). *Gender*. Cambridge, Malden: Polity Press
- Bradley, H., (2008). *Ethnicity and Gender at Work. Inequalities, Careers and Employment Relatons*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmilian
- Brodzinska-Mirowska, B., (2009). 'Kobiety w Polityce- aktywne czy pasywne?' in Marszalek-Kawa, J. (2009). *Kobiety w Politce*. Torun: Adam Marszalek
- Brooks, R., Eagle, A., Short, C., (1990). *Quotas Now: Women in the Labour Party*. London: Fabian Society
- Bryman, A., (2004). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Bunning, M., Pollmann-Schult, M., (2015). 'Family Policies and father's working hours: cross- national differences in the paternal labour supply'. *Work, employment and society*. 1-19. DOI: 10.1177/0950017015578999 [Online] Available from: <http://wes.sagepub.com/content/early/2015/06/16/0950017015578999.full.pdf+html> [Accessed: 20 June 2015]
- Burns, R.B., (2000). *Introduction to Research methods*. London: Sage Publications
- Burnham, P., Gilland, K., Grant, W., Layton-Henry, Z., (2004). *Research Methods in Politics*. Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Cadogan, J., (2010), 'Comparative, cross-cultural, and cross-national research: A comment on good and bad practice'. *International Marketing Review*. 27 (6): 601 – 605
- Campbell, R., Winters, W., (2008). 'Understanding men and women's political interests: evidence for t a study of gendered political attitudes'. *Journals of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*. 18(1): 53-74
- Campbell, R., Childs, S., (2014). *This Ludicrous Obsession, Parents in Parliament: The Motherhood Trap*. [Online] Available from: http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/drosie-campbell/women-in-politics_b_4608418.html [Accessed: 02 March 2014]
- Carlin, D., B., (2009). 'Have You Come a Long Way, Baby? Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin, and Sexism in 2008 Campaign Coverage'. *Communication Studies*. 60(4): 326-343 [Online] Available from: http://www.kean.edu/~jkeil/Welcome_files/Havepercent20Youpercent20Comepercent20apercent20Longpercent20Waypercent3F.pdf [Access: 20 June 2013]

Caul, M. (1999) 'Women's Representation in Parliament: The Role of Political Parties'. *Party Politics*. 5 (1): 79–98.

Childs, S., (2000). 'The new labour women MPs in the 1997 British parliament: issues of recruitment and representation'. *Women's History Review*. 9(1): 55-73

Childs, S., (2003). 'The sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002 and Its Implications'. *Representation* 39(2): 83-93

Childs, S., (2004). *New Labour's Women MP's: Women Representing Women*. New York: Routledge

Childs, S., Lovenduski, J., Campbell, R. (2005). *Women at the top 2005, changing numbers, changing politics?* London: Hansard Society

Childs, S., Campbell, R., Lovenduski, J., (2008). 'The 'Mother of All Parliaments': Westminster's Male Face' in Tremblay, M., (ed). *Women and Legislative Representation. Electoral Systems, Political Parties, and Sex Quotas*. New York, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Childs, S., Krook, M.L., (2008). 'Critical Mass Theory and Women's Political Representation'. *Political Studies*. 56(3): 725-736

Childs, S., Webb, P., (2012). *Sex, Gender and the Conservative Party. From Iron Lady to Kitten Heels*. Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Chopra, S.T., (2014). 'The Palace of Westminster: Drunken MPs harass young political aides'. *London loves Business*. 11 April 2014. [Online] Available from: <http://www.londonlovesbusiness.com/business-news/politics/the-palace-of-sexminster-drunken-mps-harass-young-political-aides/7893.article> [Accessed: 18 June 2015]

Ciensi, J., (2010). 'Why do Polish women lag behind?' *Global Post*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/poland/100330/polish-women-politics-business>. [Accessed: 08 May 2013]

Clifford, S., (ny). 'Tipsheet - Interviewing Elites'. *DISM Duke Initiative on Survey Methodology* [Online] Available from: <http://www.dism.ssri.duke.edu/pdfs/Tipsheetpercent20percent20Interviews.pdf> [Accessed: 23 April 2015]

Cocco, M., (2008). 'Misogyny I Won't Miss'. *The Washington Post*. 15 May 2008, Thursday. [Online] Available form: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/05/14/AR2008051403090.html> [Accessed: 14 February 2015]

Cole, D., (1993). *Women in Political Theory*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf Publishers

Cowell-Meyers, K., (2001). 'Gender, Power, and Peace: A Preliminary Look at Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly'. *Women and Politics* 23 (3): 32

Cracknell, R. (2015). 'General Election 2015: women MPs and candidates'. *House of Commons Library*. [Online] Available from: <http://commonslibraryblog.com/2015/05/09/general-election-2015-women-mps-and-candidates/> [Accessed: 22 May 2015]

Crowley, N., (2013). *A policy response to gender perceptions: Discussion Paper*. Luxembourg: EIGE.

Czesnik, M., (2007). *Partycypacja wyborcza w Polsce*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar

Dahlerup, D., (1988). 'From Small to a Large Minority: Women in Scandinavian Politics'. *Scandinavian Political Studies*. 11(4): 275-298

Dahlerup, D., (2005). 'Increasing Women's Political Representation: New Trends in Gender Quotas' in Ballington and Karam (ed.). *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*. A Revised Edition. Stockholm: Publications Office International IDEA

Dahlerup, D., (2006). 'Political Parties as a Gatekeepers to Equal Political Representation'. *Paper for the Session MT 07.239 Political Parties and Democratization, International Political Science World Congress*. 9-13 July 2006, Fukuoka, Japan [Online] Available from: http://paperroom.ipsa.org/papers/paper_5475.pdf [Accessed 20 July 2014]

Dahlerup, D., Freidenvall, L., (2008). *Electoral Gender Quota Systems and their Implementation in Europe*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.europeanpwn.net/files/euquotaonderzoek.pdf> [Accessed: April 14, 2012].

Dahlerup, D., Freidenvall, L., (2005). 'Quotas as a "Fast Track" to Equal Representation for Women'. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*. 7(1): 1-22

Dahlerup, D., Freidenvall, L., (2011). 'Electoral Gender Quota Systems and their Implementation in Europe'. *Report for the European Parliament's Committee on Gender Equality*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:467830/FULLTEXT01.pdf> [Accessed: April 14, 2012].

Dahlerup, D., Leyenaar, M., (2013). *Breaking Male Dominance in Old Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Dalton, R., J., Klingemann, H., D., (2007). *The Oxford Handbook of Political behaviour*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Darcy, R., Welch, S., Clark, J., (1994). *Women, Elections, and Representation*. London: University of Nebraska Press.

Dave, D., (2011). 'All Women Shortlists: A Route To equality'. *Dreaming Genius Blog*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.dreaminggenius.com/2011/06/all-women-shortlists-route-to-equality.html> [Accessed: 01 June 2012]

Davies P., (2001). 'Spies and Informants: Triangulation and the Interpretation of Elite Interview Data in the Study of the Intelligence and Security Services'. *Politics*. 21(1): 73-80

Debski, M., (2006). 'Udział Kobiet w życiu publicznym'. *Survey Centrum Badan Opini Społecznej 2006*. [Online] Available from: http://www.neww.org.pl/download/Udzial_kobiet_w_zyciu_publicznym.pdf [Accessed: 16 February 2015]

Demailly, C. (2005). 'Quotas: For or Against?' *European PWN*. [Online] Available from: http://www.europeanpwn.net/index.php?article_id=213 [Accessed: 30 May 2013]

Denzin, N. K., Lincoln, Y. S., (2003). *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. London: Sage Publications

Devitt, J. (2002). 'Framing gender on the campaign trail: female gubernatorial candidates and the press'. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*. 79(2): 445-463

Donno D., Russett B., (2004). "Islam authoritarianism, and female empowerment: what are the linkages?" *World Politics*. 56(4):582–607n

Drake, R.F., (2001). *The Principles of Social Policy*. New York: Palgrave

Druciarek, M., Fuszara, M., Nizynska., A., Zbieranek, J., (2012). *Women on the Polish Political Scene*. Warszawa: Fundacja Instytut Spraw Publicznych

DuBois, E.C., (1999). *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848-1869*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press

du Vall, M., (2009). *Współczesne Polki-trudność w wyborze roli* in Fratzczak, A., (2009). *Kobiety wobec polityki- kobiety w polityce. Historia, realia, perspektywy*. Krakow: Krakowska Akademia im. Andrzeja Frycza Modrzewskiego

EGM/BPFA/MD-MDG, (2005). "Achievements, gaps and challenges in linking the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals". *Report of the Expert Group Meeting. Division*

for the Advancement of Women Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Baku, Azerbaijan 7-10 February 2005. [Online] Available from: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/bpfamd2005/EGM-BPFA-MD-MDG-2005-REPORT-final.pdf> [Accessed: 18 June 2005]

EIGE, (2013). "Women and political decision-making. Online discussion report". Report by EuroGender online Platform. Belgium: European Institute for Gender Equality [Online] Available from: http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/MH0213843ENC_PDF.Web_.pdf [Accessed: 19 June 2015]

Emily's list, (2012). 'Our Races'. [Online] Available from: <http://www.emilyslist.org/pages/entry/our-history> [Accessed: 20 July 2012]

Equal Opportunities Commission (1997). 'Partnering Equality'. *Annual Report 1996*. London: Parliamentary Archives

Evans, E., (2011a). *Gender and the Liberal Democrats: Representing women?* Manchester: Manchester University Press

Evans, E., (2011b). 'Selecting the 'Right Sort': Patterns of Political recruitment in British By-elections'. *Parliamentary Affairs*. 65(1): 195-213 [Online] Available from: <http://pa.oxfordjournals.org/content/65/1/195.full.pdf+html> [Accessed: 20 February 2012]

Fairclough, N., (2003). *Analysing discourse: textual analysis for social research*. London: Routledge

Flowerdew, R., Martin, D., (2005). *Methods in human geography: a guide for students doing a research project*. 2nd ed. Harlow: Pearson Prentice Hall

Fodor, E., (2011). 'The Policy on gender Equality in Hungary'. *Report for the European Parliaments Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality*. [Online] Available from: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2013/493017/IPOL-FEMM_NT\(2013\)493017_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2013/493017/IPOL-FEMM_NT(2013)493017_EN.pdf) [Accessed: 02 November 2012]

Franke, G.R., Richey, R.G., (2010). 'Improving generalizations from multi-country comparisons in international business research'. *Journal of International Business Studies*. 41 (8): 1275-1293

Fratczak, A., (2009). *Kobiety wobec polityki- kobiety w polityce. Historia, realia, persepcytywy*. Krakow: Krakowska Akademia im. Andrzeja Frycza Modrzewskiego

Fushara, M., (1991). 'Will Abortion Issues Give Birth to Feminism in Poland' in Maclean, M., Groves, D. *Women's Issues in Social Policy*. London: Routledge

Fushara, M., (2000). 'New Gender Relations in Poland in the 1990s' in Gal, S., Kligman, G., (2000). *Reproducing gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life After Socialism*. New Jersey and Chichester: Princeton University Press

Fushara, M., (2006). *Kobiety w Polityce*. Warszawa: Trio

Fuszara, M., (2009). 'Kobiety w polityce dwudziestolecia (1989-2009)' in *Raport Kongres Kobiet Polskich 2009. Kobiety dla Polski. Polska dla Kobiet. 20 lat transformacji 1989-2009*. [Online] Available from: https://www.kongreskobiet.pl/Content/uploaded/files/sytuacja_kobiet_w_polsce/raport-kobiety-dla-polski-polska-dla-kobiet-20-lat-transformacji-1989-2009.pdf [Accessed: 20 April 2012]

Fuszara, M., Tomaszewska, J., (2002). 'Analysing Female Visibility. Enlargement, Gender and Governance (EGG)'. *EU Framework 5 Project*. University of Warsaw.

Galligan, Y., Tremblay, M., (2005). *Sharing Power: Women, Parliament, Democracy*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Galligan, Y., Clavero, S., Calloni, M., (2007). *Gender, Politics and Democracy in Post-Socialist Europe*. Opladen: Budrich-Verlag

Ginsburg, M., (2006). 'The Contributions and the Limitations of Cross-National Comparisons in Examining Professional Development and Educational Quality'. *American Institutes for Research under the EQUIP1 LWA*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.equip123.net/docs/E1-IP-Contributions&LimitationsofCrossNationalComparisons.pdf> [Accessed: 01 October 2012]

Glaser, B., (2005). 'Staying Open: The use of theoretical codes in grounded theory'. *The Grounded Theory Review*. 5(1): 1-20

Grey, P.S., (2002). 'Does Size Matter? Critical Mass and New Zealand's Women MPs.' *Parliamentary Affairs*. 55(1):19-29

Grey, P.S., Williamson, J.B., Karp, D.A., Dalphin, J.R., (2007) *The Research Imagination. An Introduction to Qualitative and Quantitative Methods*. New York: Cambridge University Press

Gorecki, M.A., Kukolowicz, P., (2014). 'Gender quotas, candidate background and the election of women: A paradox of gender quotas in open-list proportional representation systems'. *Electoral Studies*. 36 (12): 65-80

Gwiazda, A., (2014). 'Women's representation and gender quotas: the case of the Polish parliament' *Democratization*. 22: (4): 679-697. DOI: 10.1080/13510347.2013.869583 [Online] Available from:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13510347.2013.869583> [Accessed: 15 June 2015]

Grzybek, A., Rochon, A., (2008). *Gender Mainstreaming. How to Use Its Potential Effectively?* Warsaw: Heinrich Boll Foundation Regional Office

Habowski, M., (2002). *Nauka społeczna Kościoła w świetle prasy katolickiej w Polsce (1989-1995): wybrane problemy.* Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego

Haffert, K., O'Connell, S., Ruthrauff, H., Powley, A., (2010). *Democracy and the Challenge of Change A Guide to Increasing Women's Political Participation.* [Online] Available from: http://www.ndi.org/files/Democracy_and_the_Challenge_of_Change.pdf [Accessed: April 14, 2012].

Hammersley, M., (2003). 'Recent Radical Criticism of Interview Studies: and implications for the sociology of education?' *British Journal of Sociology of Education.* 24(1): 119-126

Haralambos, M., Holborn, M., (2008). *Sociology: themes and perspectives.* 7th ed. London: Collins.

Harman, G., (2005). *Epistemology as methodology.* [Online] Available from: <http://www.princeton.edu/~harman/Papers/Profile.pdf> [Accessed: 25 May 2011]

Harman, H., Mattinson, D., (2000). *Winning for Women. Fabian Society No. 596.* London: The College Hill Press Limited.

Hart, Ch., (1998). *Doing a Literature review.* London: Sage Publications

Hattenstone, S., (1999). 'Out of this world'. *The Guardian.* Monday 21 June 1999. [Online] Available from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/1999/jun/21/features11.g21> [Accessed: November 2012]

Heinen, J., Portet, S., (2009). 'Religia, polityka i równość płci w Polsce'. *Końcowy raport badawczy podsumowujący projekt „Religion, Politics and Gender Equality”.* [Online] Available from: http://pl.boell.org/sites/default/files/downloads/Religa_polityka_i_rownosc_plci_Heinen_Portet.pdf [Accessed: 20 April 2015]

Herod, A., (1999). "Reflections on Interviewing Foreign Elites: Praxis, Positionality, Validity, and the Cult of the Insider". *Geoforum.* 30(4): 313-327

Hewitt, P., Mattinson, D., (1989). *Women's Votes: The Key to Winning.* London: Fabian Society.

Hinsliff, G, (2012). Tory feminists: the true blue sisterhood. *The Observer*. 08 January [Online] Available from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/jan/08/tory-women-mps-new-feminism> [Accessed: 11 January 2012]

Ho, E.L., (2008). "Embodying Self-Censorship: Studying, Writing and Communicating". *Area*. 40(4): 491-499

Hobin, (2012). 'Maggie's List' PAC Emerges as Right's Answer to 'Emily's List'. *Newsman Independent American*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.newsmax.com/Politics/maggie-emily-list-pac/2012/07/16/id/445498> [Accessed: 20 July 2012]

ICRW, (2010). 'Recognising Rights Promoting Progress. The Global Impact Of The Convention Of The Elimination Of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women'. *CEDAW* [Online] Available from: <http://www.icrw.org/files/publications/Recognizing-Rights-Promoting-Progress-CEDAW.pdf> [Accessed: 18 June 2015]

IDEA, (2010). '*Table of Electoral Systems Worldwide*'. [Online] Available from: <http://www.idea.int/esd/world.cfm> [Accessed: 27 July 2012]

Inglehart, R., (1981). 'Political Interest in West European Women. An Historical and Empirical Comparative Analysis'. *Comparative Political Studies*. 14 (3): 299-326

Inglehart, R., Norris, P., (2003). *Rising Tide. Gender Equality and Cultural Change Around the World*. Cambridge: The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge

Inglehart, R., Norris, P., Welzel, Ch., (2004). *Gender equality and democracy*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/pnorris/Acrobat/Genderper cent20equalityper cent20&per cent20democracy.pdf> [Accessed: 20 April 2015]

Inglehart, R., Welzel, Ch., (2005). *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*. New York: Cambridge University Press

IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union), (1997). 'Results 98'. *Conference and related meetings of the Inter-Parliamentary Union*. Cairo (Egypt), 9-16 September 1997

IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union), (1999). 'Participation of Women in Political Life'. *New York: IPU* [Online] Available from: http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/womenplus5_en.pdf [Accessed: 10 July 2012]

IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union), (2006a). *Women in Politics: 60 years in retrospect*. [Online] Available at: http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/wmninfokit06_en.pdf [Accessed: 25 October 2012]

IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union), (2006b). *Women in Parliament in 2006. The Year in Perspective*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/wmn06-e.pdf> [Accessed: 25 October 2012]

IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union), (2011). *Women in Parliament in 2011. The Year in Perspective*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/wmnpersp11-e.pdf> [Accessed: 20 July 2012]

IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union), (2012). *Women in Parliament in 2012. The Year in Perspective*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/WIP2012e.pdf> [Accessed: 20 April 2014]

IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union), (2015a). *Women in National Parliaments*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm> [Accessed: 22 April 2015]

IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union), (2015b). *Women in National Parliaments*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> [Accessed: 22 May 2015]

Instytut Spraw Publicznych, (2010). *Kobiety na Listach wyborczych*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.isp.org.pl/site.php?id=639> [Accessed: 18 April 2015]

Jeff, P., (2009). *10 Ways to End Your Speech With a Bang*. [Online] Available from: <http://sixminutes.dlugan.com/10-ways-to-end-your-speech/> [Accessed: 20 May 2015]

Kaiser, P., (2001). 'Strategic Predictors of Women's Parliamentary Participation: A Comparative Study of Twenty-Three Democracies'. *PhD Dissertation*. Los Angeles: University of California in Krook, L., (2010). 'Women's Representation in Parliament: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis'. *Political Studies*. 58(5): 886-908

Kampichler, M., Machovcova, K., (2008). 'Gender Mainstreaming in the Czech Republic: a critical Perspective' in Grzybek, A., and Rochon, A., (ed). *Gender Mainstreaming. Hope to Use Its Potential Effectively?* Warsaw: Heinrich Boll Foundation Regional Office

Karam, A., Lovenduski, J., (2005). 'Women in Parliament: Making a Difference' in Ballington, J., Karam, A., (2005). *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*. A Revised Edition. Stockholm: Publications Office International IDEA

Kezar, A., (2003). "Transformational Elite Interviews: Principles and Problems". *Qualitative Inquiry*. 9(3): 395-415

Keen, R., (2015). 'Women in Parliament and Government'. *Social and General statistics Section*. London: the House of Commons Library.

Kelly, R., and White, I., (2009). *Parliament and Constitution Centre*. London: House of Commons Library

Kicińska, M., (2009). 'Parlamentarna Grupa Kobiet – lobby kobiece w polskim parlamencie' *Raport: Kobiety dla Polski: Polska dla Kobiet. 20 lat transformacji 1989-2009*. Warszawa: Fundacja Feminoteka

King, A., Soloman, A., (1973). *Westminster and Beyond*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd

King, O., (2005), 'All-women shortlist a must, says report'. *The Guardian*. Tuesday 15 November 2005 [Online] Available from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2005/nov/15/women.gender?INTCMP=ILCNETTXT3487> [Accessed: 05 May 2012]

King, N., Horrock, Ch., (2010). *Interviews in Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications

Kittilson, M. C., (2006). *Challenging Parties, Changing Parliaments. Women and Elected Office in Contemporary Western Europe*. Ohio: The Ohio State University Press

Knapik, W., (2009). 'Skąd Biorą się Kobiety w Polityce?- Miejsko-Wiejski Kontekst Społeczny' in Marszałek-Kawa, J., (2009). *Kobiety w Polityce*. Torun: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek

Kondzińska, A., Uhlig, D., (2012). 'Być Kobieta w Polityce'. *Gazeta Wyborcza.pl*. 18 May 2012. [Online] Available from: <http://archive-pl.com/page/11986/2012018/http://wyborcza.pl/Polityka/0,110296.html> [Accessed: 21 March 2015]

Kosa-Kovacs, M., (2004). "The situation of women in the countries of post-communism transition". *Report for the Standing Committee Equal Opportunities for Women and Men*. [Online] Available from: <http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Doc/XrefViewHTML.asp?FileID=10366&Language=EN> [Accessed: 20 June 2015]

Krolokke, Ch., Sorensen, S.A., (2006). *Gender Communication Theories and Analyses*. London: Sage Publications

Krook, M., L., (2007) 'Gender Quotas: A Framework for Analysis'. *European Journal of Political Research*. 46(3): 367-394

Krook, L., (2010). 'Women's Representation in Parliament: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis'. *Political Studies*. 58(5): 886-908

Kroom, L., Ekstrom, M., (2008). 'The Complex Visual Gendering Of Political Women In The Press'. *Journalism studies*. 9(6): 891-910

Kunovich, S., (2003). 'The Representation of Polish and Czech Women in National Politics: Predicting Electoral List Position'. *Comparative Politics*. 35(3): 273-291

Kunovich, S., Paxton, P., (2005). 'Pathways to Power: The Role of Political Parties in Women's National Political Representation'. *American Journal Of Sociology*. 111(2): 505-552.

Larsrud, S., Taphorn, R., (2007). *Designing for Equality. Best-fit, medium-fit and non-favourable combinations of electoral systems and gender quotas*. Stockholm: International IDEA

Lee, J., (2014). 'Feminism Has a Bra-burning Myth Problem'. *The Time*, June 12, 2014. [Online] Available from: <http://time.com/2853184/feminism-has-a-bra-burning-myth-problem/> [Accessed: 19 April 2015]

LeDuc, L., Niemi, R.G., Norris, P., (2010). *Comparing Democracies. Elections and Voting in the 21st Century*. London: Sage Publications

Lilleker, D.G., (2003). "Doing Politics: Interviewing the Political Elite: Navigating a Potential Minefield". *Politics*. 23(3): 207-214

Lilliefeldt, E., (2012). 'Party and gender in western Europe revisited: A fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis of gender- balanced parliamentary parties'. *Party Politics*. 18(2): 193-214

London, B., Styles, R., (2014). "'Cameron's Cuties" make their presence felt as their march into Downing Street following dramatic Cabinet reshuffle'. *Online Mail*. 15 July 2014. [Online] Available from: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2693150/Camerons-cuties-make-stylish-presence-felt-march-Downing-Street-dramatic-reshuffle.html> [Accessed: 25 March] 2015

Lord Davies of Abersoch (2011) 'Women on Boards 2011'. *Policy paper: Women on boards review*. 24 February 2011 [Online] Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/31710/11-745-women-on-boards.pdf [Accessed: 24 April 2015]

Lord Davies of Abersoch (2015) 'Women on Boards 2015'. *Policy paper: Women on boards 2015: fourth annual review*. 25 March 2015 [Online] Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/415454/bis-15-134-women-on-boards-2015-report.pdf [Accessed: 24 April 2015]

Lovenduski, J., (2001). 'Women and Politics: Minority Representation or Critical Mass?' *Parliamentary Affairs*. 54(4): 743-758

Lovenduski, J., (2005). *Feminizing Politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press

Lovenduski, J., (2012) in Nizynska, A., (2012). 'Kwoty, kobiety , politika'. *Sprawozdanie z konferencji*. Warszawa, Kwiecień 2012. [Online] Available from: <http://www.isp.org.pl/uploads/filemanager/Kwotykobietypolityka-sprawozdaniezkonferencji.pdf> [Accessed: 16 February 2015]

Lovenduski, J., Norris P., (1993). *Gender and Party Politics*. London: Sage Publications

Lovenduski, J., Karam, A., (2002). 'Women in Parliament: Making a Difference'. *International IDEA Women in Parliament*. Stockholm [Online] Available from: <http://www.idea.int> [Accessed: 02 May 2012]

Lovenduski, J., (2005). *Feminizing Politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press

LSE, (2012). *The LSE's simple guide to UK voting systems*. [Online/Blog]. Available from: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/2012/11/13/the-lses-simple-guide-to-uk-voting-systems/> [Accessed: 22 November 2012]

Luhiste, M., (2012). *Candidate gender And Electoral Success In Party List proportional Representation (PR List) Systems*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. United Kingdom: University of Exeter

Maanen, J., V., (1983). *Qualitative Methodology*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications

Markstedt, H., (2007). 'Political handbags. The representation of women politicians. A case study of the websites and newspaper coverage of the women candidates in the Labour Party deputy Leadership election'. *Media and LSE. Department of Media and Communications, London*. [Online] Available from: http://www.google.co.uk/#hl=en&client=psy-ab&q=Georgina+beckett+mp+media+coverage&pbx=1&oq=Georgina+beckett+mp+media+coverage&aq=f&aql=&gs_sm=3&gs_upl=11435114434111479211411410101011461154013.1111410&bav=on.2,or.r_gc.r_pw.r_qf.,cf.osb&fp=d7e38348993b7270&biw=1040&bih=406 [Accessed: 20 February 2012]

Marshall, C., Young, M., (2006). Gender and methodology in Skelton, C., Francis, B., Smulyan, L. (eds). *The sage handbook of gender and education*. London: Sage Publications Ltd

Marshall, K., (2013). 'Current gender quotas patronising to women'. *Vancouver 24hrs*. 03 February 2013. [Online] Available form: <http://vancouver.24hrs.ca/2013/02/03/current-gender-quotas-patronizing-to-women> [Accessed: 18 June 2015]

Marszal, K., (2005). *Lobby kobiet w polskim parlamencie, 1989-2005*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe

Marszalek-Kawa, J., (2010). *Kobiety w Polityce*. Torun: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszalek

Matland, R.E., (2005). Enhancing women's political participation: legislative recruitment and electoral systems in A. Karam, & Ballington, J. (ed.), *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*. Revised edition. Stockholm: International IDEA.

Matland, R.E., Montgomery, K.A., (2003). *Women's access to political power in post-communist Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Matland, R.E. Studlar, D. T. (1996) 'The Contagion of Women Candidates in Single-Member District and Proportional Representation Electoral Systems: Canada and Norway'. *The Journal of Politics*. 58 (3), 707–33.

Matland, R.E., Taylor, M.M., (1997). 'Electoral System Effects on Women's Representation: Theoretical Arguments and Evidence from Costa Rica'. *Comparative Political Studies*. 30(2): 186-210. DOI: 10.1177/0010414097030002003. [Online] Available from: http://www.academia.edu/5438336/Richard_E._Matland_and_Michelle_Taylor_Electoral_System_Effects_on_Womens_RepresentationTheoretical_Arguments_and_Evidence_from_Costa_Rica._ [Accessed: 20 April 2012]

McAllister, I. Studlar, D. T. (2002) 'Electoral Systems and Women's Representation: A Long-Term Perspective'. *Representation*. 39 (1): 3–14.

McAllister, L., (2006). *Dal dy Dir/ stand your ground: international lessons on women's equality from a small nation*. [Online] Available from: http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb6655/is_1_32/ai_n29288138/pg_4/ [Accessed: 22 November 2011]

McAllister, I., (2008). 'Early Promise Unfulfilled: The Electoral Representation of Women in Australia' in Tremblay, M., (ed). *Women and Legislative Representation. Electoral Systems, Political Parties, and Sex Quotas*. New York, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

McLeay, E., (1993). 'Women and the Problem of Parliamentary Representation: A Comparative Perspective'. *Political Science*. 45(1): 40-62

Mikecz, R., (2012). 'Intervening Elites: addressing methodological issues'. *Qualitative Enquiry*. 18(6): 482-493

Miller, D. C., Salkind, N. J. (2002). *Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement*. 6th ed. Thousand Oaks, NY: American Sociological Association.

Milliken, P. J., Schreiber, R. S. (2001). 'Can you "do" grounded theory without symbolic interactionism?' in Schreiber R. S., Stern P. N., (ed), *Using grounded theory in nursing*. New York: Springer.

Mills, J., Bonner, A., Francis, K. (2006). 'The Development of Constructivist Grounded Theory'. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 5 (1): 25-35

Molecki, P., (2009). 'Sexafera w Sejmie. Mucha nie byla jedyna'. *Fact.pl*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.fakt.pl/Seksafera-w-Sejmie-Mucha-nie-byla-jedyna,artykuly,56977,1.html> [Accessed: 22 January 2015]

Morris, N., (2015). *The Independent*. 07 May 2015. [Online] Available from: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/generalelection/record-numbers-of-women-set-to-become-mps-10233798.html> [Accessed: 18 June 2015]

Mullings, B. (1999). "Insider or Outsider, Both or Neither: Some Dilemmas in Cross-Cultural Setting". *Geoforum*. 30(4): 337-350

NDI (2013). *Women Political Participation*. [Online] Available form: <http://www.ndi.org/womens-political-participation> [Accessed: 30 May 2013]

Neil, S.J., (1976). *Comparative Methods in the Social sciences*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall

Nelson, B.J., Chowdhury, N., (1994). *Women and Politics Worldwide*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press

Netta, A., (2009). 'Language and gender: the mass media's portrayal of two U.S. presidential candidates'. *eScholarship. University of California* [Online] Available from: [file:///C:/Users/michal/Desktop/media'sper cent20representationper cent20clintonper cent20vsper cent20obamaper cent20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/michal/Desktop/media'sper cent20representationper cent20clintonper cent20vsper cent20obamaper cent20(1).pdf) [Accessed: 14 February 2015]

Neuman, W., L., (2000). *Social Research Methods. Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. 4th edition. London: Allyn and Bacon

Neuman, W. L., (2006). *Social Research Methods. Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Boston: Pearson

Nizynska, A., (2012). 'Kwoty, kobiety , politika'. *Sprawozdanie z konferencji*. Warszawa, Kwiecień 2012. [Online] Available from: <http://www.isp.org.pl/uploads/filemanager/Kwotykobietypolityka-sprawozdaniezkonferencji.pdf> [Accessed: 16 February 2015]

Norris, P., (1996), 'Women Politicians: Transforming Westminster?' *Parliamentary Affairs*. 49(1): 89-102

Norris, P., (2000). *Breaking the Barriers: Positive Discrimination Policies for Women. Has Liberalism Failed Women? Parity, Quotas and Political Representation*. New York: St Martin's Press

Norris, P., (2006a). 'Women Politicians: Transforming Westminster?' *Parliamentary Affairs*. 49(1): 89-102

Norris, P., (2006b). 'The Impact of Electoral Reform on Women's Representation'. *Acta Politica*. 41(2): 197-213

Norris, P., Inglehart, R., (2001). 'Cultural Obstacles to Equal Representations'. *Journal of Democracy*. 12 (3): 126-140

Norris, P., Inglehart, R., (2008). 'Cracking the Marble Ceiling: Cultural barriers facing women leaders'. *Harvard University Report*. 13th January 2008 [Online] Available from: <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/pnorris/Acrobat/Marblepercent20ceilingpercent20professionalpercent20format.pdf> [Accessed: 19 February 2012]

Norris, P., and Lovenduski, J., (1995). *Political Recruitment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

OECD (2012). 'Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship: Final Report to the MCM 2012'. *Meeting of the OECD Council at Ministerial Level*. Paris, 23-24 May 2012 [Online] Available from: <http://www.oecd.org/employment/50423364.pdf> [Accessed: 03 March 2015]

O'Neill, P. (1989). 'Responsible to whom? Responsible for what? Some ethical issues in community intervention'. *American Journal of Community Psychology*. 17(3): 323-341

O'Neill, P., Trickett, E., (1982). *Community consultation*. San Francisco: Jossey- Bass

Opyd, D., (2014a). 'Men and Media: Friends or Enemy of Women Parliamentarians? Under-representation of Women in Politics' in Stivachtis, Y.A., Abbott, S. G., (2014). *Addressing Integration and Exclusion: Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Intervention*. Athens: Athens Institutes for Education and Research

Opyd, D., (2014b). 'Men and Media: Friends or Enemy of Women Parliamentarians? Under-representation of Women in Politics'. *Athens Journal of Social Sciences*. 1(1): 35-46

OSCE, (2014). 'Why Advocate for Gender Equality and the Promotion of Women in Political Office?' in OSCE, (ed.) *Handbook on promoting women's Participation in Political Parties*. Warsaw: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

Padgett, D.K., (1998). *Qualitative Methods in Social Work Research*. London: Sage Publications

Pankow, I., Post, B., (2010). *Kobiety u Wladzy? Spojrzenie z Sejmu*. Warszawa: Instytut Studiow Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk

Pawlowski, L., Kierulff- Dubrow, J., (2011). 'Worlds Apart? Political theorists, Parliamentarians and the Meaning of Unequal Representation'. *Polish Sociological Review*. 3(175): 301-314

Paxton, P., (1997). 'Women in National Legislatures: A Cross-National Analysis'. *Social Science Research*. 26 (4): 442–64.

Paxton, P., Kunovich, S., (2003). Women's political representation: the importance of ideology. *Social Forces*. 82, 87–114

Peacock, L., (2012). 'EU quotas would 'patronise women''. *The Telegraph*. 05 March 2012. [Online] Available from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/jobs/9123991/EU-quotas-would-patronise-women.html> [Accessed: 18 June 2015]

Perkins, A., Ward, L., (2001). 'The Rise and fall of Blair's babes'. *The Guardian*. 24 May 2001 [Online] Available from: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/may/24/gender.uk> [Accessed: 18 June 2015]

Phillips, A., (1992). 'Must Feminists Give Up on Liberal Democracy'. *Political Studies*. 4 (1): 68-82

Phillips, A., (1995). *The Politics of Presence*. Oxford: Clarendon Press

Phillips, D.A., Gritzner, Ch, F., (2009). *Human Rights*. New York: Infobase Publishing

Pickard, A., J., (2007). *Research methods in information*. London: Facet Publishing

Pitkin, H, F., (1972). *The Concept of Representation*. Berkley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press

Platek, M., (2004). 'Hostages of Destiny: Gender Issues in Today's Poland'. *Feminist Review*. 76(1): 5-25

Platell, A., (2009). 'Women-only shortlists are patronising stunt....haven't the Tories learnt anything from the catastrophe of Blair's Babes?'''. *Mail Online*. 22 October 2009. [Online] Available from: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-1222062/Women-shortlists-patronising-stunt---havent-Tories-learnt-catastrophe-Blairs-Babes.html> [Accessed: 18 June 2015]

Puwar, N., (1997). 'Gender and political elites: women in the House of Commons'. *Sociology Review*. 7(2): 2-6

Randall, V., (1987). *Women and Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Reynolds, A., (1999). 'Women in the Legislatures and Executives of the World: Knocking at the Highest Glass ceiling'. *World Politics*. 51(4):547-572

Richardson, P., B., (2014). 'Engaging the Russian Elite: Approaches, Methods and Ethics'. *Politics*. 34(2): 180-190

Ridge, S., (2014). 'Meet the group Parliament is secretly discriminating against'. *The Telegraph*. 23 December [Online] Available from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-politics/11307670/Meet-the-group-Parliament-is-secretly-discriminating-against.html> [Accessed: 02 March 2015]

Rivera, S.W., Kozyreva, P.M., Sarovski, E.G., (2002). 'Interviewing Political Elites'. *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 35(4): 683-688

Roberts, S., (2013). 'Research in Challenging Environments: The Case of Russia's Managed Democracy'. *Qualitative Research*. 13(3): 337-351

Robson, C. (2002). *Real world research*. 2nd ed. Malden- MA: Blackwell

Rosenbluth, F., Kalla, J., Teele, D., (2015). 'The Female Political Career'. *The World Bank Group. A joint study 2012 by WIP and The World Bank*. [Online] Available from: http://www.womeninparliaments.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Final_13012015_The-Female-Political-Career.pdf [Accessed: 02 March 2015]

Ross, K., (2002). *Women, Politics, Media. Uneasy Relations in Comparative Perspectives*. New Jersey: Hampton Press

Ross, K., (2003). 'Women Politicians and Millstream Media: A Game of Two sides'. Centre for Advancement of Women in Politics, School of Politics, Queen's University Belfast

Ross, K., (2010). *Gendered Media. Women, Men, and Identity Politics*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers

Ross, K., Comrie, M., (2012). 'The rules of the (leadership) game: Gender, politics and news'. *Journalism*. 13(8): 969-984

Roza, V., Llanos, B., Garzon de la Roza, G., (2011). *Gender and Political Parties. Far from Parity*. Stockholm: International IDEA

Ruane, J. M., (2005). *Essentials of Research Methods. A Guide to Social Science Research*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing

Ruedin, D., (2012). 'The Representation of Women in National Parliaments: A Cross-national Comparison'. *European Sociological Review*. 28(1): 96-109

Rugg, G., Petre, M., (2004). *The Unwritten Rules of PhD Research*. Maidenhead: Open University Press

Rule, W., (1987). 'Electoral systems, contextual factors and women's opportunity for election to parliament in twenty-three democracies'. *Western Political Quarterly*. 40 (3): 477-498.

Russell, M., (2001). *The Women's Representation Bill: Making it Happen*. [Online] Available from: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/spp/publications/unit-publications/79.pdf> [Accesses: 17 June 2015]

Russell, M., Mackay, F., McAllister, L., (2002). 'Women's Representation in the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales: Party dynamics for Achieving Critical Mass'. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*. 8(2): 49-76

Sabot, E., (1999). 'Dr Jekyll, Mr H(i)de: The Contrasting Face of Elites at Interview'. *Geoforum*. 30(4): 329-335

Sadia, H., T., (2013). *The Global Women's Movement and the Feminist Perspective in 21st Century*. Course Paper. University of Dhaka. [Online] Available from: http://www.academia.edu/4574843/The_Global_Womens_Movement_and_Feminist_Perspective_in_21st_Century [Accessed: 20 June 2014]

Sakwa, G., Crouch, M., (1978). 'Sejm Elections in Communist Poland: An Overview and a Reappraisal'. *British Journal of Political Science*. 8(4): 403-424

Sanbonmatsu K., (2006). *Where women run: Gender and party in the American states*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press

Sanghani, J., (2014). 'The real reasons female Tory MPs are quitting Parliament'. *The Telegraph*. Wednesday 22 January 2014. [Online] Available from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-politics/10588196/The-real-reasons-female-Tory-MPs-are-quitting-Parliament.html> [Accessed: 22 January 2015]

Sawer, M., (2000). 'Parliamentary representation of Women: from Discourses of Justice to Strategies of Accountability'. *International Political Science Review*. 21(4): 361-380

Sawer, M., (2010) 'Women and Elections' in LeDuc, I., Niemi, R.G., Norris, P., (2010). *Comparing Democracies 3. Elections and Voting in the 21st Century*. London: Sage Publications Ltd

Sawer, M. (2012). 'What makes the substantive representation of women possible in a Westminster parliament? The story of RU486 in Australia'. *International Political Science review*. 33(3): 320-35

Schmidt, G.D., (2009). 'The election of women in the list PR systems: Testing the conventional wisdom'. *Electoral Studies*. 28 (2): 190-203

Schwindt-Bayer, L.A., (2009). 'Making quotas work: The effect of gender quota laws on the election of women'. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. 34 (1): 5-28

Shiers, J., (2008). *The Quotable Bitch. Women Who Tell It Like It Really Is*. Guilford: The Lions Press

Sheperd-Robinson, L., Lovenduski, J., (2002). 'Women and Candidate Selection in British Political Parties. 2002'. *Report for Fawcett* [Online] Available from: [http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/report \(3\).pdf](http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/report%20(3).pdf) [Accessed: 20 July 2012]

Short, C., (1996). 'Women and the Labour Party'. *Parliamentary Affairs*. 49(1)17-25

Sieminska, R., (2000). *Nie moga, Nie chca czy Nie potrafia? O postawach i uczestnictwie politycznym kobiet w Polsce*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar

Sieminska, R., (2004). 'Gender Party Quotas in Poland'. *The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)/CEE Network for Gender Issues Conference*. 22-22-23 October 2004. Budapest, Hungary

Sieminska, R., (2005). 'Winners and Losers: Gender Contracts in the New Political and Economic Situation'. *International Journal of Sociology*. 35(1): 3-39

Sierakowski, S., (2014). 'The Polish Church's Gender Problem'. *New York Times*. 27 January 2014 [Online] Available from: <http://ihtbd.com/ihtuser/print/oldpercent20THT/27-01-2014/a2701x08xxxxxxxxx.pdf> [Accessed: 20 June 2015]

Silva, M.A., (1990). Campus Life: Centenary; Love Is Message As Maya Angelou Addresses 700. *New York Times*. 11 March 1990. [Online] Available from: <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/03/11/style/campus-life-centenary-love-is-message-as-maya-angelou-addresses-700.html?ref=mayaangelou> [Accessed: 01 August 2012]

Sineau, M., (2008). 'The Single-Member District System: The Hidden Bonus for Notables' ' in Tremblay, M., (ed.). *Women and Legislative Representation. Electoral Systems, Political Parties, and Sex Quotas*. New York, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Shedova, N., (2005). 'Obstacles to Women's Participation in Parliament' in Ballington, J., Karam, A., (2005). *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*. A Revised Edition. Stockholm: Publications Office International IDEA

Skjeie, H. (2002). *Credo on Difference – Women in Parliament in Norway in International IDEA, (2002). Women in Parliament*. Stockholm: Publications Office International IDEA [Online] Available from: http://www.idea.int/publications/wip/upload/CS_Norway.pdf [Accessed: 13 February 2015]

Sledzinska-Simon, A., Bodnar, A., (2014). 'Between symbolism and incrementalism: Moving Forward with the gender equality project in Poland'. *Legal Struggles around Quotas in Europe*. Workshop. European University Institute. 10-12th September 2014. [Online] Available from:

http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/35981/LAW_2015_30.pdf?sequence=1 [Accessed: 20 June 2015]

Sloat, A., (2004). 'Integrating Women: The Gendered Dimension of EU Enlargement'. *Second Pan-European Conference Standing Group on EU Politics*. Bologna, 24-26 June 2004. [Online] Available from: <http://www.jhubc.it/ecpr-bologna/docs/570.pdf> [Accessed: 19 April 2015]

Smith, K. B., (2010). 'When All's Fair: Signs of Parity in Media Coverage of Female Candidates'. *Political Communication*. 14(1): 71-82. DOI: 10.1080/105846097199542. [Online] Available from: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/105846097199542> [Accessed: 10 April 2014]

Sones, B., Moran, M., Lovenduski, J., (2005) *Women in Parliament: the new suffragettes*. London: Politico's

Sozanska, D., (2009). Stanowisko Kościoła katolickiego wobec działalności politycznej kobiet in Fraczkak, A., (2009). *Kobiety wobec polityki- kobiety w polityce. Historia, realia, perseptywy*. Krakow: Krakowska Akademia im. Andrzeja Frycza Modrzewskiego

Spence, L., (2012). 'Debate: Media treatment of female politicians, which side is to blame?'. *Current affairs* [Online/Blog] Available form: <http://blog.lewispr.com/2012/02/debate-media-treatment-of-female-politicians-which-side-is-to-blame.html> [Accessed: 30 May 2013]

Spurek, S., (2002). *Kobiety Partii Wybory*. Lodz: Centrum Praw Kobiet

Squires, J., (2007). *The New Politics of Gender Equality*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Squires, J., Wickham-Jonas, M., (2001). 'Women in Parliament: a Comparative Analysis'. *EOC Research Discussion Series* [Online] Available form: http://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar?hl=en&q=Women+in+Parliamentpercent3A+a+Comparative+Analysis&btnG=Search&as_sdt=0percent2C5&as_ylo=&as_vis=1 [Accessed: 12 December 2010]

Sroda, M., (2009). *Kobiety i władza*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo W.A.B.

Stevens, A., (2007). *Women Power and Politics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Stockemer, D., (2007). 'Why are there differences in the political representation of women in the 27 countries of the European Union?' *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*. 8(4): 476-493

Sturken, M., Cartwright, L., (2001). *Practices of Looking: an introduction to visual culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Suska, D., (2005). 'Droga do Sejmu i praca parlamentarna kobiet i mężczyzn (w III kadencji 1997–2001). Podobne czy różne?' in Siemieńska. R., (ed.) *Płeć, wybory, władza*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.

Szelewa, D., (2013). *Demographic challenges in Europe. A review of the basic problems with a focus on East and Central Europe*. Warsaw: Friedrich Ebert Foundation and ICRA Foundation.

Tashakkori, A., Teddlie, Ch., (2003). *Handbook of Mixed methods in Social & Behavioural Research*. London: Sage Publications

Teigen, M., Wangnerud, L., (2009). 'Tracing Gender Equality Cultures: Elite Perceptions of Gender Equality in Norway and Sweden'. *Politics & Gender*. 5 (1): 21–44.

Thomas, S., Welch, S., (2008). 'Commentary Thomas and Welsh 1991 Article "The Impact of Gender on Activities and Priorities of State Legislators"'. *Political Research Quarterly*. 61 (1): 43-45 [Online] Available from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20299706> [Accessed: 26 December 2010]

Tobin, A., (2002). 'The Family-Friendly Scottish Parliament'. *Scottish Affairs*. 38: 125-135 [Online] Available form: http://www.scottishaffairs.org/backiss/pdfs/sa38/Sa38_Contents.pdf [Accessed: 30 May 2013]

Tremblay, M., (2010). *Quebec Women and Legislative Representation*. Vancouver: The University of British Columbia

Tripp, A. and Kang, A. (2008). 'The global impact of quotas: on the fast track to increased female legislative representation'. *Comparative Political Studies*. 41, 338–361.

Truth, S., (1859) 'Ain't I a Woman?' in Genius (2015). [Online/Blog] Available from: <http://genius.com/Sojourner-truth-aint-i-a-woman-annotated> [Accessed: 20 June 2015]

Turska-Kawa, A., Widera, Z., Wojtasik, W., (2012). *Preferencje Polityczne. Postawy-Identyfikacje-zachowania*. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UNIKAT

UNESCO, (1995). *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Fourth World Conference on Women*. 15 September 1995 [Online] Available from: http://www.unesco.org/pv_obj_cache/pv_obj_id_9E4D674C5D99A0EB28BF3750C3BEB90496AF0600/filename/BEIJIN_E.PDF [Accessed: 09 November 2012]

UNICEF, (2007). *The State of the World's Children 2007. Women and Children. The Double Dividend of Gender Equality*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.UNICEF.org/sowc07/docs/sowc07.pdf> [Accessed: 20 June 2012]

UN, (2005). *Women and Elections. Guide to promoting the participation women in elections*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/publication/WomenAndElections.pdf> [Accessed: 16 February 2015]

UNSD (United Nations Statistics Division), (2012). *Statistics and indicators on women and men*. [Online] Available from: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/indwm/default.htm> [Accessed: 07 April 2012]

UNSD (United Nations Statistics Division), (2014). *The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics* [Online] Available from: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/Worldswomen/Executivepercent20summary.htm> [Accessed: 03 March 2014]

Vallance, E., (1979). *Women in The House. A Study of Women Members of Parliament*. London: The Athlone Press.

Walsh, C., (2001). *Gender and Discourse. Language and power in politics, the church and organisations*. Edinburgh and London: Pearson Education Ltd

Walsh, K. A., (2013). *The Stalking of Julia Gillard: How the media and Team Rudd brought down the Prime Minister*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin

Walby, S., (2004). 'The European Union and gender Equality: Emergent Varieties of Gender Regime'. *Social Politics*. 11(1): 4-29

Waniek, D., (2010). *Kobiety lewicy w polskim doswiadczeniu politycznym. Tradycje, wartosci i tozsamosc*. Torun: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszalek

Wangnerud, L., (2009). 'Women in Parliaments: Descriptive and substantive Representation'. *Annual Review of Political Science*. 12(1): 51-69

Wawrowski, L., (2007). *Polityka Rownych Szans. Instytucjonalne mechanizmy zwiekszania partycypacji kobiet w strukturach politycznych na oprzykladzie panstw Europejskich*. Torun: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszalek

Welzel, Ch., Inglehart R., Klingemann, H., D., (2003). 'The Theory of Human Development: A Cross-Cultural Analysis'. *European Journal of Political Research*. 42 (2): 341-380

Williams, P. J. (2008). 'American pie. The Nation, 10' in Coverage D. B., Winfrey C., Winfrey K. L., (2009). 'Have You Come a Long Way, Baby? Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin, and Sexism in 2008 Campaign'. *Communication Studies*. 60(4): 326-343

Willig, C., (2001). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology. Adventures in theory and methods*. Buckingham: Open University Press [Online] Available from: <http://www.mcgraw-hill.co.uk/openup/chapters/0335205356.pdf> [Accessed: 28 May 2011]

Zarnowska, A., (2004). "Women's Political Participation in Inter-war Poland: opportunities and limitations". *Women's History Review* 13 (1): 57-68

Zhang, Y., Wildemuth, B.M., (2009). 'Unstructured interviews' in Wildemuth (ed). *Applications of Social Research Methods to questions in Information and Library Science*. Wesport: Libraries Unlimited [Online] available form: https://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~yanz/Unstructured_interviews.pdf [Accessed: 24 February 2015]

Zukowski, A., (2011). *Partycypacja Wyborcza Kobiet- Wyzwania i Dylematy*. Torun: Centrum Studiow Wyborczych

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Picture 1: 'Blair's Babes'



Source: BBC News, 2007

Appendix 1

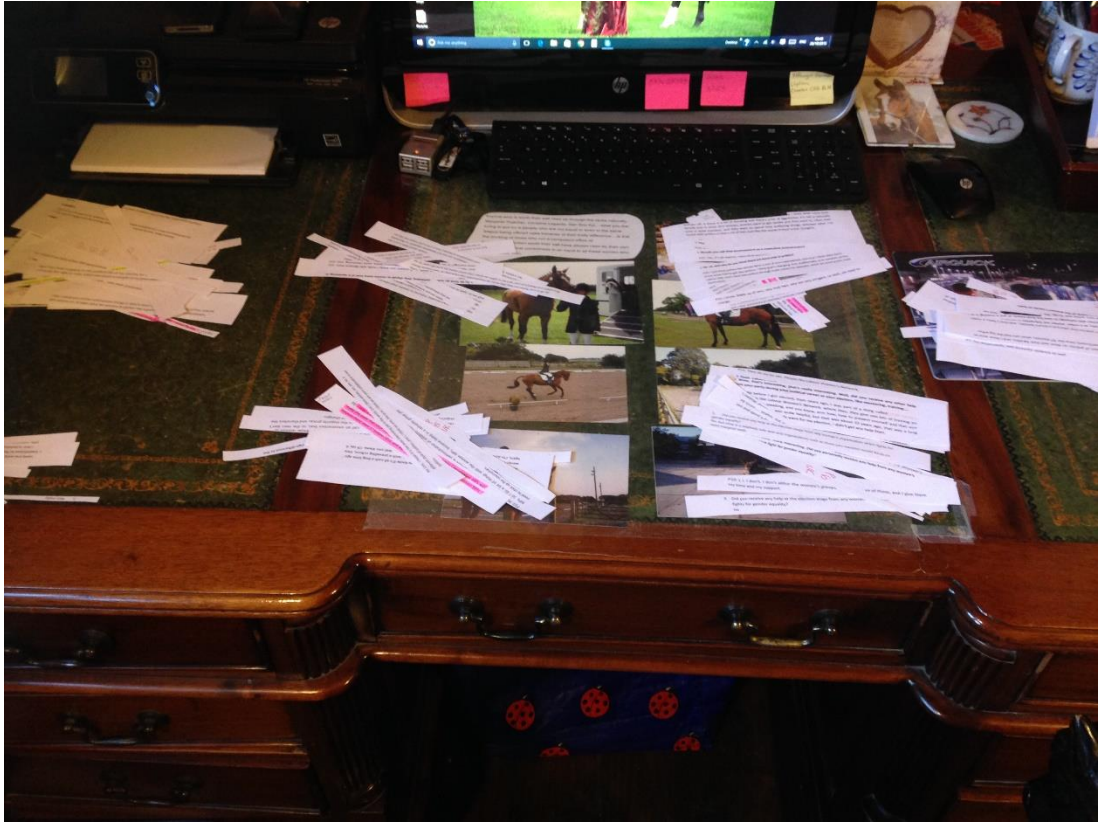
Picture 2: Women politicians during the UK's 2015 General Election



Source: Morris (2015)

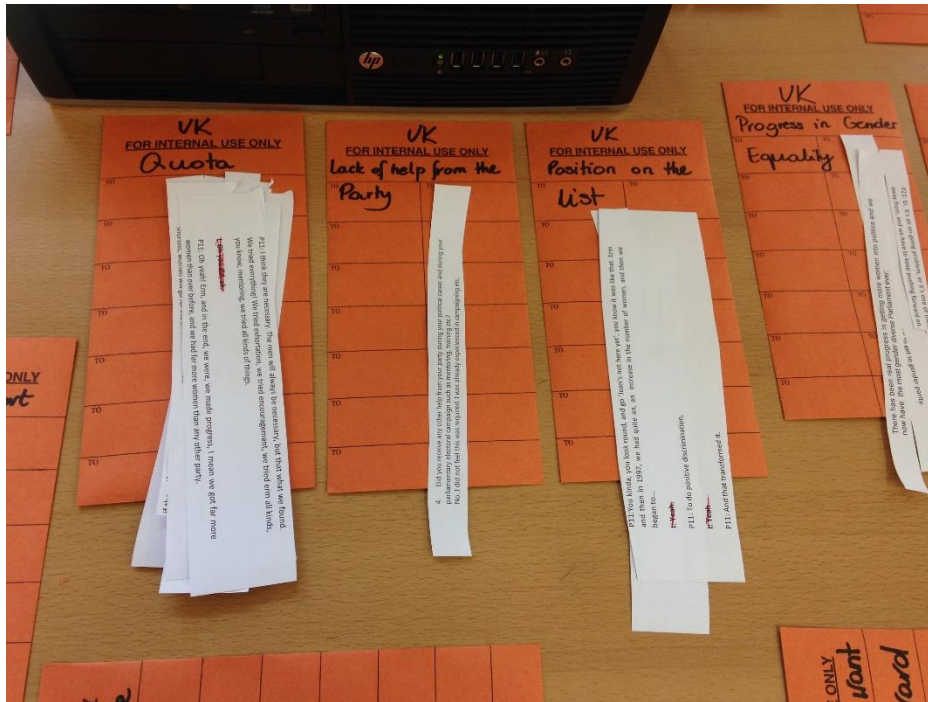
Appendix 1

Picture 3: Creation of sub-categories and categories

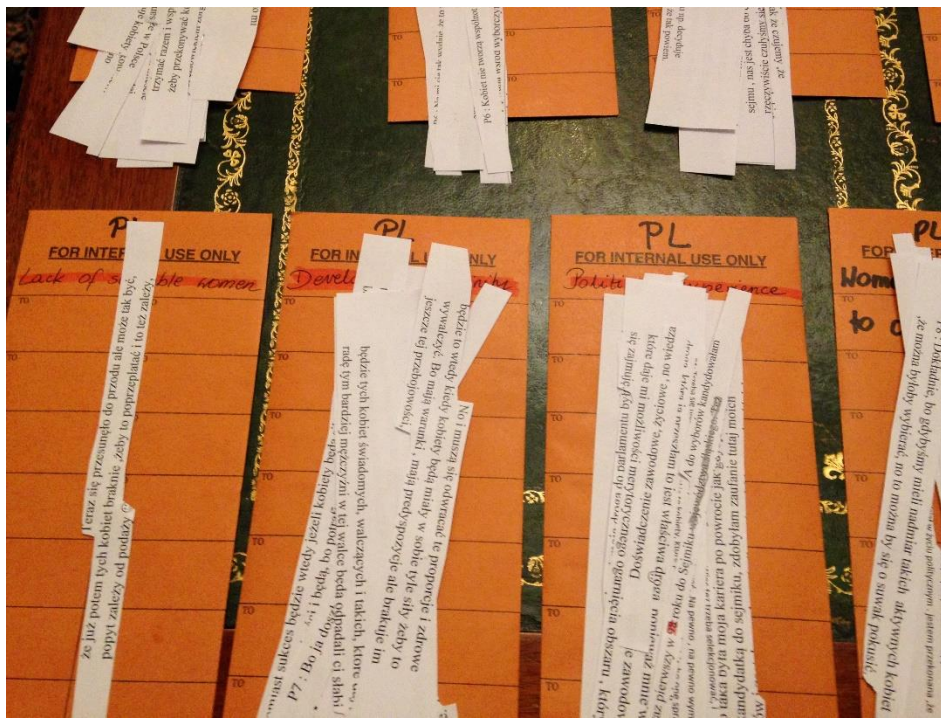


Appendix 1

Picture 4: Creation of master categories UK



Picture 5: Creation of master categories PL



Appendix 2

Table 4: Categories: United Kingdom

Sub Categories	Categories	Master Categories
Women don't want to come forward	Reluctance	Gender similarities/differences
Women's fear		
Lack of suitable women		
Differences between men and women	Male/female characteristics	
Developing masculinities		
Family responsibilities	Work/life balance	Family
Family support		
Social changes	Social issues	
Social help		
Cultural barriers	Culture	Distortions
Media's representation of women politicians		
Progress in gender equality		
Sexism	Club atmosphere	
Electoral systems	Political establishments	
Quotas	Positive actions	Structural pros and cons
Interference of the Government		
Winnable seats		
Electoral support		
Help/lack of help from the party		
Selection	Election processes	
Education	Background of the candidates	Ways to gender quality
Political experience		
Male orientated environment	Coming together	
Women's organisations		
Critical mas		
Women's issues		
No barriers	Gender equality not an issue	

Appendix 2

Table 5: Categories: Poland

Sub Categories	Categories	Master Categories
Women don't want to come forward	Reluctance	Gender similarities/differences
Women's fear		
Differences between men and women	Male/female characteristics	
Family responsibilities	Work/life balance	Family
Family support		
Social changes	Social issues	
Social help		
Cultural barriers	Culture	Distortions
Media's representation of women politicians		
Women's integration	Club atmosphere	
Men's integration		
Sexism		
Religion	Political establishments	
Communism		
Spectrum of the political party		
Quotas	Positive actions	Structural pros and cons
Interference of the Government		
Position on the electoral list/ winnable seats	Election processes	
Electoral support		
Help/lack of help from the party		
Education	Background of the candidates	Ways to gender quality
Political experience		
Male orientated environment	Coming together	
Women's organisations		
Critical mas		
Women's issues		
No barriers	Gender equality not an issue	

Appendix 3

Table 6: Gender similarities/differences

	UK (how many MPs mentioned)	PL (how many MPs mentioned)	UK (how many MPs mentioned more than once)	PL (how many MPs mentioned more than once)
Women's fear	5	16	1	7
Women don't want to come forward	12	11	6	9
Lack of suitable women	2	2	1	0
Differences between men and women	9	20	3	13
Developing masculinities	8	0	5	0

Table 7: Family

	UK (how many MPs mentioned)	PL (how many MPs mentioned)	UK (how many MPs mentioned more than once)	PL (how many MPs mentioned more than once)
Family responsibilities	20	23	12	18
Family support	8	16	4	12
Social changes	4	11	0	2
Social help	1	2	0	1

Appendix 3

Table 8: Distortions

	UK (how many MPs mentioned)	PL (how many MPs mentioned)	UK (how many MPs mentioned more than once)	PL (how many MPs mentioned more than once)
Women's integration	5	14	1	9
Sexism	2	5	4	1
Cultural barriers	13	23	4	15
Media's representation of women politicians	19	22	12	17
Progress in gender equality	5	0	1	0
Electoral systems	1	0	0	0
Men supporting other men	0	2	0	1
Spectrum of the political party	0	1	0	1
Communism	0	3	0	2
Religion	0	2	0	1

Table 9: Structural pros and cons

	UK (how many MPs mentioned)	PL (how many MPs mentioned)	UK (how many MPs mentioned more than once)	PL (how many MPs mentioned more than once)
Electoral support	12	8	4	3
Help/lack of help from the party	5	12	0	3
Position on the electoral list/winnable seats	7	11	2	10
Selection	3	0	0	0
Quotas	22	24	16	24
Interference of the Government	17	17	8	4

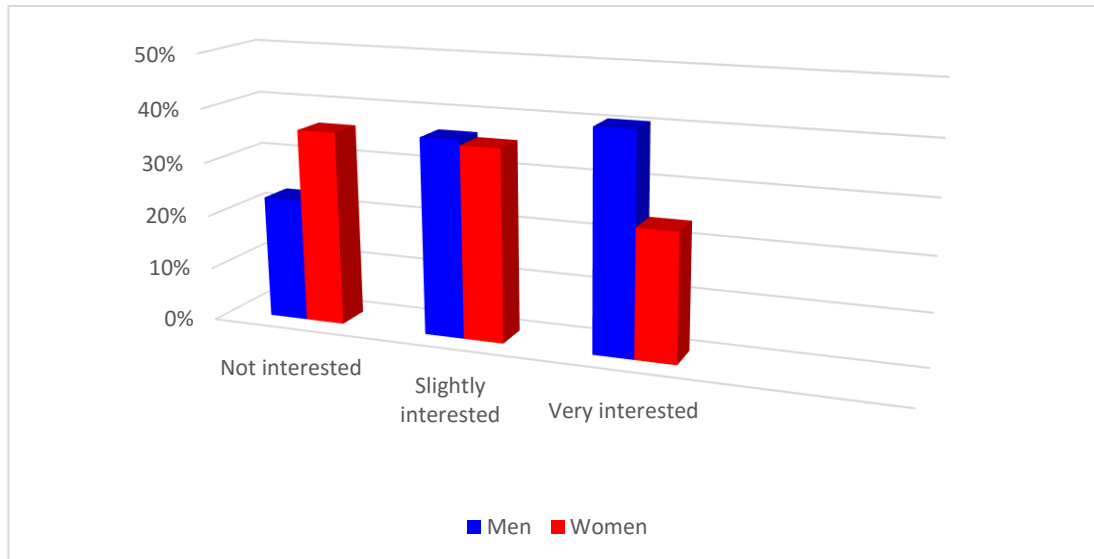
Appendix 3

Table 10: Ways to gender equality

	UK (how many MPs mentioned)	PL (how many MPs mentioned)	UK (how many MPs mentioned more than once)	PL (how many MPs mentioned more than once)
No barriers	7	8	5	1
Critical mass	9	10	4	5
Male orientated environment	7	3	5	1
Women's organisations	11	20	4	8
Women's issues	8	6	4	5
Education	3	8	2	6
Political experience	10	21	7	10
No more women needed	0	3	0	2
Positive experiences	0	3	0	0

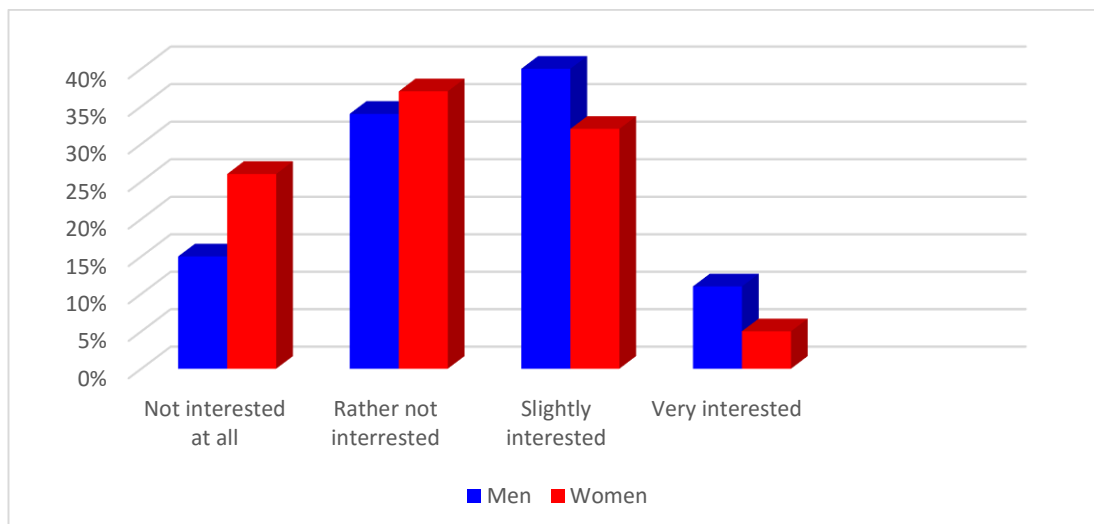
Appendix 4

Figure 9: Differences in percentages between men and women and their interest in British politics



Source: Amended from: 2005 British Election study dataset in Ryland and Mackie, (nd)

Figure 10: Differences in percentages between men and women and their interest in Polish politics.



Source: Amended from Survey: Actual problems by women eye's, Warsaw, 2005 TNS OBOB in Marszalek-Kawa, 2010

Appendix 5

Table 11: Information about the British interviewees

Participant	Marital Status	Children	Educational Level	Political Party	Length of active political involvement	How long as MP
Susan	Married	yes	HND	Conservative	26 years	14 years
Alison	Married	yes	MPhil	Labour	34 years	17 years
Sarah	Single	no	BA	Labour	19 years	9 years
Katie	Married	yes	Masters	Liberal Democrats	16 years	7 years
Debbie	Divorced	yes	BA	Labour	-	9 years
Michelle	Divorced	yes	BA	Labour	-	22 years
Alison	Single	no	MA	Labour	-	4 years
Georgina	Divorced	yes	BA	Conservative	-	4 years
Diane	Single	no	BA	Labour	2 years	2 years
Janet	Married	yes	BA	Conservative	-	17 years
Patsy	Married	yes	BA	Labour	44 years	41 years
Nicky	Divorced	yes	BA	Labour	-	17 years
Vicky	Married	yes	BA	Conservative	13 years	9 years
Joan	Married	yes	BA	Labour	16 years	9 years
Rebekah	Divorced	yes	Secondary Education	Labour	-	4 years
Emma	Married	yes		Labour	7 years	4 years
Samantha	Divorced	no	BA	Labour	17 years	4 years
Julie	Married	no	BA	Labour	17 years	13 years
Rosie	Single	no	BA	Labour	31 years	17 years
Annabel	Married	yes	BA	Labour	21 years	17 years
Lydia	Married	yes	BA	Labour	-	9 years
Tilly	Married	no	BA	Scottish National Party	16 years	4 years

Appendix 5

Table 12: Information about the Polish interviewees

Participant	Marital Status	Children	Educational Level	Political Party	Length of active political involvement	How long as an MP
Marta	Married	yes	MA	Civic Platform	12 years	3 years
Teresa	Divorced	yes	MA	Palikot Movement	34 years	3 years
Elzbieta	Divorced	yes	MA	Civic Platform	-	3 years
Karolina	Married	yes	MA	Civic Platform	34 years	3 years
Hanna	Divorced	yes	MA	Civic Platform	4 years	3 years
Wanda	Married	yes	MA	Law and Justice	16 years	9 years
Zofia	Divorced	yes	MA	Civic Platform	16 years	9 years
Maria			PhD	Civic Platform	20 years	9 years
Roza	Single	no	MA	Civic Platform	12 years	3 years
Agata	Married	yes	MA	Civic Platform	13 years	3 years
Anita			MA	Civic Platform	16 years	7 years
Agnieszka	Married	yes	MA	Civic Platform	14 years	3 years
Sabina	Married	yes	MA	Civic Platform	12 years	3 years
Barbara	Married	yes	MA	Independent	24 years	3 years
Justyna	Married	yes	MA	Civic Platform	10 years	7 years
Monika	Married	yes	MA	Civic Platform	19 years	9 years
Evelina	Divorced	yes	MA	Civic Platform	12 years	3 years
Mariola	Married	no	PhD	Civic Platform	16 years	5 years
Celina	Single	yes	MA	Civic Platform	24 years	7 years
Dagmara	Married	yes	MA	Civic Platform	4 years	3 years
Ewa	Married	yes	MA	Civic Platform	8 years	3 years
Malgorzata	Married	yes	MA	Civic Platform	13 years	3 years
Halina	Single	no	PhD	Law and Justice	7 years	3 years
Irena	Married	yes	MA	Civic Platform	12 years	2 years
Jolanta	Married	yes	MA	Civic Platform	12 years	3 years