Master’s Thesis

Men in Power:

The Significance of the Representation of Women in terms of Gender Equality in the National Legislatures of Sweden and Canada

Heidi McColl
801201 – P485
Linköpings Universitet
Msc in International and European Relations
Thesis Advisor: Per Jansson
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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Definition of the Problem

Women have been marginalized from the political sphere throughout the past centuries as it has been predominantly a male domain and thus dominated by men across the globe. Progress has gradually been achieved, beginning with women obtaining the right to vote in general elections, followed by achieving the legal right to run for office. These great achievements have been realized by nations throughout the world over a wide range of time. Today, women’s movements are primarily concerned with increasing the representation of women in the political arena so as to create a more just society and to better represent the interests of women nationally. It is a logical step in the general progression of gender equality to increase the presence of women in public office as well as in other primarily male-dominated domains. What remains to be said is whether increased representation will signify a higher level of gender equality. While higher numbers of women participating in political life would clearly be a step in the right direction, it is not clear that numbers alone will progress gender equality at any great rate. The problem which needs to be solved is whether or not representation alone signifies gender equality.

The Swedish Riksdag has been referred to as an example of a progressive case in regards to the advancement of gender equality. The Riksdag has achieved a high quantity of female representation, reaching 45 percent in the last election, while on the other end of the scale the Canadian House of Commons has not fared as well (www.riksdagen.se). The Canadian House of Commons has reached only a 21 percent representation of women as of the 2004 election (www.parl.gc.ca). In order to discover whether higher representation signifies a higher level of gender equality it will be beneficial to compare a more progressive parliament in terms of representation, with a less progressive case. Through the use of quantitative and qualitative methodologies in the form of a multi-strategy research design, questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and statistical analyses will be used in order to gain insight into the question as to whether or not the representation of women in numbers signifies gender equality.

1.2 Representation of Women: Justice
As mentioned, recent women’s movements have been concerned with increasing the representation of women in the political sphere throughout the world. In order to embark on a study of the significance of the political representation of women in terms of increasing gender equality, it is important to understand why the representation of women is significant in the first place. According to Anne Phillips, there are a number of reasons which indicate the significance of political representation:

There are those that dwell on the role model successful women politicians offer; those that appeal to principles of justice between the sexes; those that identify particular interests of women that would be otherwise overlooked; and those that point towards a revitalized democracy that bridges the gap between representation and participation (Phillips 1998, p.228)

The most convincing reason for gender parity, which will be discussed here, is offered by the argument for justice between the sexes. Phillips states, “it is patently and grotesquely unfair for men to monopolize representation” (1998, p.229). She asserts that distribution in politics would be randomly divided between both sexes if it were not for certain obstacles keeping women out of the political sphere (Phillips 1998, p.229). Furthermore, As John Stuart Mill eloquently stated:

Women’s subordination is a barbarous relic of an earlier historical period; far from being the inevitable outcome of natural attributes, it originated in force, and was now sanctified by custom so as to appear ‘natural’ (Bryson 1992, p.54)

There is a widely accepted view that the current sexual division of labour is inequitable and unnatural (Phillips 1998, p.229). The meaning of justice requires one to eliminate all forms of discrimination and it must be appealed to in order to remove this structural discrimination which has excluded women from being represented in political office in great numbers (Phillips 1998, p.230). As well, Democracy defined is government by popular representation; it is a form of government in which the supreme power is retained by the people, but is indirectly exercised through a system of representation and delegated authority which is periodically renewed. To elaborate further, a 1997 Inter-Parliamentary Union study asserted:

The concept of democracy will only assume true and dynamic significance when political parties and national legislation are decided upon jointly by men and women with equitable regard for the interests and aptitudes of both halves of the population (Corrin 1999, p.177)
Furthermore, if political office is considered as an ordinary career, “then there is a clear argument from justice for making such office equally available to women” (Phillips 1998, p.231). It is just as clear when one looks at the situation from the perspective which “denies any just basis for a male monopoly” (Phillips 1998, p.237). Men do not possess a natural superiority over women which would give them the right to dominate political office. The male sex is neither better at understanding problems and making decisions, nor do they have a “socially derived advantage which enhances their political skills” (Phillips 1998, p.232). Thus, as concluded by Phillips:

There is no argument from justice that can defend the current state of affairs; and in this more negative sense, there is an argument from justice for parity between women and men (Phillips 1998, p.232)

This provides insight into the arguments for a more proportionate representation of women in political office. Feminists have supplied numerous arguments regarding the significance of the presence of women in national legislatures, which have only been briefly highlighted here. However, this brief analysis provides a background for a study of the significance of women in national parliaments in terms of increasing gender equality.

1.3 Motivation: An Academic Need

It is necessary to more clearly define the motivation and relevance for such a research study. In 2000, a study was conducted by Lena Wängnerud entitled, “Testing the Politics of Presence: Women’s Representation in the Swedish Riksdag”. Based upon data obtained from parliamentary survey studies from 1985, 1988, and 1994, Wängnerud concluded that the representation of women does matter, in terms of a shift of emphasis occurring in the political agenda towards women’s interests (Wängnerud 2000, p.85). However, as stated by Wängnerud, “…to gain a solid basis for such a conclusion, we would really need to carry out further studies in which countries like Sweden and Norway are contrasted with other countries where female representation is much lower” (Wängnerud 2000, pp.85-6). In other words, in order to discover what affects representation in parliament could have it is necessary to compare two differing cases. Thus, this supports the relevance of embarking on a research study in which I will compare the Swedish Riksdag with the Canadian House of Commons in order to come to a more firm conclusion regarding the significance of representation in numbers. While Wängnerud’s study set out to determine whether or not the representation of women mattered in terms of women’s interests receiving more emphasis, this study is based upon whether the representation
of women matters in terms of an increased sense of gender equality in the attitudes and working conditions of parliament.

In Wängnerud’s study, she focused on three main areas: a) the recognition of women as a social category, b) the acknowledgement of the unequal balance of power between the sexes, and c) the occurrence of policies to increase the autonomy of female citizens (Wängnerud 2000, p.67). This research study will primarily focus and build upon the first two parts of Wängnerud’s study: the recognition of women as a social group and the acknowledgement of an unequal balance of power between men and women in parliament (the attitudes of parliamentarians in regards to gender equality). In addition the study will include an analysis of the existing degree of gender equality through a study of the general working conditions of the parliament.

1.4 Motivation: Gender in International Relations

In addition to the aforementioned relevance of conducting such a study, it is important to note the relevance on an international level. Feminist studies are fairly new to the arena of international relations as women have not played a great role in this arguably male-dominated sphere in the past. Gender equality has not been considered an issue of great importance in international relations and has largely been contested in terms of its relevance. J. Ann Tickner, a well-known Feminist scholar in the discipline of International Relations, has brought to the surface such questions as; “Why are there so few women in my discipline?”, “Why are there so few readings by women to assign to my students?”, “Why is the subject matter of my discipline so distant from women’s lived experiences?”, and “Why have women been conspicuous only by their absence in the worlds of diplomacy and military and foreign policy-making?” (Tickner 1992, p.ix) Tickner has studied ‘the masculinist underpinnings” of the field of international relations as well as examining:

…what the discipline might look like if the central realities of women’s day-to-day lives were included in its subject matter. Making women’s experiences visible allows us to see how gender relations have contributed to the way in which the field of international relations is conventionally constructed and to reexamine the traditional boundaries of the field. Drawing attention to gender hierarchies that privilege men’s knowledge and men’s experiences permits us to see that it is these experiences that have formed the basis of most of our knowledge about international politics (Tickner 1992, p.xi)

Thus, in studying the presence of women in the national legislatures of Sweden and Canada it brings women and women’s experiences to the surface which will contribute to the field of International Relations in such a way as to redefine the traditional boundaries of the field. These
experiences of women will be revealed through studying the general attitudes of parliamentarians towards gender equality in society and parliament as well as the general working conditions that women have experienced in parliament. The experiences of women have been largely ignored in the past and it is important to now make them visible in the international sphere in order to highlight that countries’ relations with one another are influenced by the gender relations in national legislatures.

1.5 Definition: Gender

It is important to explain the concept of gender before embarking upon a study of gender equality. Gender has taken on a variety of different meanings throughout the years, such as, the biological sex of an individual or sexual identity in reference to social or cultural categories. In everyday usage the terms ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ are often used interchangeably (Steans 1998, p.10). However, by definition ‘sex’ refers to biological identity, while ‘gender’ refers to “the ideological and material relations” which exist between men and women (Steans 1998, p.10). Gender refers also to “the social institutionalization of sexual difference; it is a concept used by those who understand not only sexual inequality but also much of sexual differentiation to be socially constructed” (Moller Okin 1998, p.116). Furthermore, Steans asserts:

…while sex and gender do not coincide naturally, individuals who are born as biological males or females are usually expected to develop ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ character traits and behave in ways appropriate to their gender (Steans 1998, p.10)

Throughout the past decades Feminists have encountered many problems regarding socially assigned sex roles which have become deeply entrenched in society (Steans 1998, p.12). Feminists have asserted that in order achieve gender equality and women’s liberation one must challenge these conventional sex roles (Steans 1998, p.12). However, Steans has further asserted:

The ascription of gender involved a highly complex system of stereotyping which was in turn supported by a whole range of social institutions and practices. ‘Women’ and ‘men’ were not only created by society but conformity to the characteristics held to be specifically ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ was rigidly enforced (Steans 1998, p.12).

These deep-rooted gender stereotypes have brought forth the issue of power relations between men and women in society. Unequal power relations between men and women have been said to have been justified by socially constructed ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ characteristics (Steans 1998, p.12). The concept of ‘Gender Equality’ is clearly an issue of power relations and the
inequality which exists can be attributed to the sociallyconstructed character traits which have been attached to women and men. According to Feminists, the concept of ‘gender’ itself has come to be viewed as a socially constructed inequality (Steans 1998, p.12). It is clear that the concept of ‘gender’ is social while comparatively the concept of ‘sex’ is natural and gender is “related to but not determined by biological sex difference” (Moller Okin 1998, p.126). The issue of Gender Equality is evidently a social issue centered on unbalanced power relations between women and men in all facets of life.

This study is specifically concerned with the unequal power relations between male and female members of parliament in the Swedish Riksdag and the Canadian House of Commons in terms of their participation in Parliamentary Committees and subsequent positions of power. The power relations in parliament can be said to have been socially constructed and consequently reinforced by everyday customs and conventions. These social constructs exist throughout the world, as do uneven power relations between women and men to varying degrees. It is the intent of this paper to analyze the extent to which these power relations are unequal in the parliaments of Sweden and Canada, and thus a discussion of gender was integral to this project.

1.6 Review of Relevant Literature:

The empirical and theoretical literature that was utilized in this study was quite wide in its subject content and was extremely valuable for the completion of this thesis. To begin, the theoretical literature which was used ranged from general Feminist theory publications written by authors such as V. Bryson and C. Corrin, to more specific theoretical literature, such as “The Politics of Presence”, by Anne Phillips. The general Feminist theory literature was employed in order to highlight the primary aspects of Liberal Feminist theory. The work of Anne Phillips was used in order to employ her ‘Politics of Presence’ theory and incorporate it into the theoretical framework of this study. As well, literature consisting of Feminist theory as concerned with International Relations was made use of in this thesis. For example, J. Ann Tickner’s “Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security”, and Jill Steans’ “Gender and International Relations” were used in order to display the importance of Feminism in an international context, which was a motivation for this study.

The empirical resources which were utilized in the writing of this thesis varied from journal articles, to official government websites, to recently published literature. To begin, journal
articles, such as Lena Wängnerud’s article entitled, “Testing the Politics of Presence: Women’s Representation in the Swedish Riksdag”, were used in order to compare and contrast the results of this study. Articles from edited books, such as “Looking for New Opportunities in Politics: Women’s Organizations and the Political Parties in Canada and Sweden” by Maille and Wängnerud, were used in a secondary analysis in order to display high quality data and to subsequently save time and resources. Another example of a useful article from an edited book which was used in a secondary analysis in this thesis is, “How the election system structure has helped women close the representation gap” by R.E. Matland. Furthermore, statistics from official government websites were also used in a secondary analysis as the websites offer high quality official data which is easily accessible.

The literature that was available which was relevant to the topic of this thesis was numerous and easily accessible. As Feminist views on politics have become more and more frequent throughout the past decade, it has created an upsurge of relevant literature on this topic. Many studies have been conducted regarding the participation of women in politics throughout the world and much has been written about what needs to be done in order to improve gender equality in politics among other industries. The majority of studies which have been conducted on the topic of women in politics have been concerned with increasing representation and what is required to achieve higher numbers of women in parliament. Furthermore, much has been written concerning the issue of why the representation of women matters. Less has been written concerning the topic of what representation in numbers means for gender equality. This gap in the research of women in politics needs to be filled, which is one of the reasons why this study was conducted.

Chapter Two: Theory

2.1 Liberal Feminism

There are a number of different schools of Feminist thought, such as Radical Feminism, Marxist Feminism and Liberal Feminism. A common element among all Feminist theory contends that the primary focus of politics should be concerned with relations of power and eliminating those conditions which perpetuate women’s inferior position in the economic, social and political domains (Corrin 1999, p.184). The form of Feminist theory that has the most relevance to the topic of this paper is Liberal Feminism, which is more specifically concerned with pulling down the barriers that have been preventing women from rising to the level achieved by men.
Throughout history, women have struggled to eliminate such barriers as being denied the right to vote and the right to run for public office. One of the great pioneers of Liberal Feminism, John Stuart Mill, once stated, “Legal discrimination against women is wrong. It ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other” (Bryson 1992, pp.54-5). In the political arena, this ‘perfect equality’ has not yet been achieved in Sweden or Canada, as activists in both countries are lobbying for increased representation of women in their national legislatures. So long as barriers remain which permit power or privilege to either sex, perfect equality has not been satisfied. What remains to be discovered, is the level of gender equality that has been achieved in the political spheres of Sweden and Canada. We know that equal representation of the sexes in Parliament has not been achieved in either country in question; however, representation does not necessarily signify the level of equality present. In order to establish the level of gender equality and thus the actual importance of representation in numbers, we must study the situation inside the legislatures. In order to operationalize Liberal Feminist theory, I will: a) analyze the current levels of gender equality with respect to the working conditions in the Swedish and Canadian legislatures; b) compare the situations of the two legislatures in order to establish whether representation in numbers signifies gender equality; c) conclude which conditions (if any) exist that are perpetuating ‘women’s inferior position’ in the political domain and thus admitting ‘power or privilege’ to one sex. While Liberal Feminist theory provides an appropriate motivation for such a study, it is important to include an additional theory, the politics of presence theory, in the theoretical framework of this study.

2.2 The Politics of Presence

There are currently strong arguments for the increase of the presence of women and other minorities in political institutions. Demands are being set for the equal representation of the sexes in national parliaments and for the political inclusion of marginalized groups (Phillips 1995, p.5). As asserted by Anne Phillips, the pioneer of ‘presence theory’:

In the conventional understandings of liberal democracy, difference is regarded as primarily a matter of ideas, and representation is considered more or less adequate depending on how well it reflects voters’ opinions or preferences or beliefs (Phillips 1995, p.1)

However, Phillips has proposed a Politics of Presence theory, which states that representation in national legislatures is not simply a matter of politicians adequately representing voters’ interests,
but a matter of proportionately including minority groups which have historically been suppressed from the political sphere. The cornerstone for a politics of presence is the argument that there is a symbolic significance attached to who is present in parliament, and that a sense of importance must be attached to groups that are now being included which have previously been excluded (Phillips 1995, p.45). Furthermore, another key argument for a politics of presence refers “more directly to the policy consequences we can anticipate from changing the composition of elected assemblies” (Phillips 1995, p. 45). Phillips further asserts:

…my main concern is with the more specifically political mechanisms which associate fair representation with political presence and emphasize changes at the political level: measures, that is, that regard the gender, race, or ethnicity of the representatives as an important part of what makes the representative, and seek some guarantee of equal or proportionate presence (Phillips 1995, pp.12-13).

It is clear that the symbolic significance of the representative is integral to Phillips’ politics of presence theory. As well, according the Lovenduski and Norris, the politics of presence argument suggests that, “beyond a certain threshold, as the numbers of women change, so also will other elements of the legislature because men and women bring different interests to politics” (Lovenduski et al 2003, p.89). An appropriate threshold for women, who represent half the population in both Sweden and Canada, would be somewhere below 50 percent according to Phillips, as, “…when the group composes half the population, the threshold might be considerably lower” (Phillips 1995, p.67). To further enunciate the issue, Rosabeth Moss Kanter who has completed work on gender relations, has proposed the idea that the size of the minority matters in terms of change in institutional cultures (Lovenduski et al 2003, p.88). Kanter states:

Uniform groups contain only men or only women. Skewed groups contain a large imbalance of men or women, up to about 15 percent of the minority group. Tilted groups contain about 15-40 percent of the opposite sex. Lastly, balanced groups contain 40-50 percent of each sex (Lovenduski et al 2003, p.88)

According to Kanter, once a group reaches a certain size, somewhere in the titled group range, the minority group begins to assert itself and “from this assertion there eventually follows a transformation of the institutional culture” (Lovenduski et al 2003, p.88). This implies that there is a ‘tipping point’ at which women in national legislatures begin to affect and change the political culture. Further articulated by Lovenduski and Norris:

Once the groups reaches a certain size… their available strategies change and lead to a qualitative shift in the nature of group interactions, as the minority starts to assert itself
and thereby transform the institutional culture, norms and values (Lovenduski et al. 2003, p.88)

Thus, according to Kanter, there is a presence threshold somewhere in the range of 15-40 percent representation, which when surpassed affects the political culture of the institution. These numbers are of course not cut-and-dried, however, it proposes the idea that representation could affect the political culture and inner-workings of the institution, and higher numbers would be in more of a position to do so.

The theoretical framework which this study is based upon is Phillips’ politics of presence theory which puts forth the idea that representation of minority groups in national legislatures matters, symbolically, and in terms of the interests they represent. Furthermore, Kanter proposes the idea that numbers matter in terms of representation and that higher numbers are in more of a position to transform the norms of the institution. This study aims to discover whether or not the higher numerical representation of women signifies gender equality in terms of attitudes and working conditions in the national parliaments of Sweden and Canada. As presence theory has stated that the representation of women matters, I plan to test that theory in order to see whether representation matters in terms of gender equality. If it is discovered that the representation of women does not matter in terms of gender equality, i.e. gender inequality exists in both the Riksdag and the House of Commons, then this means that the theory has failed the test. On the other hand, if it is discovered that the representation of women does signify gender equality, i.e. the Riksdag, which has a higher number of women present, has an equal situation in regards to gender, while the House of Commons is unequal in regards to gender, then this means that the theory has passed the test.

Furthermore, while Phillips has asserted that the presence of minorities is important in national legislatures, she has not mentioned whether this presence ‘spills over’ into the primary decision-making areas of legislatures, mainly Parliamentary Committees. As the majority of parliamentary work is conducted in the committees it is important for minorities, such as women, to be present there as well and distributed evenly among the committees.

**Chapter Three: Electoral Systems**

**3.1 Electoral System Analysis**
It is important to analyze the differences in electoral systems between Canada and Sweden in order to highlight the primary divergence in the two political systems. The differing electoral systems reflect the disparity in representation in numbers between Canada and Sweden. The electoral systems “have had major impacts on the percentage of women elected in each country” (Maille et al 1999, p. 203). We must analyze the electoral systems as they reflect the percentage of women in the legislatures which, in turn, could possibly affect the level of gender equality that exists. The research problem aims to establish whether the representation of women in numbers signifies the level of gender equality with respect to attitudes and working conditions. If we discover that representation affects gender equality, the electoral system subsequently affects gender equality as well. However, if we discover that representation does not signify gender equality, the electoral system would have no major affect on gender equality and would only be primarily relevant to the issue of increasing the numbers of women for moral and/or demographic reasons. In either case, the electoral system is of great relevance to a discussion regarding the participation of women in the national legislatures of Sweden and Canada.

3.2 Sweden: Proportional Representation

The electoral systems in Sweden and Canada possess great variation, as Canada is characterized by a single-member plurality system and Sweden is characterized by a proportional representation system based on party lists (Maille et al 1999, pp. 188-90). This means that one representative is elected from each constituency in Canada, while on average; about 12 representatives are elected from each constituency in Sweden (Maille et al 1999, pp. 188-90). Multi-member constituencies are more advantageous to female candidates, as the seats are distributed proportionally to each party that receives more than 4 percent of the votes, which means that a candidate does not need to be in the top position in order to get elected (Maille et al 1999, pp. 189-90). Furthermore, while Sweden’s twenty-eight constituencies are each represented by approximately 12 members each, the Swedish Riksdag is subsequently comparatively large in relation to the size of the electorate – 349 members represent approximately 6.5 million voters (Maille et al 1999, p. 190). Multi-member constituencies are clearly beneficial to female candidates, as “It is easier to respond to demands for female candidates when there are more seats to deal with” (Maille et al 1999, p. 190). Moreover, party lists also assist in the election of an increased number of female candidates. This is because party lists give the parties the ability to consciously compose and balance their lists (Lovenduski et al, 1993, pp. 314-15).
3.3 Canada: Single-member Plurality

In contrast to a system of proportional representation, single-member plurality, or “first-past-the-post”, does not hold the same benefits for female candidates. Only one representative is elected from each constituency in Canada, which does not permit many opportunities for female candidates to be elected. In each electoral district, or riding, the candidate who has the most votes wins a seat in the House of Commons and subsequently represents that riding as its Member of Parliament (www.elections.ca). Candidates do not need to receive more than fifty percent of the vote (an absolute majority) in order to be elected (www.elections.ca). Following an election, the government is formed by the party that achieved the highest number of elected representatives and the leader of this party is sworn in as the Prime Minister (Maille et al 1999, p. 188).

It has been common for female candidates to be better represented among small parties or as independents in Canada, which has greatly lowered their chances of being elected as single-member plurality systems make it difficult for small parties to win seats (Maille et al 1999, p. 188). As a result of this, it has been said that the Canadian electoral system is not “woman-friendly” (Maille et al 1999, p. 189). In contrast, Helga Hernes, a Norwegian political scientist, has characterized Nordic electoral systems and Nordic society in general as “woman-friendly” (Hernes 1987). Thus, it is clear that Sweden’s proportional representation electoral system is advantageous to female candidates and subsequently allows for a higher number of female candidates to be elected. In comparison, Canada’s single-member plurality electoral system hinders the number of female candidates to be elected and is clearly detrimental to women struggling to win seats in the House of Commons.

3.4 District Magnitude

Research has shown conclusively that proportional representation electoral systems provide a much higher level of representation for female candidates, in comparison to single-member district systems (Matland 1997, pp. 281-82). An important aspect of the proportional representation system is that it has a comparatively high district magnitude, i.e. it permits a number of seats to be allocated in each district or constituency. A high district magnitude increases the chance of women being nominated by their parties to be candidates for political office. As party officials have a fair amount of control in choosing their candidates, they will likely search for a variety of candidates in order to attract a diverse group of voters, which is
beneficial to women as female candidates appeal to new groups of voters (Matland 1997, p. 282). Furthermore, “as district magnitude increases, the exclusion of women from the party’s list of candidates becomes increasingly obvious and increases the danger of a negative reaction from voters” (Matland 1997, p. 282). In contrast, in single-member district systems, the district magnitude is one, which means that it is a zero-sum game. In a system which allows multi-member districts, it is much easier to nominate women as a balance of male and female candidates is possible and the male candidates will not be completely excluded. It is possible to balance the party list when district magnitude is large; it is slightly more difficult when district magnitude is small, but it is impossible to balance when district magnitude is one (Matland 1997, p. 282). Thus, not only does a proportional representation electoral system allow for more female candidates to be elected, but it also aids in the nomination of the female candidates in the first place.

It is apparent that the electoral system has a strong affect on the nomination and election of female candidates and is largely responsible for the difference in the number of women represented in parliament in Canada and Sweden. While other factors also likely affect this differentiation, it is clear that the electoral system is an integral part of the discussion. However, what the electoral system may not be able explain is the subsequent level of gender equality that exists in the parliaments of Canada and Sweden.

**Chapter Four: Methodology Design**

4.1 **Multi-strategy research**

Multi-strategy research is a term which is used to describe research that combines quantitative and qualitative research methods (Bryman 2001, p.505). There is an argument against the use of multi-strategy research which is based upon, “the idea that research methods carry epistemological commitments, and the idea that quantitative and qualitative research are separate paradigms” (Bryman 2001, p.444). This means that quantitative and qualitative research have been said to have been incommensurable and incompatible. However, there is a strong argument in favour of combining quantitative and qualitative research methods, which takes the form of a ‘technical’ argument. The technical argument “gives greater prominence to the strengths of the data-collection and data-analysis techniques with which quantitative and qualitative research are each associated and sees these as capable of being fused” (Bryman 2001, p.446). Supporters of the technical argument recognize that quantitative and qualitative research methods “are each
connected with distinctive epistemological and ontological assumptions but the connections are not viewed as fixed and ineluctable” (Bryman 2001, p.446). Thus, research methods are perceived as autonomous and quantitative and qualitative methods are viewed as capable of being fused together in order to serve one another (Bryman 2001, p.446).

There are three different forms of multi-strategy research: triangulation, facilitation and complementarity. Each method involves the fusing together of quantitative and qualitative research in order to gain a desired ends. Triangulation “refers to the use of quantitative research to corroborate qualitative research findings or vice versa” (Bryman 2001, p.447). Facilitation “arises when one research strategy is employed in order to aid research using the other research strategy” (Bryman 2001, p.447). Finally, complementarity “occurs when the two research strategies are employed in order that different aspects of an investigation can be dovetailed” (Bryman 2001, p.447).

The form of multi-strategy research that will be employed in this study is the method of complementarity. Complementarity “occurs when the research cannot rely on either a quantitative or a qualitative method alone and must buttress his or her findings with a method drawn from the other research strategy” (Bryman 2001, p.450). The method of complementarity unites the different aspects of a study through the use of a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. In this study the research methods that will be employed are questionnaires, statistical analysis and semi-structured interviews. The qualitative method of interviews will not suffice on its own and must be complemented with at least one quantitative method.

Furthermore:

Sometimes, researchers want to gather two kinds of data: qualitative data that will allow them to gain access to the perspectives of the people they are studying; and quantitative data that will allow them to explore specific issues in which they are interested (Bryman 2001, p.451).

While the qualitative method of interviews is not adequate on its own, it is however needed in order to analyze the attitudes of the members of parliament, as a personal dimension is important to such a study. As well, “…confidence in the findings deriving from a study using a quantitative research strategy can be enhanced by using more than one way of measuring a concept” (Bryman 2001, p. 447). This means that the results from a qualitative study could support the results from a quantitative study and in turn improve the validity of the study as a whole. In addition,
quantitative research is thought of as being more suited to the research of ‘macro’ level phenomena, while qualitative research is thought of as being better suited to ‘micro’ level phenomena such as small-scale interaction (Bryman 2001, p.453). Through using both types of research method one can analyze patterns and interactions at both the macro and micro levels and gain personal perspectives as well as objective observations.

Furthermore, the development of multi-strategy research has in part been prompted by the softening of feminist attitudes towards quantitative research methods (Bryman 2001, p.454). While feminists still tend to prefer qualitative research methods, they are becoming more willing to employ quantitative research methods as well. Thus, a multi-strategy approach is the perfect compromise for a feminist research study such as this one, which aims to evaluate the level of gender equality in the parliaments of Sweden and Canada.

Chapter Five: Research Indicators

5.1 Questionnaires and Interviews

In order to assess the importance of women as a social category, the attitudes of parliamentarians towards gender equality and the degree of existing gender equality in parliament based upon general working conditions, it is important to personally contact individual members of parliament. I decided to reach out to all members of parliament in both Canada and Sweden through the use of an online questionnaire, in hopes of receiving enough responses to ensure statistical validity. However, I had a very poor response rate among Canadian parliamentarians and only 6 percent of the questionnaires were completed in Canada, while 27 percent were completed in Sweden. While the results I received have been useful, it was clear that the questionnaire method would have to be supplemented with an additional method. In order to gain access to the personal thoughts and opinions of parliamentarians I decided it would be necessary to interview a sample. With this method I could acquire more detailed and thorough responses from parliamentarians that could prove to be more effective in this respect than the method of questionnaires. In the questionnaires, a number of parliamentarians indicated their interest in participating in a follow-up interview. These parliamentarians were contacted and telephone interviews were arranged. The decision to conduct the interviews over the telephone was made as it was the only feasible method considering the time and money that would be needed to travel between Ottawa, Canada and Stockholm, Sweden.
5.2 Questionnaire Research Indicators

In the following paragraphs I will refer to conditions in ‘parliament’, in which I am specifically referring to the Canadian and Swedish parliamentarians’ respective parliaments. The questions put forth in the online questionnaire aimed to gain insight into the general attitudes of parliamentarians regarding the importance of gender equality. To indicate this they were asked to state how important they felt it was to pursue a society which would be characterized by greater equality between men and women. Comparatively, they were also asked to state how important they felt it was to achieve an equal distribution of men and women in parliament. In addition, parliamentarians were asked to list the issues which were most important for them to emphasize when campaigning as well as which were most important to them personally. Thus, indicators have been created to indicate the acknowledgement of an unequal balance of power and the subsequent importance of gender equality, which involve, “…the views of parliamentarians on the issue of whether more gender equality is desirable, and the extent to which they pursue issues of gender equality in their parliamentary work” (Wängnerud 2000, p.72).

In order to assess the importance of women as a social category, parliamentarians were asked to indicate how important it was for them to promote the interests of women. Within the same question they were also asked to indicate how important they felt it was to represent electorate interests, party interests, ethnic minority interests and labour organization interests. In addition, they were asked to indicate the degree of contact they have had with various women’s organizations. Thus the following indicators have been established to indicate the importance of women as a social group:

First, via the parliamentarians’ definitions of their job: do they separate women as a particular group which it is important for them to represent? Second, via the contacts that the parliamentarians have with various groups in their political work: are women’s organizations included in this network? (Wängnerud 2000, p.72)

In order to indicate the level of existing gender equality in parliament it was necessary to evaluate the general working conditions. To do this, parliamentarians were asked whether or not they felt a division along the line of gender existed in parliament. As well, they were posed with the question of the extent that they felt alliances based upon policy similarities existed across the gender divide in parliament. They were also asked whether or not they felt that politics was a male-dominated domain in their respective countries. Finally, in order to further assess the working conditions in parliament, they were asked to list the parliamentary committees of which
they had been members or chairpersons. The following section refers to the most relevant questions which were posed that achieved the most interesting and noteworthy responses.

Chapter Six: Methodology I - Questionnaires

6.1 Women’s Interests and Women’s Organizations: Women as a social group

The first issue which was analyzed by the questionnaire was whether or not the respondent considered women to be a distinct social group with special interests that needed to be represented. If the respondent felt it was important to promote women’s interests and/or if the respondent had frequent contact with women’s organizations, this meant that he/she recognized women as a distinct social category. As well, Members of Parliament who have considered women to be a separate social group are likely to deem more gender equality to be desirable.

According to Wängnerud’s study; “The results show that there are great differences between female and male parliamentarians in their views about the duty to promote the interests/views of women” (Wängnerud 2000, p.75). These results were based upon studies conducted in 1985, 1988 and 1994. She found that in all three studies more than half of the female members of parliament considered representing women’s interests as very important, while among male members of parliament only 10 percent or less in all three studies indicated that they felt promoting women’s interests was very important (Wängnerud 2000, p.75).

In addition, Wängnerud has studied the responses from parliamentarians regarding what contacts they had made, in their capacities as politicians, with various women’s organizations (Wängnerud 2000, p.75). Wängnerud’s results displayed distinct differences in the responses from male and female parliamentarians to this question as well. The results displayed:

Among the men in parliament, 9 percent in 1985 and 4 percent in 1994 said that they had been in frequent contact with a women’s organization. Among the women in parliament, the corresponding figures were 55 percent in 1985 and 51 percent in 1994 (Wängnerud 2000, p.76)

Thus, Wängnerud’s results from studies conducted in 1985, 1988 and 1994 have showed that “in the course of their political work female politicians to a greater extent differentiate women as a special group” (Wängnerud 2000, p.76). However, 10 years have passed since the latest of these particular studies and much progress has been made with respect to gender equality in politics.
The results of the questionnaire study that was conducted in October – December 2004 with members of the Riksdag and Canadian House of Commons achieved highly different results.

A) Sweden:

When male and female members of the Riksdag were posed with the question of how important they felt it was to promote the interests of women in their capacities as politicians, similar responses were received from both sexes and no great differences were present. The respondents had the opportunity to choose from 5 different responses: Unimportant, Not very important, Neutral, Fairly important and Very important. This differs from Wängnerud’s study as the respondents only had the possibility of choosing between ‘Very important’ or ‘unimportant’. The results of this study have displayed that 75 percent of men responded that it was either fairly important or very important to promote the interests of women. Only 2 percent of male parliamentarians in the Riksdag considered it to be not very important or unimportant to promote women’s interests, while 23 percent indicated that they were neutral on the issue. In comparison, 84 percent of female members of the Riksdag surveyed indicated that they felt it was fairly important or very important to promote women’s interests, while 8 percent were neutral and 8 percent felt it was not very important or unimportant. Both Male and female members of the Riksdag feel that it is quite important to promote the interests and views of women in their capacities as politicians. The differences displayed between the responses of women and men in Wängnerud’s studies over 10 years ago have evidently disappeared and the gap has narrowed between the sexes with respect to this particular issue.

However, we must also look at the results of the study of parliamentarians’ contact with women’s organizations. Members of Parliament were asked to indicate the degree of contact they had made with women’s organizations in their careers as members of parliament. They had the opportunity to choose between 4 responses: Frequent (at least once a month), Often (once every few months), Minimal (once in a 6 – 12 month period), or No contact (never made contact). This question also differs from Wängnerud’s study as her study only offered respondents the opportunity to choose between ‘Frequent’ and ‘No contact’. The results of this study show that 73 percent of male members of the Riksdag surveyed have had often or frequent contact with women’s organizations, while 27 percent of the men mentioned they had minimal or no contact at all. In comparison, 82 percent of female members of the Riksdag indicated they had often or frequent contact with women’s organizations, while 18 percent stated they had minimal or no
contact at all. Furthermore, the majority of both male (63 percent) and female (58 percent) Riksdag members indicated that they had had often contact with women’s organizations. When broken down, only 10 percent of male parliamentarians and 24 percent of female parliamentarians stated that they had had frequent contact with women’s organizations. While female Riksdag members have had slightly more contact with women’s organizations than the males, it is clear that the gap has narrowed between women and men from the studies that Wängnerud conducted over 10 years ago.

B) Canada:

As mentioned earlier, Wängnerud did not include a comparative case in her studies. In order to see whether the progress made in the Swedish Riksdag can be attributed to the progressively higher representation of women they have achieved, it is important to conduct a comparative study. Canadian members of the House of Commons were posed with the same questions as the members of the Riksdag were in order to compare and contrast the results. The results of this study show that 56 percent of the male members of the House surveyed felt that it was fairly important or very important to promote the interests of women, while 44 percent were neutral and nobody who was surveyed indicated that it was unimportant or not very important. In comparison, 87.5 percent of female members of the House stated that it was fairly important or very important to promote women’s interests, while 12.5 percent were neutral and none of the respondents felt it was unimportant or not very important. A majority of both male and female members of parliament feel it is quite important to promote the views of women in their capacities as politicians. It is evident that female members of the House feel stronger about promoting the interests of women, as a higher percentage of male respondents remained neutral on the issue.

Concerning the second question of the degree of contact male and female parliamentarians have made with various women’s organizations, male and female participants have responded quite similarly. The results show that 67 percent of the males who participated indicated that they had had often or frequent contact with women’s organizations in the parliamentary careers, while 33 percent of the males stated that they had had minimal or no contact at all. Furthermore, when broken down even more, only 11 percent of the males stated that they had frequently made contact, while 56 percent had often had contact. In contrast, 75 percent of the females surveyed had often or frequent contact, while 25 percent stated they had made minimal or no contact at all.
When we break down these figures further, it is interesting to note that 50 percent of the women have had frequent contact, while 25 percent have had often contact. Thus, while a majority of both the men and women have made frequent or often contact, it is clear that the women have a tendency to have more frequent contact with women’s organizations than the men.

The figures have displayed that the gap has narrowed greatly between the sexes in both Canada and Sweden with respect to women being considered a distinct social group, in comparison with Wängnerud’s study in the past two decades. While differences exist between men and women concerning this issue in both countries, it is clear that the differences are minimal.

6.2 Equal Distribution: Acknowledgement of an unequal balance of power

The second issue to be analyzed by the questionnaire was the level of importance the respondent attributed to achieving equal distribution of the sexes in parliament. The higher the importance attributed, the higher the recognition of an unequal balance of power between the sexes, and the subsequent desire for more gender equality. As asserted by Wängnerud:

> The underlying assumption has been that the more favourable a member of parliament is about working towards gender equality and the more actively he or she pursues gender equality issues, the stronger the acknowledgement of inequality between the sexes (Wängnerud 2000, p.80)

This brings us to Wängnerud’s results concerning the importance that members of parliament have attached to achieving an equal distribution of the sexes in parliament. The results are again based upon her studies in 1985, 1988 and 1994. It was discovered that women in the Riksdag were “more positive about working towards more gender equality than were men in all comparable groups” (Wängnerud 2000, p.77). Wängnerud’s interpretation was that “we have come a step further towards bypassing ritual answers where everyone claims to be in favour of equality” (Wängnerud 2000, p.77). However, the results of the current study do not clearly support the results Wängnerud achieved in the past two decades.

A) Sweden:

Both male and female members of the Riksdag are quite supportive of achieving an equal distribution of the sexes in the Riksdag. The respondents had the opportunity to choose between
5 different responses to the degree of importance they attached to achieving an equal distribution of the sexes in parliament: Very important, Fairly important, Neutral, Not very important and Unimportant. The results show that 94 percent of female members of the Riksdag felt that it was fairly important or very important, while 3 percent remained neutral and another 3 percent felt it was not very important. In comparison, 92 percent of the males surveyed felt it was fairly important or very important, while 6 percent remained neutral and 2 percent felt it was not very important. Out of the parliamentarians surveyed, nobody indicated that they felt it was unimportant to achieve an equal distribution. These figures indicate that both male and female Riksdag members agree that equal representation is important. When the figures are broken down further, we see that 60 percent of the women felt it was very important, while 34 percent felt it was fairly important. Comparatively, 48 percent of the men felt it was very important, while 44 percent of the men stated it was fairly important. In any case, it is clear that both sexes ascribe importance to this issue and there is only a very slight difference between them.

B) Canada:

In comparison, there is a stronger difference between the sexes concerning this issue in the Canadian House of Commons. Concerning the question of the importance of achieving an equal distribution of the sexes, 87.5 percent of the female members of the House surveyed indicated that they felt this issue was fairly important (37.5 percent) or very important (50 percent). In contrast, 44 percent of the male members of the House who participated felt it was very important, while nobody indicated that it was fairly important. The most interesting finding was that 12.5 percent of the women remained neutral and none of the women who participated felt it was unimportant or not very important, while 11 percent of the men remained neutral and 44 percent of the men felt the issue was not very important (33 percent) or unimportant (11 percent). There is a more clear distinction between men and women in the House concerning this issue, than in the Riksdag. However, while it is clear that more women in the House feel that an equal distribution is important to achieve, it is also apparent that the male parliamentarians in Canada who participated in the study seem to be quite divided on this issue.

6.3 Gender Equality Interests:

The next question that the parliamentarians were asked to respond to concerned, “which issues/problems they emphasized most when campaigning and which political areas they were
personally most interested in” (Wängnerud 2000, p.79). All respondents who mentioned, “Equality”, “Gender issues”, “Sex equality”, “Women’s issues”, “Sex discrimination” among others, were considered to be gender equality interests.

To begin, we will highlight Wängnerud’s results from her 1985, 1988, and 1994 studies. The results from these studies stated that:

In 1985, 14 percent of female politicians stated that they emphasized gender equality in their campaigns. The corresponding figures were 12 percent in 1988 and 16 percent in 1994. The levels are about the same – around 10 percent – if one looks at the personal areas of interest among female politicians. Among male politicians, however, all the results…are perilously close to 0 (Wängnerud 2000, p.79).

However, the current study has achieved slightly different results in comparison with these studies from the past couple of decades. Issues of gender equality have become much more prominent in the political careers of parliamentarians in both Canada and Sweden.

A) Sweden:

Gender equality has become an increasingly prominent issue in the lives of many members of the Swedish Riksdag. The results of the study which asked members of the Riksdag to state which interests they emphasized the most when campaigning show that, 39 percent of the respondents mentioned gender equality issues. When broken down further, 58 percent of these respondents were women, while 42 percent were men. The results of the following question, which asked the respondents to state which issues they were interested in personally, displayed that 32 percent mentioned that they were personally interested in gender equality issues, 70 percent of these respondents were women and 30 percent were men.

Thus, 50 percent of female parliamentarians mentioned that they emphasized gender equality issues when campaigning, and 50 percent mentioned that they were personally interested in issues of gender equality. On the other hand, 27 percent of male parliamentarians stated that they emphasized gender equality when campaigning and 15 percent stated that they were personally interested in gender equality issues. We see that a larger number of Riksdag members are interested in gender equality issues both when campaigning and personally as compared to the studies in 1985, 1988 and 1994. However, it is also clear that there is a gender gap concerning
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this issue as a much higher number of women in both categories mentioned gender equality issues in their actions as parliamentarians as compared to the responses of the male parliamentarians.

B) Canada:

The figures are even more discouraging when we look at the responses from Canadian parliamentarians to the question of which issues they emphasized most when campaigning and which they were most interested in personally. The results show that 19 percent of respondents mentioned that they promoted issues of gender equality when campaigning, 100 percent of these respondents were women. The numbers are slightly higher when we look at the results of the second question: 31 percent of the respondents state that they were personally interested in issues of gender equality, 100 percent of these respondents were also women.

Thus, 37.5 percent of female respondents mentioned that they emphasized gender equality issues when campaigning, and 62.5 percent mentioned that they were personally interested in issues of gender equality. On the other hand, not a single male parliamentarian who participated in the study mentioned gender equality issues in his actions as a parliamentarian. It is evident that a gender gap exists with regards to this issue as a fairly high percentage of female parliamentarians mentioned gender equality issues in their actions as parliamentarians, while not a single male respondent did.

6.4 Gender Division: Acknowledgement of an unequal balance of power

The next issue that the questionnaire investigated concerned the question of whether or not the respondent considered there to be a gender division in parliament. The stronger the respondent agreed with the existence of a gender division, the stronger the acknowledgement of an unequal balance of power between the sexes.

A) Sweden:

Parliamentarians in the Swedish Riksdag were posed with the question of whether or not they felt that there existed a division along the line of gender in the Riksdag. They had the opportunity to choose between 5 responses: Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, or Strongly disagree. The results display that 50 percent of the males surveyed agreed that there was a gender division,
while 58 percent of the females agreed. Not a single member of parliament surveyed from either sex indicated that they strongly agreed with this statement. Furthermore, 33 percent of the men remained neutral and 17 percent disagreed (13 percent) or strongly disagree (4 percent), while 26 percent of the women remained neutral and 16 percent disagreed. These figures are quite similar for both sexes and there does not seem to be an obvious gender gap concerning this issue.

B) Canada:

The same question was posed to Canadian parliamentarians and once again there is a larger gap between the sexes in Canada than in Sweden. The results show that 22 percent of the men agreed that there existed a gender division but not a single man strongly agreed, while 25 percent of the women strongly agreed and 50 percent of the women agreed. Furthermore, 56 percent of the male parliamentarians disagreed and 11 percent strongly disagreed, while only 12.5 percent of the women disagreed and 12.5 percent strongly disagreed. As well, 11 percent of the men remained neutral, but none of the women remained neutral. There seems to be a much clearer cut distinction between Canadian men and women parliamentarians than Swedish men and women in parliament. A greater percentage of males in Canada disagree that a gender division exists as compared to males in Sweden.

6.5 Male Domination: Acknowledgement of an unequal balance of power

The final issue that was pursued by the questionnaire was whether or not the respondent felt that national politics was male-dominated in their respective country. If the respondent agreed that politics was male-dominated, this also indicated recognition of an unequal balance of power between men and women.

A) Sweden:

Members of the Swedish Riksdag were asked to respond to the question of whether they felt that politics was dominated by men in Sweden. They were presented with 5 responses to choose between: Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree or Strongly disagree. The majority of both men (54 percent) and women (54 percent) who were surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that politics was male-dominated in Sweden. As well, 23 percent of men and 23 percent of women remained neutral on the issue. Furthermore, 23 percent of men and 23 percent of women
disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Swedish male and female parliamentarians were very similar in their responses and no gender gap was detected concerning the issue of men dominating politics in Sweden.

B) Canada:

Once again, the responses from men and women in the House of Commons were more differentiated. The results display that 37.5 percent of the men surveyed agreed that politics was male-dominated in Canada, while 37.5 percent of the women agreed and an additional 25 percent strongly agreed. Furthermore, only 12.5 percent of the women disagreed, while 37.5 percent of the men disagreed and an additional 12.5 percent of the men strongly disagreed. As well, 12.5 percent of the male parliamentarians remained neutral and 25 percent of the females remained neutral. It is clear that the majority of Canadian male members of parliament disagree that politics is a male-dominated domain, while the majority of the Canadian female members of parliament surveyed agree that politics is dominated by men.

In summary, out of the questionnaire respondents, Canadian male parliamentarians submitted the most ‘negative’ responses in terms of equal distribution, a gender division, and male-domination in politics. The Canadian males have not recognized an unequal balance of power or gender inequality to the extent that the other respondents have and they subsequently support an increase in gender equality the least.

6.6 Political Party Affiliation:

It is also important to note any differences in responses with regards to political party affiliation. As stated by Wängnerud, “A more detailed analysis shows that gender and party affiliation are the most important factors when we attempt to explain views on equality between the sexes” (Wängnerud 2000, pp. 77-8). In Sweden, the most obvious differentiation in responses to gender equality questions with respect to party affiliation is between the Moderate party and the Left party. Members of the Moderate party, the strongest right-wing party in Sweden, have a persuasive tendency regardless of sex to put forth responses which indicate a very low acknowledgement of an unequal balance of power between the sexes. On the other hand, members of the Left party, the strongest left-wing party in Sweden, have a compelling tendency
regardless of sex to give responses which indicate a very high acknowledgement of inequality between the sexes.

In Canada, the 4 major political parties, the Liberal party, the Progressive Conservative party, the New Democratic Party and the Bloc Quebecois party, all have quite similar ideological values and represent varying degrees of right-wing views. A differentiation in responses to gender equality questions with regards to party affiliation was not evident in Canada’s case, which could be due to the fact that there is not a strong left-wing party present in the House of Commons.

**Chapter Seven: Methodology II - Interviews**

**7.1 Telephone Interviews**

The qualitative research method of one-to-one semi-structured interviews was chosen as it has been said that qualitative methods are more compatible with Feminism’s central tenets than quantitative methods (Bryman 2001, p.286). The nature of qualitative research allows: “women’s voices to heard; exploitation to be reduced by giving as well as receiving in the course of fieldwork; women not to be treated as objects to be controlled by the researcher’s technical procedures; and the emancipatory goals of feminism to be realized” (Bryman 2001, p. 286). However, “the link between feminism and qualitative research is by no means a cut-and-dried issue” (Bryson 1992, p. 286). Thus, I have chosen to couple a quantitative method with a qualitative method in order to receive the benefits of accessing a large number of people through questionnaires as well as gaining a more in-depth personal dimension through interviews. Furthermore, the interview method was chosen in order to follow-up and complement the questionnaire method.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted over the telephone with ten Members of Parliament, five from Canada (Wayne Easter, Gary Goodyear, Guy Lauzon, Susan Barnes, and Carol Skelton) and five from Sweden (Tobias Billström, Ulrik Lindgren, Birgitta Ohlsson, Margareta Andersson, and Yvonne Ångström). The interviews were approximately ten minutes in length each and the interviewees were each asked the same set of nine questions. All nine questions were open-ended questions and each interviewee was permitted to speak as long as he/she wished. During the interviews notes were taken and a summary was written upon the completion of each interview and sent to the interviewee for revision and approval.
The following categories represent the most relevant and noteworthy questions which were asked in the interviews and which achieved the most interesting responses. The responses have been coded as follows: “Positive responses” are represented by an acknowledgement of an unequal balance of power between the sexes and/or an acknowledgement of women as a distinct social group; “Negative responses” are represented by a lack of acknowledgement of an unequal balance of power between men and women and/or a lack of acknowledgement of women as a distinct social category.

7.2 Importance of Equal Distribution:

The interviewees were each asked to elaborate on their responses to the importance that they attributed to achieving an equal distribution of men and women in parliament. This question resulted in the respondents expressing varying degrees of importance which they placed upon a fifty-fifty balance of women and men in parliament. The women’s responses from both Canada and Sweden were ‘positive’ responses, meaning that they agreed that an equal distribution of the sexes should be accomplished. Their reasons for an equal representation of men and women ranged from the view that women have different life experiences and backgrounds which should be represented, to the importance of representing the total amount of intelligence of the population, to the importance of achieving true democratic representation.

The Swedish women who were interviewed, Birgitta Ohlsson, Margareta Andersson and Yvonne Ångström, all stated that they felt that achieving an equal distribution of the sexes was very important. Andersson asserted that women have different experiences and backgrounds which need to be represented and there is a subsequent need for parliament to mirror more parts of society, including various age groups, both genders, and various occupational backgrounds. Ångström agreed that women have different life experiences which need to be represented, for example women have historically had a different role from men in family life. Ohlsson offered a slightly different reason as to why there should be an equal representation of the sexes, as she stated that the total amount of intelligence of the population is not monopolized by men and that politics should ideally be more or less equal.

The Canadian female parliamentarians who were interviewed, Susan Barnes and Carol Skelton, both asserted that they believed it was important to achieve an equal distribution of the sexes in parliament. Honourable Susan Barnes stated that the demographics are split between male and
female and in order to achieve true democratic representation the number of women should increase. On the other hand, Carol Skelton offered a different reason for an equal distribution as she stated that there is a difference in the thinking of men and women, women have a certain softness, provide a cordial atmosphere, have a calming influence and are not as combatative as men.

The male parliamentarians interviewed from both Canada and Sweden put less emphasis on achieving an equal distribution of the sexes in parliament. To begin, the Swedish male parliamentarians, Ulrik Lindgren and Tobias Billström, felt that core values and interests were more important than the gender of the parliamentarian. Billström asserted that achieving a balance of figures was not important, rather it is what people represent, their competences, the issues they are interested in and their behaviour that is important. Lindgren stated that it was fairly important to achieve an equal distribution but that it is more important to consider people’s basic values that they represent rather than their gender.

The male members of parliament from Canada who participated in the study varied in their responses to this question. First, Wayne Easter stated that he did not feel it was very important to achieve an equal distribution of the sexes in the House of Commons as the issues that people represent and the thoughts in their minds are more important to consider. He asserted that whether one is male or female should not matter, rather it is the ideas and the policies that one promotes that is the most important aspect to consider. Similarly, Guy Lauzon asserted that an equal distribution of the sexes is not necessary at all costs, but that it is more important to have the people who are most interested in being there present. Lauzon further stated that equal distribution should not be enforced through a quota system. In contrast, Gary Goodyear stated that he felt it was important to achieve an equal distribution as society reflects a balance which should also be reflected in politics among all portions of society. However, he further asserted that an equal distribution should not be forced through legislation, but that women should be encouraged to participate in politics from a lower level.

7.3 The Presence of Women and the Representation of Women’s Interests

A question was asked in the interviews regarding the importance of women being present in parliament in order for women’s interests to be represented. The female parliamentarians who were interviewed from both Canada and Sweden expressed ‘positive’ responses to this question.
as well, which means that they indicated that the presence of women in parliament was important in order for women’s interests to be best represented. The responses varied from the view that women have different experiences, points-of-view and dreams, to the historical fact that men did not push for women’s interests, to the view that men do not fully understand the challenges that women face.

To elaborate further, the Swedish parliamentarians who participated agreed that women needed to be present in parliament but offered slightly different responses as to why they felt this way. Margareta Andersson reiterated that women have had different experiences in life and different wishes and dreams for the future, which are better represented by women themselves. Yvonne Ångström agreed that men do not have the same life experiences as women and a female point-of-view needs to be present in parliament. Birgitta Ohlsson asserted that historically, men did not push for women’s issues and women are needed in order for their interests to be fully advocated.

Similarly, the female members of the House agreed that women need to be present in parliament, but again offered diverse reasons for this. Hon. Susan Barnes asserted that it was important for women to be present but that men are being sensitized to women’s issues and as society changes, women’s interests are not exclusive to women, but to like-minded individuals. On the other hand, Carol Skelton stated that there is a gender difference and that men do not totally understand what women go through and the challenges that they face.

The male members of the Riksdag who were interviewed differed in their responses to this question which is suspected to be an effect of their political party affiliation. Billström stated that women are not needed to be present in order for their interests to be represented in the Riksdag. He elaborated that men are equally able to pursue issues of equality and that it is not the sex of an individual that matters, rather the interests they represent. On the other hand, Lindgren agreed that women should be present in the Riksdag in order for their interests to be better represented. He explained that women have the equal right to be elected to political office and should have the same opportunities as men.

The male members of the House of Commons also differed in their responses to this question. First, Wayne Easter explained that he felt that it was absolutely needed for women to be present in the House, but not necessarily a fifty-fifty split. He elaborated that a good representation of strong women is needed in order to continually represent all issues and to keep it honest.
Similarly, Guy Lauzon stated that women are needed to be present in the House as males think in a certain way while females think in another way. He further asserted that both sexes bring assets to parliament and both need to be represented. In comparison, Gary Goodyear asserted that women are not needed to be present in the House in order for their interests to be represented as members of parliament represent a plethora of cultures and backgrounds as well as both genders in their constituencies. He stated that he was quite open to the concerns of all of the members of his constituency no matter what their culture, gender or background.

7.4 What signifies Gender Equality?

The Members of Parliament who were interviewed were each asked whether they felt that an equal representation of the sexes would signify gender equality or whether they felt that other factors would be more important. A ‘positive’ response to this question would be an acknowledgement that other factors would be influential in the signification of gender equality as well. A realization that other issues could have an effect on gender equality, such as attitudes, views or working conditions, suggests that one also recognizes that a simple increase in representation is not enough for an increase in gender equality to be achieved. Furthermore, this acknowledgement means that one believes that more gender equality is required and it also indicates a recognition that an unequal balance of power exists between the sexes. Male and female parliamentarians from both Canada and Sweden stated that they felt that other factors would be more important than representation in the signification of gender equality. While all of the interviewees felt that a higher representation of women could possibly help, they also felt strongly that an equal representation was not enough to achieve gender equality. However, the reasons that the interviewees offered varied slightly between the sexes in both countries.

The female parliamentarians in Sweden who were interviewed offered intriguing responses concerning the factors that they felt contributed to gender equality. Andersson stated that achieving a fifty-fifty balance was important but it was also important to consider whether or not women are in positions of power, for example Committee Chairpersons. Ångström mentioned that attitudes are important when considering gender equality and that these attitudes must be formed from birth. Ohlsson agreed with Andersson that women do not have the highest positions in parliament and that men have more power in the system even though it appears to be equal on the outside.
The Canadian female parliamentarians agreed that other factors would be influential in signifying gender equality. Hon. Susan Barnes mentioned that a critical mass (33 percent representation) would be more beneficial than an equal representation in signifying gender equality. While on the other hand, Carol Skelton emphasized that equal representation would help considerably but will prove to be a challenge to reach.

The male members of the Riksdag asserted that other factors would be more influential than equal representation of the sexes in achieving gender equality. First, Tobias Billström stated that a fifty-fifty balance could still be very unequal in terms of gender equality. He elaborated further and stated that people’s interests and ideological beliefs have a greater effect on gender equality in politics. In addition, Ulrik Lindgren explained that people’s attitudes, a respect for women and a general awareness of equality issues have a larger effect on the level of gender equality present in the Riksdag.

In the House of Commons, the male members who were interviewed stated that an equal representation was not necessary in order to achieve gender equality. First, Wayne Easter asserted that a fifty-fifty balance between the sexes does not necessarily mean that gender equality exists. He further elaborated that the policies that people pursue which provide for equal opportunities are more important than a physical presence. Similarly, Gary Goodyear stated that he did not feel that an equal representation in terms of numbers was necessary for any group in order to achieve equality. He further explained that a fifty-fifty balance is not needed, but that it does make sense in terms of demographics. Finally, Guy Lauzon asserted that the only way equal representation would have an effect on gender equality would be if it was naturally evolved as opposed to being legislated through a quota system.

7.5 Gender Division/Power Struggle

Questions were posed to the Members of Parliament concerning the issues of whether or not they felt that a division along the line of gender or a power struggle existed in parliament. They were asked to elaborate on the responses that they provided in the questionnaire concerning the existence of a gender division. As well, a new question was posed regarding the existence of a power struggle between the sexes.
The female parliamentarians who were interviewed in Sweden varied slightly in their responses concerning the issue of a gender division in the Riksdag. Ohlsson explained that a gender division indeed exists in the Riksdag especially when considering the distribution of women among parliamentary committees and the positions that women possess. She asserted that women are primarily present on committees which deal with soft issues, such as health and equality, and men are primarily present on committees which are concerned with hard issues, for example business and finance. Ohlsson mentioned that while there are women present on hard issue committees, it is more often segregated than not. Furthermore, she pointed out that women have very few chairperson posts on committees in comparison with men and very few party leader positions. In addition, Andersson agreed that men are more common among economically powerful committees such as labour and finance and women are more copious among committees such as the Committee on Culture. To offer a different point-of-view, Ångström stated that she did not feel that there was a gender division and that it had not been a problem for her. She explained that this could be due to her age, as she was over the age of 60 and the young male parliamentarians have had much respect for her. Furthermore, Ångström stated that a gender division seemed to have been more of an issue for the younger female parliamentarians.

The female Canadian parliamentarians agreed to varying degrees that a gender division exists in the House of Commons. First, Carol Skelton asserted that she agreed that there was a gender division as she had noticed a difference in debate and in committees. Skelton explained that there was a tendency for the men to be very aggressive, intimidating in their questioning, sarcastic, offensive, and have condescending attitudes. On the other hand, Hon. Susan Barnes stated that she felt that there was a “gender difference” in the House and that “division” was too strong of a word.

Concerning the issue of whether or not a gender division existed in the Riksdag, the male parliamentarians who were interviewed are divided in their responses. Billström asserted that a division along gender lines does not exist in the Riksdag as women do not primarily work with women and men do not primarily work with men. The everyday work conducted in the Riksdag is not divided along gender lines, according to Billström. On the other hand, Lindgren has stated that he feels that a gender division does exist in parliament but that it is hard to detect. He asserted that “we are failing” concerning the issue of gender equality.
Concerning the question of whether or not a gender division existed in the House of Commons, the male members of parliament responded similarly. First, Easter stated that he did not feel that there was a gender division in the House as it is the policy pursuit that matters, not the physical make-up. Similarly, Goodyear asserted that he did not feel that a division along the line of gender existed in the House as both genders are represented on his caucus and neither gender has less power, attention or influence. Furthermore, Lauzon also stated that he did not feel that there was a gender division as he felt everyone was treated equally and it was obvious that there was not a gender bias.

Concerning the issue of a power struggle in parliament, the female parliamentarians in Sweden agreed that a power struggle existed in the Riksdag. Ohlsson reiterated that the core of power in the Riksdag was represented by men and thus there was power struggle between men and women. Andersson stated that there does not appear to be a power struggle from the outside, but if one looks closer it is apparent but difficult to pin-point. Ångström asserted that a power struggle indeed exists in the Riksdag as some men have a tendency to think that they are more important and prominent.

The female members of the House of Commons who were interviewed differed in their responses to the question of whether or not a power struggle existed in the House. Hon. Susan Barnes agreed to the existence of a power struggle on some issues, as she stated that women are capable of more than just soft issues, contrary to what is perceived when looking at the gender distribution among parliamentary committees. Barnes was the first woman Chairperson of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance and served three terms as Chair on that committee. On the other hand, Carol Skelton stated that she did not feel that there was a power struggle along gender lines in the House of Commons.

In regards to the question of whether or not a power struggle between the sexes existed in the Riksdag, the male parliamentarians were again divided. Billström disagreed that there was a power struggle in parliament and stated that he felt this issue was very exaggerated in the media. He further asserted that he could only speak on behalf of the Moderate party and that a power struggle does not exist with the Moderates. In comparison, Lindgren stated that he agreed to the existence of a power struggle in the Riksdag but that it was difficult to distinguish it. He explained that women tend to feel pressure to not only be equal than men, but to be better than
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Lindgren also stated that he felt that women have a greater need to be appreciated and recognized.

Regarding the issue of a power struggle between the sexes existing in the House, the male members of parliament disagreed. Easter denied the existence of a power struggle and also stated that if anything there were problems with women in positions of power as they can be “more chauvinist than males” in the same position (McColl 2004). In this sense, Easter stated that the situation was beyond equal in favour of the women. In comparison, Goodyear also denied that there was a power struggle and stated that the female members of parliament often get more or extra attention than the males. Furthermore, Lauzon also denied the existence of a power struggle between the sexes, as he stated a power struggle was not evident in any way shape or form.

7.6 Politics: Male Dominated?

Finally, the interviewees were asked to elaborate on the responses they offered in the questionnaire concerning the issue of whether or not they felt that politics was a male-dominated domain. A ‘positive’ response to this question would be a response which would state that politics is male-dominated for one reason or another and thus recognition of an unequal balance of power between the sexes would exist. On the other hand, a ‘negative’ response would be represented by the opinion that politics is not male-dominated and subsequently an unequal balance of power does not exist.

Female parliamentarians in both Canada and Sweden generally agree that politics is primarily a male-dominated domain but that women’s voices are impacting and making a difference. However, Yvonne Ångström, a member of the Swedish Riksdag, stated that she did not feel that politics was male-dominated as the Riksdag is “one of the most equal parliaments in the world, if not the best” (McColl 2004). As well, Susan Barnes, a member of the Canadian House of Commons, asserted that “politics is mainly male in Canada, but women’s voices are impacting” (McColl 2004). On the other hand, Margareta Andersson and Birgitta Ohlsson, members of the Riksdag, both stated that they felt politics in Sweden was male-dominated as the most important politicians and top officials, such as party leaders and the Prime Minister, are primarily represented by men. Carol Skelton, a member of the House of Commons, provided an entirely different point-of-view when she explained that politics is male-dominated in Canada due to the fact that women are not prepared to make the time commitments necessary and the position is
also not highly respected. She elaborated further and stated that she felt that a position as a member of parliament is “right down there with a used car salesman” in terms of respect. It is clear that each female interviewee offered varying views concerning politics as a male-dominated domain. The common-ground that can be seen among female parliamentarians in both countries is that they feel that politics is male-dominated, but that women are still very influential despite the challenges they face.

In comparison, the male parliamentarians who were interviewed from both Canada and Sweden varied in their opinions on this issue. To begin, the male members of the Riksdag, Billström and Lindgren, differed in their responses. Billström asserted that he strongly disagreed that politics was dominated by men in Sweden. He stated that political distribution in terms of gender has nothing to do with the interest displayed concerning issues of equality. He further elaborated that politics was not male-dominated, rather that the parliament was simply pursuing greater individual freedom for all citizens. In contrast, Lindgren agreed that politics was male-dominated as even though some goals have been achieved, such as women in public positions, politics is still primarily run by men.

The male members of parliament in Canada who were interviewed, Easter, Goodyear and Lauzon, also differed in their responses. Wayne Easter asserted that in terms of numbers, he agreed that politics was male-dominated in Canada. However, in terms of policies, he asserted that politics was not dominated by men as there have been many policies which have moved women ahead. Furthermore, he stated that there are progressive thinking men in parliament as well who are capable of pursuing policies which would progress women’s issues. Similarly, Guy Lauzon stated that in terms of numbers there are more males, however, he further asserted that politics is not male-dominated in Canada as women tend to take on more responsibility and show more leadership. In comparison, Gary Goodyear asserted that he agreed that politics was male-dominated, as are many other professions, but that it should not be this way.

Chapter Eight: Methodology III – Statistical Analysis

8.1 Secondary Analysis: Parliamentary Committees and Party leadership

It is not enough to only look at the presence of women in formal institutions in order to understand the degree of gender equality. We must also look at the position of women within those institutions, specifically with respect to party leadership and parliamentary committee
participation. This involves the method of secondary analysis which, “is the analysis of data by researchers who will probably not have been involved in the collection of those data for purposes that in all likelihood were not envisaged by those responsible for the data collection” (Bryman 2001, p.196). It is beneficial to use the method of secondary analysis to gather statistical information when time and finances are limited and high quality data is needed. As well, there are few limitations in using secondary analysis, aside from a lack of familiarity with the data and possible complexity of the data (Bryman 2001, pp. 197-200). In any case, a secondary analysis of official government statistics is necessary and beneficial when considering the position of women in political parties and parliamentary committees.

8.2 Positions of Power:

Women have made considerable progress with respect to representation in national legislatures. In Sweden, there is a 45 percent representation of women in the Riksdag and in Canada there is a less impressive 21 percent representation of women in the House of Commons. Interestingly, women are well-represented within political parties in both Canada and Sweden. However, “women are well represented among the membership and lower ranks of the political parties…but the higher the rank, the fewer the women” (Maille et al 1999, pp. 193-4). Research has shown that there exists empirical evidence for the concepts of ‘the higher the fewer’ and ‘the more competitive the fewer’, in local constituency executives, convention delegates, campaign managers, party-office holders, candidates for public office, legislators and cabinet appointees (Maille et al 1999, p. 194). In both Canada and Sweden women are underrepresented in the upper-elite positions in both political parties and in parliament, however the gender representation in positions of power has been said to have been more balanced in Sweden than in Canada. In any case, “Certainly one of the most often-voiced desires of the women’s movement is placing women in positions of influence” (Sapiro 1998, p.180). One of the reasons for this is that “…legislators may become most effective when they become specialists, or take a leading role on specialized committees” (Sapiro 1998, p.181). However, studies have indicated that “women are less likely to be promoted or placed in important positions within governmental bodies…that they may be less well integrated informally and socially into the ‘men’s club’ called government” (Sapiro 1998, p.181). The unequal gender representation in positions of power in both countries will be illustrated through a statistical analysis of the positions of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson in the Parliamentary Committees, as well as the Party leadership positions.
8.3 Party Leadership: Past and Present

A) Sweden:

Women have been few and far between when it comes to political party leadership in Sweden. While there have been a few women throughout the past years who have obtained party leadership status, this number has yet to reach a level proportionate to the number of women represented among the lower ranks of the political parties. Currently there are two women represented among the ranks of party leadership in Sweden, Maud Olofsson leader of the Centre Party and Maria Wetterstrand co-spokesperson of the Green Party. The Green Party does not have one single party leader, rather two spokespersons that have historically been represented by one woman and one man. Maud Olofsson has been the leader of the Centre Party since 2001 (www.riksdagen.se). In the not so distant past, the Left Party was represented by a female leader, Gudrun Schyman, who was the leader of the party from 1993 to January 2003 when she was forced to resign due to tax fraud. Following the resignation of Schyman, the Left Party was temporarily led by Ulla Hoffman and Ingrid Burman (2003-04) as Vice-Chairs and Joint Acting Leaders (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gudrun_Schyman). As well, in 1995 Maria Leissner was elected party leader of the Liberal Party (www.folkpartiet.se). In the more distant past, the Centre Party was run by Sweden’s first female party leader in 1985-87, Karin Söder (www.centerkvinnorna.se). In addition to these few monumental women, there have been a number of female spokespersons for the Green Party: Ragnhild Pohanka (the first co-spokesperson after its foundation), Eva Goës, Fiona Björling, Margareta Gisselberg, Marianne Samuelsson, and Lotta Nilsson Hedström (www.miljopartiet.se). It is evident that very few women have achieved party leadership status in Sweden, which is disproportionate to the numbers of women represented in political parties and subsequently in the Riksdag. Furthermore, as asserted by Birgitta Ohlsson, a member of the Riksdag, the two major political parties in Sweden, the Social Democratic Party and the Moderate Party, have never had a female party leader and there has never been a female Prime Minister (McColl 2004).

B) Canada:

In comparison, the situation concerning women in party leadership positions in Canada is just as grim, if not poorer. Currently there is not a single woman in Canada leading a federal political party which has elected representatives in the House of Commons. There are quite a few smaller political parties in Canada which have not had a single representative elected to the parliament.
and have subsequently not passed the 4 percent threshold required to be granted official party status. These parties will not be considered here as they are not competitive parties and thus do not hold much promise for their leaders to be elected. Furthermore, there are a number of women who are leaders of provincial political parties in Canada, but will also not be considered here as the focus of this study is national politics and not regional politics. While there are currently no women represented as political leaders at the federal level, there have been a few extraordinary women in the recent past. Audrey McLaughlin was the leader of the New Democratic Party from December 1989 to October 1995, a span of 4 years and 10 months. Following McLaughlin was Alexa McDonough who was leader of the New Democratic Party from October 1995 to June 2002, a period of 6 years and 8 months. Also worth mentioning is Kim Campbell, who was leader of the Progressive Conservative Party from June 1993 to December 1993, a period of only 6 months (http://stillcounting.athabascau.ca/table4-1.php). Campbell served these 6 six months as Prime Minister of Canada, the first and only female Canadian Prime Minister. Unfortunately her party was set for defeat before she ever set foot in her position as Prime Minister, due to a number of errors made by her predecessor Brian Mulroney. Nonetheless, Campbell is one of the few women who have achieved party leadership status and the only woman to have achieved Prime ministerial status in Canada. One of the major political parties in Canada, the Liberal party, which has been in power since 1993, has never had a female party leader. This is similar to the case in Sweden, whose two major political parties have yet to be represented by a female leader. However, two of Canada’s major political parties, the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party, have been represented by female leaders. In any case, there are very few women who have held the position of party leader in either Canada or Sweden and neither country has had a woman in the Prime Ministerial position for a full political term. Despite the high numbers of female representation among the lower ranks of political parties in Sweden and despite the high percentage of women in the Riksdag, Sweden has not achieved a proportionate amount of women in party leadership positions and remains in a situation of inequality with Canada.

8.4 Parliamentary Committees: Chairmanship

A) Sweden:

The situation is equally as bleak when considering the number of women in the position of chairperson or vice chairperson on Standing Parliamentary Committees in both Canada and Sweden. In Sweden, there are sixteen Standing Parliamentary Committees with seventeen
members each, which range in subject matter from Finance to Cultural Affairs to Health and Welfare. Each of the sixteen committees has one Chairperson and at least one Vice (Deputy) Chairperson (www.riksdagen.se). Currently, of the sixteen Chairpersons there are 6 women and 10 men, representing 37.5 percent women and 62.5 percent men. In addition, of the 23 Deputy Chairpersons there are 15 women and only 8 men, representing 65 percent women and 35 percent men (www.riksdagen.se). While women are poorly represented among the highest rank of Chairperson, they are highly represented among the second highest rank of Deputy Chairperson. The most prestigious and elite position is, however, Chairperson and a 37.5 percent representation of women while not horrible, is not proportionate to the number of women in the Riksdag or in society. Furthermore, the Committees in which these female Chairpersons are in charge of are interesting in terms of their subject matter, which is a topic that will be returned to at a later point.

B) Canada:

To compare, the situation in Canada regarding women in the positions of Standing Parliamentary Committee Chairpersons or Vice Chairpersons is again equally as bleak, if not worse. In the Canadian Parliament there are twenty Standing Committees with 12 members on each. Among these committees there are 11 Chairpersons and twenty-two Vice Chairpersons, as not every committee has a Chairperson. Currently women represent the positions of one Chairperson and four vice Chairpersons, amounting to 9 percent and 18 percent respectively (www.parl.gc.ca). Women are clearly poorly represented among both elite positions with much lower percentages than the Swedish women appreciate on parliamentary committees. It is interesting to note that the one committee with a female Chairperson in Canada is the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, which has an 83 percent membership of men. Furthermore, only one committee has a majority of women (92 percent) and that committee is appropriately the newly established (2004) Standing Committee on the Status of Women (www.parl.gc.ca). It is evident that women are suffering from under-representation in the Chairperson positions on Standing Parliamentary Committees in both Canada and Sweden; however, women appreciate a higher, slightly more balanced representation in Sweden. In any case, both Canadian and Swedish female parliamentarians are under-represented in positions of power, given the party leadership and Committee Chairmanship cases. This means that both Parliaments suffer from a case of inequality to some extent. We shall examine the extent of this inequality further with regards to the distribution of women among Parliamentary Committees.
8.5 Parliamentary Committees: Distribution

The distribution of women among Parliamentary Committees is important as in the past women have been more highly represented among committees which deal with “soft issues”. This uneven distribution of men dominating “hard issues”, such as Finance, Taxation, Foreign Affairs and Defense, and women being predominant among “soft issues”, such as Health, Education and Culture, represents an example of gender inequality. In order to examine the current gender distribution situation in Canada and Sweden official statistics have been analyzed which have been provided by the Riksdag and House of Commons official websites.

A) Sweden:

Women are fairly well represented among Standing Parliamentary Committees in the Riksdag; however, gender inequality is still present. Men represent a majority in 9 of the 16 Parliamentary Committees. The committees in which women represent a majority are the Committees on: Housing (59 percent), Cultural Affairs (59 percent), Industry and Trade (71 percent), Social Insurance (59 percent), Health and Welfare (71 percent), Education (59 percent), and Foreign Affairs (53 percent) (www.riksdagen.se). Only one committee in which women hold a majority is a committee which definitively deals with a “hard issue”, the Committee on Foreign Affairs, while five of these committees deal with “soft issues” and the Industry and Trade Committee can be said to be borderline. Furthermore, the majority held by women in the Committee on Foreign Affairs is a minute majority, as women represent 53 percent of the members. The largest majority that women have is on the Committee on Health and Welfare, with a 21 percent majority (71 percent women), a committee in which women have historically been well represented. As well, women also have a 21 percent majority on the Committee on Industry and Trade. Men dominate the “hard” Committees on Finance (65 percent), Taxation (59 percent), Transport and Communications (71 percent), Justice (65 percent), the Constitution (71 percent) and Defense (59 percent), among others. While women are present on all 16 Standing Committees, they have achieved a higher presence on committees which deal with “soft issues” and the “hard issue” committees are still primarily dominated by men.

Furthermore, in a recent study it was asserted that out of the 9 committees which deal with “hard issues”, there are only 2 women Chairpersons (22 percent) (Mellin 2004). In comparison, out of the 7 committees which deal with “soft issues”, there are only 3 male Chairpersons (42 percent).
The committees that were considered “hard” were: The Labour Market, Finance, Defence, Justice, The Constitution, Industry and Trade, Taxation, Transport and Communications, and Foreign Affairs. The committees that were considered “soft” were: Housing, Cultural Affairs, Civil Law, Environment and Agriculture, Social Insurance, Health and Welfare, and Education (Mellin 2004).

It is also interesting to note the subject matter of the six committees in which women are Chairpersons. These are the Committees on: Housing, Civil Law, Environment and Agriculture, Industry and Trade, Taxation and Health and Welfare (www.riksdagen.se). It is clear that women primarily hold Chairperson Positions on committees with deal with “soft issues”. The inequality present is not overwhelming as many of the majorities are slight; however, it is still evident that women are more likely to dominate “soft issue” committees, which means gender inequality based upon distribution still remains.

B) Canada:

Women in Canada do not have the same presence on Parliamentary Committees that the Swedish women appreciate. However, it is not impossible for women to achieve membership as the newly established Committee on the Status of Women has 11 female members and one male member (www.parl.gc.ca). This is the only committee in which women have a majority, as the remaining 19 committees are dominated by men. A more extreme gender imbalance can be seen among Canadian Parliamentary Committees as compared to the committees in the Riksdag, primarily due to the lower representation of women in the Canadian Parliament as a whole. However, when the quantity differences between Canada and Sweden are overlooked and the distribution of women is focused upon, it is possible to compare the level of gender inequality based upon the sole variable of gender distribution. Through isolating the gender distribution variable the effects of differing numbers of representation between the two parliaments are lowered. In Sweden it is easy to see where the majority of women are present through observing simple majorities, while in Canada it is more difficult as women have only achieved a majority on one committee. In order to see where the women have been primarily distributed we must look beyond simple majorities as the quantity of women in the House of Commons is too low for this method to be effective. In this way, we are overlooking the fact that much higher numbers of women are present on all committees in Sweden in order to see the patterns of distribution more clearly.
The notion of critical mass can be used in order to see which committees have the most noteworthy amounts of women present in Canada. Critical mass “…is the idea that women have a meaningful presence in decision-making processes when their representation is above a given percentage (Maille et al 1999, p. 187). The percentage that political scientists have generally accepted as the minimum amount required in order to be influential is 33 percent, or more than a third (Maille et al 1999, p. 187). Women in the House have achieved the highest presence, and critical mass, on the Committees on: Status of Women (92 percent), Citizenship and Immigration (42 percent), Health (33 percent), and Procedure and House Affairs (33 percent) (www.parl.gc.ca). These committees are predominantly concerned with “soft issues”. Unsurprisingly, men dominate the committees which deal with “hard issues”, such as Finance (75 percent), Foreign Affairs and International Trade (75 percent), National Defence and Veterans Affairs (83 percent), Public Accounts (100 percent), among others. While women have a low presence on almost all twenty committees, they have achieved a higher presence on committees which deal with “soft issues”. This is similar to the case in Sweden, when the primary focus is the gender distribution patterns that exist in Standing Parliamentary Committees.

In addition, it is important to mention that the only committee which has a woman as a Chairperson is the Committee on Canadian Heritage, which is clearly a “soft issue” area (www.parl.gc.ca). Furthermore, the four committees in which women hold Vice Chairperson Positions are the Committees on: Agriculture and Agri-food, Citizenship and Immigration, Foreign Affairs and International Trade, and Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development & the Status of Persons with Disabilities. While the position of Vice Chairperson is not as prestigious as Chairperson, it is still significant to note that 3 of the 4 female Vice Chairs are on predominantly “soft issue” committees. It is evident that a gender imbalance exists to a certain extent in both Canada and Sweden regarding gender distribution among Parliamentary Committees. While progress has been made, women are still better represented on committees concerned with “soft issues” and men continue to represent the majority on “hard issue” committees. This can be seen more clearly in the graphs on the following page which display the distribution of men and women among standing parliamentary committees in the Riksdag and the House of Commons.
**8.6 Parliamentary Committee Work: Power, Participation, Decision-making**

It is important to analyze the positions that women possess and their presence and distribution among Parliamentary Committees as this is where the majority of parliamentary work takes place. In Sweden, it is a requirement that all parliamentary business is prepared in the committees before a final decision can be made in the Chamber. This is referred to as “compulsory referral to committee” (www.riksdagen.se). This means that the committees play a very critical role in the work of parliament and “in fact much of the most fundamental work of the Riksdag takes place in committee” (www.riksdagen.se). The members of the Parliamentary Committees are appointed at the beginning of an electoral period through the nominations of representatives from the parties. The committees choose their own chairpersons and deputy chairpersons from among their appointed members (www.riksdagen.se). The most important fact to note is that bills and motions must be referred to the relevant committees following their presentation in the Chamber, and it is the committees which complete deliberations on the matters in question (www.riksdagen.se).

In Canada, the situation is similar, as the Parliamentary Committees carry out all the functions which are better performed in smaller forums (www.parl.gc.ca). Such functions include “examination of witnesses and the detailed consideration of legislation, estimates and technical matters” (www.parl.gc.ca). In the House of Commons, and in the Riksdag: “Committee work allows parliamentarians to obtain detailed information on issues of concern to the electorate and often provokes important public debate” (www.parl.gc.ca). The majority of parliamentary business takes place in the committees in both Canada and Sweden, and thus it is important for women to participate on the committees in order to become more influential and to achieve the status that men have achieved.

**Chapter Nine:**

**9.1 Methodology: Weaknesses**

It is important to analyze the possible weaknesses that may exist in the chosen methodology of this study. The primary concern I had when embarking upon on study in which questionnaires were used as a research method was that I would receive a low response rate. Unfortunately my concern was valid and I did not receive many responses to my questionnaire from Canadian parliamentarians. Members of the Swedish Riksdag proved to be much more interested in
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participating in the questionnaire and much more willing to donate a few minutes of their time to such a research study. However, it proved to be difficult to achieve access to the Members of the Canadian House of Commons as one must first go through their assistants in order to communicate with them. If one is lucky enough to get past the assistant it is an equally large feat to convince the Member of the House to donate a couple of minutes out of his or her busy schedule to participate in a student’s research study. This resulted in a very low response rate from Canadian Members of Parliament, which meant that the questionnaire results may not have been entirely representative of Canadian parliamentarians as a whole and needed to be complemented with one or two other research strategies.

There is also a question of whether or not the respondents to the questionnaires and the participants in the interviews were entirely honest in their responses. It is of course never possible to fully know whether or not someone is responding honestly or simply providing the ‘politically correct’ answer. However, a variety of different responses were received in the questionnaires as in the interviews, which indicated that the respondents were not all providing ‘politically correct’ answers. In addition, it was quite clear with a few of the interview participants that they were not concerned with providing a ‘politically correct’ response at all. All interview participants spoke their mind and provided interesting and some controversial responses to the questions which displayed that they were clearly being honest and forth-coming in their responses.

An additional possible weakness that could be attributed to the methodologies of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews is that the responses may not be representative of the entire group in question. However, trends can be discovered in the results of both the questionnaires and interviews which can be beneficial to such a research study. Considering the results may not be entirely representative of the group in question, it was necessary to complement these methods with an additional method, secondary (statistical) analysis, in order to complete the multi-strategy research design.

Reliability and Validity:

Two terms which are often associated with an analysis of research method weaknesses are: reliability and validity. As stated by Bryman, “Reliability is concerned with the question of whether the results of a study are repeatable. The term is commonly used in relation to the
question of whether the measures that are devised for concepts in the social sciences… are consistent” (Bryman 2001, p.29). Furthermore, Bryman defines validity as referring to, “the issue of whether an indicator (or set of indicators) that is devised to gauge a concept really measures that concept” (Bryman 2001, p.72). While reliability is concerned with the consistency of the measure, validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions. A further term that can be associated with an analysis of methodology weaknesses is: External Validity. Bryman has asserted that, “This issue is concerned with the question of whether the results of a study can be generalized beyond the specific research context” (Bryman 2001, p.30). It is important to have both reliable research methods and valid research results; however it is difficult to conclude whether or not these concepts exist in a study considering it takes a considerable amount of time and resources to measure their existence.

Chapter Ten:

10.1 Analysis of the Results:

The results of the questionnaires, interviews and statistical analyses must now be explored in order to discover trends and to come to a conclusion as to whether or not the representation of women in numbers has a significant effect on the level of gender equality present in the two parliaments. The politics of presence theory states that the representation of women matters and this theory has been tested in order to see whether representation matters in terms of an increased sense of gender equality in parliament. The Swedish Riksdag and the Canadian House of Commons have been compared in order to test this theory, as the Riksdag has achieved a considerably high presence of women, while the number of women in the House of Commons has remained quite low. First, the questionnaires aimed to investigate the attitudes of male and female parliamentarians with respect to: women as a distinct social category, the acknowledgement of unequal power relations between the sexes and a subsequent desire for more gender equality in politics. The interviews also aimed to gain insight into the attitudes of parliamentarians concerning the recognition of unequal power relations between men and women in parliament as well as to gain a more personal dimension through the use of open-ended questions. Finally, the statistical analyses intended to investigate the working conditions in parliament through a study of the positions of power that women possess as well as the distribution of women among the Standing Parliamentary Committees with respect to “soft” and “hard” issues. The combination of the results of each method in this multi-strategy research design, which has united qualitative with quantitative research methods, will provide for an
interesting response to the research question which has asked whether the representation of women in parliament matters when considering equality between the sexes under a microscope.

**Questionnaires:**

As mentioned, the questionnaires aimed to highlight the responses of male and female parliamentarians from Canada and Sweden regarding their thoughts of women as a distinct social group and their recognition of unequal power relations between the sexes. The results of this part of the multi-strategy research design must be taken as sheer indications due to the low response rate on behalf of Canadian members of parliament. To begin, we discovered that both male and female members of the Riksdag considered promoting women’s interests to be quite important and had relatively often contact with women’s organizations, which means that both of these groups have considered women to be a distinct social category. Comparatively, a majority of both male and female members of the House also felt it was quite important to promote the views of women in their capacities as politicians and both sexes had relatively often contact with women’s organizations, which means that both of these groups have also considered women to be a distinct social group. However, it was noted that females in both countries had slightly more contact with women’s organizations than the males and felt stronger about promoting the interests of women. Considering these questions were indicators of women as a social group, it is clear that male and female parliamentarians in the Riksdag and in the House Commons equally agree that women are a distinct social group that needs to be promoted.

When considering the acknowledgement of an unequal balance of power between the sexes, more differentiating responses have been found. The issues of achieving an equal distribution, gender equality interests, a gender division and male-domination, all indicate whether recognition of unequal power relations exists. The groups, in which a majority (50 percent) have indicated ‘positive’ responses, i.e. agree to the existence of the issue or consider the issue important, have been coded as acknowledging an unequal balance of power. The results have shown that a majority of both male and female members of the Riksdag have supplied positive responses to all questions indicating an acknowledgement of an unequal balance of power, with the exception of the question of gender equality interests in which a majority of male members of the Riksdag did not indicate a positive response. On the other hand, a majority of female members of the House of Commons indicated positive responses to all of the relevant questions, while a majority of the male members indicated negative responses to all of the questions.
What these results indicate is that while a majority of all parliamentarians in Canada and Sweden have shown that they recognize women as a distinct social category, not all parliamentarians recognize an unequal balance of power between the sexes. The results suggest that the male members of the House of Commons recognize unequal power relations the least, as not a single majority was achieved which represented a ‘positive’ response. This means that the attitudes towards gender equality among male and female parliamentarians in Canada are more disparate than they are in Sweden. While female members of parliament in both countries feel similarly about the gender equality situations in their respective parliaments, the male members of parliament in the two countries differentiate in their opinions. This means that the results of the questionnaires indicate that there is a wider gender gap concerning an acknowledgement of unequal power relations in Canada than in Sweden. As these results are only mere indications an analysis of semi-structured interviews and statistical analyses are also needed.

*Semi-structured Interviews:*

The semi-structured telephone interviews aimed to gain a personal dimension of this study through the elaboration of responses to a number of questions from the questionnaire as well as numerous new questions. The issues highlighted in the interview questions were: the equal distribution of women in parliament, the importance of the presence of women, factors which signify gender equality, the existence of a gender division and/or a power struggle, and the domination of politics by men. It was discovered that the female members of parliament from both Canada and Sweden who were interviewed offered a considerably high number of ‘positive’ responses to the questions meaning that they agreed with the issue or considered it to be important. In comparison, the male members of parliament from both the Riksdag and the House of Commons were divided in terms of ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ responses to the questions. This means that numerous ‘negative’ responses were given by the men who were interviewed from both countries, while a number of ‘positive’ responses were also given. What this indicates is that women, in both the Riksdag and the House of Commons, are more likely to acknowledge that an unequal balance of power exists between the sexes and that more gender equality is desirable. As well, the male members of parliament have a tendency to place more emphasis on people’s interests and the policies that they promote rather than their gender. However, this raises the question of why the questionnaires did not display that Swedish male parliamentarians were less likely to recognize unequal power relations between the sexes. The reason for this disparity lies
in the political party affiliation of the male parliamentarians who were interviewed from the Riksdag. Tobias Billström, a member of the Moderate Party, offered primarily ‘negative’ responses to questions, while Ulrik Lindgren, a member of the Christian Democratic Party, offered primarily ‘positive’ responses. It has been mentioned earlier in the paper that a trend was discovered among members of the Moderate Party which displayed that the members of this party primarily represented ‘negative’ views in terms of gender equality, meaning that they disagreed with the issues mentioned in the questionnaire or considered them not to be very important. This trend was not present within any of the remaining political parties in the Riksdag. Thus, as one of the interviewees, Billström, was a member of the Moderate Party, many of the responses to the interview questions were ‘negative’. While Billström’s responses were quite representative of the Moderate Party, which is significant as this party is the official opposition party, they are not however representative of the six other parties in the Riksdag. Through the examination of the questionnaire results, it is clear that Lindgren’s responses in the interview are more representative of the Riksdag as a whole. This means that the Canadian male members of parliament have offered the most ‘negative’ responses again and they thus recognize an unequal balance of power between the sexes the least.

A further point to be noted is that the women in both the Riksdag and the House of Commons have given quite similar responses to the questions in both the questionnaires and the interviews. This means that even though there is a much higher representation of women in the Riksdag, the female parliamentarians in Sweden still feel that much needs to be achieved concerning gender equality, as do the women in the House of Commons. This raises a question of the usefulness of the politics of presence theory, as we would expect the women in the Riksdag to have disparate opinions regarding gender equality from the women in the House of Commons, if the representation of women were to significantly matter.

*Statistical Analyses:*

This brings us to a discussion of the results of the statistical analyses that were achieved through a secondary analysis of official government statistics. As the third leg of this multi-strategy research design, the statistical analyses aimed to examine the working conditions of the two parliaments through of study of the positions of power that women have achieved and the distribution of women among Standing Parliamentary Committees. It was discovered that a very low number of powerful positions have been possessed by women in both the Riksdag and the
House of Commons. This was highlighted through an examination of the party leadership positions and the Committee Chairmanship positions held by women in the two parliaments. Furthermore, it was realized that the distribution of women among parliamentary committees was uneven and disproportionate with respect to ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ committees in both the House of Commons and the Riksdag. While the number of positions of power held by women in the House of Commons was lower than the number of those held by women in the Riksdag, it was still evident that women in both parliaments suffer from an under representation in powerful positions. It was equally evident that women in both parliaments are more highly represented on committees concerned with ‘soft’ issues and greatly under represented on committees dealing with ‘hard’ issues.

What this means is that a situation of gender inequality is present in both the House of Commons and the Riksdag with regards to working conditions. The higher number of women in the Riksdag has not made an impact on gender distribution among parliamentary committees or on achieving positions of power. This returns us to the discussion of the politics of presence theory which states that the representation of women in parliament matters. It is clear that the higher representation of women in the Swedish Riksdag has not impacted the working conditions in terms of gender equality. In fact, the Riksdag is in the same condition of gender inequality as is the House of Commons. If the representation of women were to matter to any great extent, as the politics of presence theory holds, a much more disparate situation would have be seen between the Riksdag and the House of Commons concerning gender distribution and positions of power.

Chapter Eleven:
11.1 Final Discussion: Most Important Findings

To conclude, through the use of quantitative and qualitative research methods, it can be seen that gender inequality is apparent in both the House of Commons in Canada and the Riksdag in Sweden. The methods of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews examined the attitudes of the parliamentarians towards gender equality in order to indicate whether or not they recognized that an unequal balance of power between the sexes existed in parliament and whether they considered women to be a distinct social category. What was found was that Canadian male parliamentarians have acknowledged unequal power relations the least, while the other groups scored much higher in terms of ‘positive’ responses. Furthermore, the method of statistical analyses examined the working conditions in the two parliaments with respect to women’s
positions of power and gender distribution among parliamentary committees. It was discovered that an unequal gender distribution among ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ committees was present in both parliaments and very few positions of power were held by women in either the Riksdag or the House of Commons. Thus, in sum, the attitudes towards gender equality in the House are disparate between the sexes, while they are similar in the Riksdag with the exception of the Moderate Party. Furthermore, the working conditions in the two parliaments with respect to gender equality are unbalanced in both countries which were investigated. This means that gender inequality is present in the Canadian House of Commons when considering attitudes and working conditions, while gender inequality is also present in the Swedish Riksdag primarily in terms of working conditions.

As promoted by Anne Phillips, the Politics of Presence theory has stated that the representation of women in national parliaments is of great relevance and matters to a significant degree. However, through a comparison of the national legislatures of Sweden and Canada, it can be seen that the number of women represented in parliament has no great effect on the measure of gender equality present. This is due to the fact that a situation of gender inequality has been found to be present in both parliaments, the Riksdag and the House of Commons, despite the differentiation in the representation of women. As a number of parliamentarians have stated, a fifty-fifty balance of men and women in parliament does not necessarily mean that a situation of gender equality exists. The politics of presence theory has not predicted that such a similarity in terms of gender equality could be possible between these two parliaments; rather, the theory would predict that the disparity in representation would have a great effect when comparing the level of gender equality present in these parliaments. Thus, the politics of presence theory does not hold true when considering gender equality in the attitudes of parliamentarians and the working conditions in the parliament. Perhaps the representation of women does matter, as the theory emphasizes, but only when considering such issues as the promotion of women’s interests or a symbolic value. It is clear that equal or a high representation of women does not signify a condition of gender equality. Thus, this theory cannot be generalized to state that the representation of women matters in all facets of gender equality, which greatly depreciates its usefulness in a wider academic application.

Women have progressed to great lengths throughout the past century and one of the great achievements that have been accomplished by women to varying extents throughout the world is the increased representation of women in national parliaments and also in many other facets of
life. However, the number of women present in national parliaments in countries across the globe still remains quite low despite some increases. While the research in this paper has discussed the irrelevance of representation in numbers with respect to overall gender equality, this does not however mean that increased or balanced representation in national parliaments is not an important accomplishment in its own right. What this means is that while the increased representation of minorities, such as women, in national legislatures has symbolic value among other benefits, equal representation of the sexes will not improve gender equality at any great length on its own. It needs to be supported with a number of other methods in order to change attitudes towards gender equality and improve working conditions with respect to positions of power and proportionate distribution among decision-making bodies. What remain unknown are the possible methods that could aid in the improvement of gender equality in national legislatures. This is of course an important topic for further research and is thus a suggestion of how to delve further into the research area of gender equality in political office. It is evident that future feminist research should focus on overall gender equality in political office, rather than primarily concentrating on increasing the number of women present.

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Men in Power: The Significance of the Representation of Women in terms of Gender Equality in the National Legislatures of Sweden and Canada

Heidi McColl

Department and Division
Department of Management and Economics
Masters in International and European Relations

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Abstract
The representation of women in numbers in national legislatures is an issue of great importance to Feminist researchers around the world. While the representation of women is an accomplishment in its own right, what remains to be said is whether or not the representation of women in national parliaments affects the level of gender equality present to a great extent. In this paper, gender equality is measured in terms of general working conditions in parliament, such as the distribution of women among standing parliamentary committees, and the attitudes of parliamentarians towards the issue of gender equality. In this multi-strategy research design a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is used in the form of questionnaires, interviews and statistical analyses in order to establish the significance of the representation of women in the national legislatures of Sweden and Canada. The national legislatures in Sweden, the Riksdag, and Canada, the House of Commons, were compared as the Riksdag represents a progressive case in terms of the presence of women with 45 percent women, while the House of Commons represents a less progressive case with only 21 percent women. The Politics of Presence theory represents the theoretical framework for this study and is tested in order to determine whether the presence of women truly matters.

In this study it is found that the presence of women in national legislatures does not signify gender equality as conditions of gender inequality are found in the attitudes and working conditions in the Canadian House of Commons and in the working conditions of the Swedish Riksdag. It is concluded that the representation of women does not matter with regards to gender equality as situations of gender inequality exist in both national legislatures investigated.

Keywords
Women, Politics, Parliament, Sweden, Canada, Riksdag, House of Commons, Gender, Equality, Representation, Presence, Distribution, Attitudes, Power, Committees